

The Gospel Message

by
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{1950-2003}

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*However, since it is our belief that all truth has its source in God, and as such, no man has a right to claim it as his own, but instead, shout "shout it from the rooftops," permission is therefore granted to copy this book in part or in whole, as long as the original text is not altered in any way and as long as it is not reproduced in any way for commercial purposes.

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Forward

The thoughts in the following pages have been written for the benefit of helping eternal souls find the heavenly blessings now available in Christ, rather than with any intent to provide a scholarly work of man's wisdom. All real truth has its source in God. And He insists we do everything within our power to shout it from the rooftops.

Since what we believe as the Gospel has everlasting consequences for our eternal soul, it is imperative we examine what we are allowing ourselves to be taught in regard to it. If a proper foundation has never been laid in our understanding, it is easy to be led astray by the "wisdom" of man. The apostle Paul said, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1: 8-9)

As you read the following pages I would ask you to do two things. First, examine the teachings in the light of God's Word. And then, ask yourself if this is the Gospel you have been taught. Or perhaps you are a preacher of the Gospel or a religious teacher. If so, I implore you to ask yourself if this is *The Gospel Message* you are sharing with others. James has a warning for those who are teachers. "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." (Jam. 3: 1)

I'd like to share the following paragraph that was discovered in the introduction to a book of compiled letters written by John Fletcher. The book, *Christ Manifested*, was edited by David R. Smith. Because Mr. Smith's thoughts are so closely related to the material in this book and the sentiment so applicable, his statement is quoted with thanksgiving to the Lord, along with a real sense of responsibility for proclaiming God's truth to this and to future generations –

If the reader, having ploughed his way through every argument here presented, comes to the last page unmoved—without any desire to voice his own "amen"—he should ask himself if he is but an unbeliever; however unpleasant a fact this may seem to be, it is likely to be true. The pure spirituality of the author's reasoning, and the over-whelming presentation of the biblical case, suggest that his opinion is not at fault. Opposition to such a display of divine truth can only be equated with unbelief...despite any statements to the contrary. If a man is "born-again of the Spirit of God" he is no longer earth-bound and essentially materialistic; he is just as aware of the things of the Lord as he is of the things of man. If they do nothing else, these pages may shake some people, who have only a profession of faith now, into realizing that one can know Him, whom to know is life everlasting.

I cannot quite end these remarks without expressing my sincere gratitude to the author, my dear {now deceased} friend and spiritual mentor, Steve Bray, for it was under his tutelage and patient guidance that I was led into Christ's abundantly full spiritual life, in the heavenly realms.

The Editor

Introduction

The term *salvation* has various meanings among the many religions of the world. There are varying beliefs even among those who have placed their trust in the Bible. This study provides an examination of the Gospel message. It reveals the one true salvation that is now available through Jesus Christ.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. (Rom. 1:16)

Christians generally agree with each other on certain aspects of the Gospel. We know that Jesus died on the cross to provide a means for “believers” to be forgiven for their sins. The Son of God became the sacrificial Lamb in order to provide an effective atonement for sin. The gates of heaven have been opened to everyone who will come to God through the Son’s shed blood. But as these lessons will reveal, the full Gospel message offers “much more” of a *salvation* than this opportunity to be forgiven for our sins and enter into heaven some day.

God began reconciling people to Himself well before the Gospel was first preached. For example, the Bible says “Noah was a just man, perfect in his generation. Noah walked with God.” (Gen. 6:9) This means that Noah lived in a reconciled state while walking in the light of truth provided to his generation. By considering this fact, we will begin to see how there must be something more now available in this New Testament dispensation. A careful study will show how God, from His perspective beyond time, began looking at the Son’s shed blood in His act of forgiving sinners soon after Adam fell into sin. He was the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Rev. 13:8) Even after God began a specific work with the Jewish nation for the purpose of revealing the standard of holiness that He requires from His people, there was a way for Gentile proselytes to be reconciled to Him.

God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the Lord when it was time to implement the promises of the New Testament. John’s message was “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matt. 3:2) He “came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance *for the remission of sins.*” (Mark 1:4 Emphasis added) This repentance and “remission of sins” was needed to “prepare the way for the Lord.” (Matt. 3:3) Everyone who entered into this reconciled state was preparing themselves to receive the “much more” of salvation that the Messiah {Jesus Christ} was coming to provide.

We will show how this “kingdom of heaven,” which is now “at hand,” has the same meaning as “the kingdom of God.” For example, where Matthew uses the term “the kingdom of heaven,” Luke refers to the same kingdom in parallel passages as “the kingdom of God.” Jesus came to fully establish this kingdom within the hearts of everyone who believes in Him. He does it by enabling us to become partakers with Him in His divine nature.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life {the divine Kingdom-life} and godliness...that through them {the promises made available through the Gospel} you may participate in the divine nature... (2 Pet. 1:3-4)

While the Son needed to actually shed His blood to provide for the atonement of fallen mankind, He also came into the world to enable “believers” to share with Him in His *Kingdom-life* from heaven. God has always desired to have children who would display His life of true righteousness and holiness—His image of divine love—while they walked in this world. From the beginning, He planned to have sons and daughters who would be holy to Him and walk blamelessly before Him in love. The promises of the New Testament provide “believers” with an opportunity to enter into this heavenly or divine life, by living through the life of the Son.

He chose us in Him {to receive our life from the Son} before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. (Eph. 1:4)

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. (1 John 4:9)

Love has been perfected among us in this...because as He is {in His life of divine love}, so are we {to become} in this world. (1 John 4:17)

The Gospel message explains how it is possible for fallen man to become a partaker with Jesus Christ in His divine nature through a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. He is now able to come to individual believers as an overcoming Savior who establishes His Kingdom-life of perfect love within the heart. When we have permitted Him to make us like Him in His life of divine love, we are enabled to fulfill all the moral requirements that are found in the laws of His kingdom.

Jesus came to Galilee, preaching *the gospel of the kingdom of God*, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. *Repent, and believe in the gospel.* (Mark 1:14-15 Emphasis added)

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, *much more*, having been reconciled {and forgiven for sins committed}, we shall be saved {from the old sinful nature} by His {indwelling} life. (Rom. 5:10 Emphasis added)

For if by the one man’s offense {spiritual} death {and sin} reigned through the one {Adam}, *much more* those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness {the divine life of perfect love} will reign in life {reign over the old sinful nature} through the One, Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:17 Emphasis added)

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son...that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled {fully met} in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rom. 8:3-4)

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us {to reconcile us to God through His shed blood}, *that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* {We are enabled to display God’s nature of righteousness when we permit the Spirit to fill our eternal soul with the Son’s life of perfect love.} We then...plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain... Behold, now is the accepted time {to be saved from the sinful nature of self-will and self-seeking and begin walking in the Spirit}, behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 5:21-6:2 Emphasis added)

If indeed you have been taught by Him *as the truth is in Jesus* {as He displayed the eternal Kingdom-life in a mortal body}...put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4:21, 24 Emphasis added)

While God could forgive people for their sins prior to the actual shedding of Jesus' blood, the Son's work of atonement had to be completed before He could restore the divine image that Adam lost at the Fall. The image of perfect love could only be reestablished in fallen man by filling his inner being with God's own Spirit. And this could not take place until Christ had actually died, been raised from the dead, and had again entered into a glorified state. (John 7:39)

The "good news" of the Gospel, which is what we will be examining, teaches the called out people of God how to become partakers with the Son in His Kingdom-life of perfect love and walk as He did in this world. (1 John 2:5-6) *Any message of salvation that falls short of this goal is not the full Gospel message.*

Scriptures are frequently included in the lessons of this study for the purpose of both clarifying the Gospel message and making it easier for the reader to test the teachings against God's Word. Some of these Scriptures will have a tendency to stretch the faith of even earnest Christians. Yes, the calling being revealed is very high. In fact, to some, the lessons may go beyond what their current faith can bear. But even if they are foreign to how the mind thinks and the reading becomes difficult, there is a need to remember that God is always trying to reveal deeper truths to His children. While it is often hard work, the rewards that can be received by learning of and then yielding to these deeper treasures in God's Word will make it worth the effort. "Jesus said... 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.'" (Mark 9:23)

The primary lesson, the Gospel message of full salvation, is repeated from a number of different perspectives. The repetitiveness is intended to reinforce the underlying principles and provide the mind with an opportunity to adjust to higher thoughts. The Bible says you are "transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Rom. 12:2) This process of repetition will permit the mind to adjust to newly revealed truth and continue to gain a clearer understanding as the lessons progress.

The Gospel message itself is really quite simple. It reveals how believers in Jesus Christ are to receive His Kingdom-life of perfect love through a yielded and dependent faith. The life needs to be imparted within our eternal soul through a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. *We are not expected to produce the life and nature of God and live victoriously above sin through our own efforts. But the mind must be able to see the truth before faith will have an opportunity to do its work of providing an entrance into the reality of the promise.*

Scriptures from the New King James Version of the Bible have been used unless otherwise noted. Italics and underlining have been added for emphasis and bracketed comments inserted for clarification. The reader is encouraged to use their own Bible as their original source of truth. But at least be like the Bereans. "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11)

Steve Bray

*Most of the passages in italics and the underlining for emphasis is a work of the editor and not the author.

The Eternal Life

Jesus Christ came into the world to reveal the “light of life” from heaven. (John 8:12) As He yielded His will to the Father, the *Kingdom-life of heaven* was revealed through Him by the Holy Spirit. The apostle John, in a reference to how the Son was able to physically reveal the “eternal life” in this world, said, “The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you *that eternal life which* was with the Father and *was manifested* {shown or made visible} *to us* {in a human body}.” (1 John 1:2 Emphasis added)

While there is a meaning of “endless duration” in the term “eternal life,” this verse is speaking about a certain type or quality of life that reveals the spiritual image of God through a mortal body. By studying the life of Jesus, we can discover the basic nature that is found in the eternal life of God. Jesus could therefore say, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9)

We will find that the Gospel promises to provide “believers” with the same form of “eternal life” that Jesus displayed through His mortal body. Not only will this life enable Christians to live forever, but the *life* will also make it possible to display the spiritual image of God—the eternal spiritual life that Adam lost at the Fall—in this world.

If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, *as the truth is in Jesus*...put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4:21, 24 Emphasis added)

The Son’s work on the cross and His return to a glorified state has made it possible for the eternal life to once again begin flowing from the heavenly realms into the hearts of God’s children. The life now flows from the Son like an endless river. *Everyone who is willing to permit God to use them for His exclusive purposes can now become filled to overflowing with the Son’s divine life*. His indwelling life enables these fully sanctified {set apart} Christians to display the Son’s eternal Kingdom-life of perfect love. (1 John 4:16-17)

He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. (John 7:38)

Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to {a display of} eternal life. (John 4:14 NIV)

For you are {created to be} the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them...” (2 Cor. 6:16-17)

In another reference to the Son of God, John said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... In Him was life {the eternal life}, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:1, 4) This Scripture teaches us that Jesus Christ, who is God, became incarnate in a human body to reveal God’s eternal Word of truth. The written Word provides a veiled revelation of the life that God has planned for His children to manifest. As the Living Word, the Son displayed an *unveiled revelation of this life*. Furthermore, we learn that as the “light of men,” Jesus Christ is able to provide this same “light of life” to everyone who follows Him *through the cross*.

If anyone desires to come after Me {into the eternal Kingdom-life}, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For...whoever

loses his {fallen or flesh-driven} life for My sake will find it {the kingdom-life from heaven}. (Matt. 16:24-25)

I am the light of the world. He who follows Me {through the cross} shall not walk in darkness, but *have the light of life*. (John 8:12 Emphasis added)

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)

The written Word reveals a way of life that exists in the eternal kingdom of God. God used various inspired writers to provide these lessons. His written Word—the Scriptures—have been bound together into the Bible. By reading the Bible, we can discover how our Creator expects us to live.

But the Scriptures can only provide a veiled revelation of how people will walk in the kingdom of God. Jesus, by becoming the Living Word, displayed the Kingdom-life through a human body. By examining the life of Jesus—the eternal life that He displayed through His humanity—we can better understand the “life” of righteous and holiness that Christians are to display in this world. We are to walk in the “light of life” “as the truth is in Jesus.”

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” The word “life” in this Scripture does not mean physical life. The Greek word *zoe*, as it is used in the Scriptures, refers to a divine spiritual life that originates in the Father. This spiritual life can be given to man by the Son of God, through a supernatural work of His Spirit. The highest blessedness of the creature is to become “filled” with the Son’s eternal life from heaven. And glory be to God, this is why Jesus has come: “I have come that they may have life {*zoe*}, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

We enter into this new spiritual life through the new birth. But the true objective of faith is to receive the eternal life “more abundantly” by becoming “filled” with Christ’s Spirit. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness {which is a sign of the new birth}, for they shall be filled.” (Matt. 5:6) They will be filled with the Lord’s Kingdom-life of perfect love.

If the believer does not quench this hunger and thirst after righteousness by returning to the temporal things of this world to find his spiritual fulfillment, he has the promise of being filled to overflowing with the Son’s divine life from heaven. Man was given the freedom to choose where he would obtain his spiritual life. The Fall occurred when Adam chose to turn from God and the “Tree of Life” in order to develop his own form of spiritual life through the lust {desires} of the flesh, the lust {desires} of the eye and the pride of life. In other words, he chose to find his spiritual life from the world rather than from God. It is this decision that has cut fallen man off from the endless flow of Living Water that is now able to well up from within to a display of the eternal life.

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

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world {by seeking his spiritual life from it}, the love of the Father {His

eternal life of love that truly satisfies the soul} 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)

Everyone who drinks this water {and tries to satisfy his spiritual thirst from temporal sources} will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him *will never thirst*. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to {a display of} eternal life. (John 4:14 NIV Emphasis added)

Because the term *zoe* refers to a life that has its source in God, we can know that a display of this life will reveal a holy and righteous conduct. It will display the light of a godly life. When the Word tells us to be holy like God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16) and to be perfect in love like our heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48), it is telling us to become “filled” with the Son’s eternal spiritual “life” from heaven.

Yes, this is the Gospel message of salvation. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes... For in it the righteousness of God is revealed...” (Rom. 1:16-17)

The Kingdom-life that can now fill the temple of our body provides a real sense of abundance within the eternal soul. *The Son’s divine life from heaven is able to lift the spirit of the believer above the darkness of this world and enable his soul to remain satisfied regardless of outward conditions. This fully satisfied soul is what delivers the believer from the old self-seeking nature and all of its evil desires.* Because he no longer needs to spend his time searching for ways to find a sense of spiritual fulfillment from the things of this world, he is free to continually give himself to live for the good of others and thereby display the Son’s life and nature of love.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life {zoe} and godliness... You may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil {self-seeking} desires. (2 Pet. 1:3-4)

In one of His early promises to give this fullness of life to fallen man, the Lord said, “Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, *and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.* Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.” (Isa. 55:2-3 NIV Emphasis added) The soul truly begins to live in the firstfruits of the divine life of heaven when it has been filled with the Son’s Spirit and perfected in His self-giving love.

The Lord will only give His Kingdom-life to those who have denied themselves and followed Him through the cross. (Matt. 16:24-25) It will be necessary to stop looking to the things of this world as a means for finding spiritual fulfillment and begin looking to Christ alone, in faith, to supply the soul with His spiritual life from the heavenly realms. Every other source of spiritual life—every idol—must be surrendered before the fullness of this heavenly life can be found.

Why do you spend money for what is not bread, 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 Emphasis added)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ {a divine spiritual life that needs to be appropriated by faith}, just as He chose us in Him {to receive our spiritual life from Him} before the

foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in {divine} love. (Eph. 1:3-4)

For you are the temple of God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them...” Therefore, “Come out from among them {the self-seeking ways of this world} and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean {all heart idols – those relationships, ways of living and any other source we have been relying on for fulfillment}, and I will receive you {into the fullness of the Kingdom-life of promise}... *Therefore, having these {New Testament} 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 Emphasis added)

The Old Testament is filled with promises. But they all culminate in the promise to send a Messiah for the purpose of enabling God’s called-out people to live in true righteousness and holiness. He would come to establish His heavenly Kingdom-life of perfect love within their hearts. Not only would He give them a new heart {to replace the defective heart we all have inherited from the first Adam as a result of his stepping out into self-will}, He would also fill the temple of their body with His Spirit. (Ezk. 36:23-29) *Using His creative powers, He would restore them to the image that God had purposed for His children before the Fall.* (Eph. 1:4; 4:24)

We enter into this resurrection life through a real dying out to the flesh 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) Through this death and resurrection, we gain access to the Tree of Life – the eternal life of the Son.

The apostle Paul was called by God to preach the Gospel message. The long awaited “Promise of the Father” became available to both Jew and Gentile alike in the new Gospel dispensation. Paul therefore spent considerable time using the Old Testament {the only Scriptures available at the time} to explain how Jesus Christ, as the Messiah, had come to reveal His eternal Kingdom-life within everyone who would present their body to Him to be a display of God’s glory. “*He explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God*, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.” (Acts 28:23 Emphasis added) He could say, “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility...among whom *I have gone preaching the kingdom of God...*” (Acts 20:18-19, 25 Emphasis added) Following the teachings of Jesus, he displayed the Kingdom-life and explained how this life needed to be fully established within the heart of every believer.

Now when He {Jesus} was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation {in the visible physical realm}; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is {to be established} within you. (Luke 17:20-21)

“For the kingdom of God is...righteousness {perfect love} and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 14:17)

I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To

them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, *which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* (Col. 1:25-27 NIV Emphasis added)

God calls people out from *the ways of the world* so they may enter into His “kingdom and glory.” (1 Thess. 2:12) These two concepts, the *kingdom* and *glory*, are linked together with a single preposition and article in the Greek. Thus, when we enter into His Kingdom-life of perfect love, we enter into God’s glory. And of course, Christ is our only hope of walking in this glory. “The glorious riches of this mystery...is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:27 NIV)

God’s glory is found in His spiritual image. Since “God is love” (1 John 4:16), we are to enter into His glory by becoming vessels of His life of love. We do this by permitting Christ to establish His eternal Kingdom-life of perfect love within our hearts. The kingdom and the glory are received together. This divine life will reveal the Son’s own righteousness and peace and joy through our mortal bodies. In the simple words of Paul, “the life of Jesus also may be manifested {made known in and then made visible} in our body.” (2 Cor. 4:10)

Although the Lord will not come to the whole world in a full revelation of His kingdom and glory until His great Second Coming, individual believers in this age of fulfillment can now receive His life within the temple of their body. *This is the Gospel of the kingdom that needs to be preached throughout the world as we wait for the reigning King to come in His full glory to all the world.*

And *this gospel of the kingdom* will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations {this witness includes a display of the Son’s Kingdom-life of perfect love}, and then the end will come {when Christ comes in His full glory as the reigning King}. (Matt. 24:14 Emphasis added)

Because Paul had learned the secret of how to receive the Son’s divine “life” from the heavenly realms, he became qualified to preach the good news of the Gospel. He could say, “It pleased God...to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.” (Gal. 1:15-16)

Men and women become qualified to preach and teach the true Gospel message when they themselves have discovered how to enter into a real participation with Christ in His divine nature. After becoming living witnesses of His Kingdom-life from heaven through a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, they are then qualified to go forth into the world to further the same kingdom of light, *but not before then.*

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you, and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord...giving thanks to the Father, *who has qualified you* {through the new birth} *to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.* {A genuine new birth – the “birthright” – gives us a right to the inheritance – the “blessing” – the Kingdom-life of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” – Christ’s divine nature, which He wants to bestow on us by the power of the Holy Spirit through our yielded and dependent faith}. (Col. 1:9-12 NIV Emphasis added)

It is not enough to simply study the life of Jesus and to intellectually learn of His way of life. There are many people within the church who are stopping short of the goal of full salvation. They admire Jesus' way of life and acknowledge Him as the sinless Son of God who died for their sins, but they neglect to fully surrender {fully consecrate} the temple of their body so they may become a vessel of His Kingdom-life of perfect love. In effect, we can say that most people within the church today have neglected to follow Jesus through the cross in order to find His divine life and be saved from their sin nature.

If anyone desires to come after Me {into the Kingdom-life}, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For...whoever loses his {flesh-driven} life for My sake will find it {the kingdom-life from heaven}. (Matt. 16:24-25)

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard {as taught in the Scriptures}, lest we drift away {from Christ's way of the cross}...How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord...? (Heb. 2:1, 3)

You search the Scriptures, for in them *you think you have eternal life*; and these are they which testify of Me. *But you are not willing to come to Me* {through the cross} that you may have life {the eternal Kingdom-life from heaven}. (John 5:39-40 Emphasis added)

If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine... (John 7:17)

The Scriptures show us how to find the eternal life. The words themselves are not the actual source of "life." They can only provide life by pointing us to Jesus Christ who is "the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14: 6) As we yield to the teachings found in the Bible, we are yielding in faith to the Living Word {our Lord} who has come to be our source of spiritual life. Personal testimony throughout New Testament history has shown how even the simplest translations of the Bible can lead people to Christ and into His Kingdom-life from heaven, when they follow all His instructions.

It is a shame how we find Christians today actually fighting about the different versions of the Bible. While certain translations have done a better job of revealing the meaning of certain passages, individuals should not idolize their version of the Scriptures as if it is the only way to eternal life. Some people even go so far as to say that every version of the Bible except a certain one will lead people astray. If this were actually true, people like the Wycliff Bible translators should be condemned rather than praised for their work of making the Bible available to various groups of people in their native language.

Everyone who is still worshipping a certain version of the Bible is effectively revealing how he or she has not yet found Christ's Kingdom-life of perfect love. *Christians who have truly entered into His supernatural life from heaven will understand how the life comes from Jesus and not from a mere belief in certain words.* While it will be necessary to yield to the truth before we will have an opportunity to "find" the life of promise, we must depend on the Lord to reveal Himself within our eternal soul if we hope to become vessels of His eternal life in this world.

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. (John 14:21)

For the kingdom of God {the Kingdom-life} is not in word {believing in certain words about Jesus} but in power {which provides the indwelling life of Jesus}. (1 Cor. 4:20)

Those who preach and teach the full Gospel message will explain how believers are to deny themselves and take Christ's way of the cross, so they may "find" His "eternal life." It is through a death to the flesh-life that the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit can begin working within the heart of believers. True Christians are willing to lose their old self-originated way of life {where self chooses, exerts and directs, and self is the source of those actions – "of self," "by self," and "for self"} so they may display the Son's heavenly "light of life" to the world. This is the "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3)

Most assuredly, I say to you, 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)

The devil has relied on the deceitful heart to lead "many" into a religion of words without power. For example, people speak of possessing eternal life because they believe in Jesus. But they do not reveal the light of His divine life from heaven in their daily walk. Furthermore, because their religion is in word only, many are easily deceived into thinking their salvation is eternal and cannot be lost. Even when they are confronted with a Scripture that is in conflict with this doctrine of eternal security, they will ignore what it reveals. Then there are those who clean up the outside of the cup through self-produced righteousness and think they are doing quite well spiritually. But theirs too is only a religion of words without power. If one could examine their hearts, it would be evident that even though they appear very righteous on the outside, their hearts are still self-centered and self-indulgent.

Christianity is real and practical. It is designed to transform the very nature of man. Yes, the Son can give us His eternal life, and He can provide this divine life in an abundantly full measure. (John 10:10) And we must realize that it is real, not simply something we hold in our head as a doctrine. While we can be reconciled to God before we have been saved from our sinful nature by the indwelling life of Christ (Rom. 5:10), our faith needs to be looking for the conscious reality of this life to be revealed within our heart. Have we truly been looking to Jesus to perfect our heart in love and enable us to walk as He did in this world through a yielded and dependent faith?

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.

By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought {must} himself also to walk just as He walked. (1 John 2:5-6)

We will later learn how people who have entered into the Lord's eternal life of perfect love do not live for themselves. We can therefore say that people who still have a bent toward living for themselves, even if they spend much time doing church work, do not have the Son's eternal life of perfect love filling their soul. While they may be in a justified state and be qualified for the inheritance that is available to all believers, they still need to press forward in their faith until they have entered into the life of promise.

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which

he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him...in the heavenly realms. (Eph. 1:18-20)

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection... (Heb. 6:1)

Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling...*so that you may become blameless and pure* {perfected in love}, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life. (Phil. 2:12-16 Emphasis added)

The Faith that Justifies

Paul's letter to the Galatians describes how to "live" in a right relationship with God. It is a classic statement on how "The just shall live by faith." (Gal. 3:11) But, contrary to what many seem to think, Paul did not use this letter to teach people how to enter into a justified state.

Paul begins the epistle by reestablishing his credentials as an apostle. He understood the true Gospel message. He also reminds the members of this newly formed church how he had previously led them into a right relationship with the Lord. They had obviously entered into an initial state of salvation when God gave them the gift of His Holy Spirit. (Gal. 3:3)

However, false teachers were leading these Christians away from the true Gospel with its emphasis on dependent faith in Jesus Christ, to the *way of law*. Paul was therefore deeply concerned about their current relationship with God. In effect, the Galatian letter addresses the danger of how Christians can potentially step out of their justified state when they stop depending on Jesus Christ to be the source of their life. He alone can enable people to walk in perfect love.

The Galatians wanted to do what was right before God. The Spirit would have provided these believers with a real hunger and thirst after true righteousness through the new birth. This is why it was easy for them to be deceived into thinking they should try to make themselves righteous through their own works. One of Satan's most effective ploys when he works through church leaders as an "angel of light" is to convince believers to depend on their own efforts to be saved from unrighteousness. But, as Paul tried to teach the Galatians, this way of trying to make ourselves righteous – living by the Law {trying to obey God's commandments in the strength of the flesh, in other words, by our own efforts and resolutions, which is the essence of the teaching and preaching that encourages us to read our Bibles and then "do it"} – will actually turn us away from a powerful work of God's grace.

Paul had obviously taught these converts of the need to reach a mature Christian state. But they were confused about how they were to reach their goal. We therefore find Paul asking the Galatians his searching question: "This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit {a past event} by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth...? *Having begun in the Spirit, are you being made perfect by the flesh* {by your own efforts}?" (Gal. 3:1, 3 Emphasis added) After reminding them of how they had received the gift of the indwelling Spirit through faith, Paul wants to know if they thought they could make themselves perfect or complete in the Son's life of love through their own efforts. "Are you being made perfect by the flesh?"

Since Paul was not teaching the Galatians how to enter into a justified state, we can conclude that his lessons about justification in this letter are intended to show Christians how to *remain* in a right relationship with God. Paul was attempting to protect them from losing their hope of full salvation. Only as they continued to depend on Jesus and "live by faith" could they remain justified and have an opportunity to enter into the overcoming life that is promised through the Gospel. In other words, they would need to go back to looking to Jesus Christ in child-like dependent faith rather than depending on their own

efforts and resolutions to be righteous if they hoped to have the divine life of true righteousness and holiness fully established within their hearts. (Eph. 4:24)

John Stott, in his well-known commentary on Galatians, looks at justification from the perspective of a single event. As a Calvinist, He naturally thinks in terms of “once saved, always saved.” This implies that once a person is justified, he will remain justified. His commentary therefore focuses on how a “sinner” {an unsaved person} is *initially* justified. But Paul is not addressing this particular lesson in his letter. Again, using a different translation of the same text, we find Paul asking the Christians in Galatia, “After beginning with the Spirit {after being justified and receiving the Spirit from God by faith}, *are you now trying to attain your goal* {full salvation} by human effort?” (Gal. 3:3 NIV Emphasis added)

Stott does not comment on this key third verse of chapter three in his book. It is difficult to comment on a statement that does not fit in with an accepted system of theology. While his lessons about entering into a justified state through faith are true, he does not elaborate on Paul’s real concern with the Galatians. Paul’s letter teaches Christians how to *remain* in a justified state by continuing to seek out the “goal” of the Gospel {full salvation} through a yielded and dependent faith.

Because there are very few leaders within the church today who understand what faith is intended to achieve, the body of Christ has generally remained confused about the meaning of “salvation”. *The Gospel points to a type of perfection that we are to receive from the life of Jesus Christ in this world through a dependent and responsive faith. It is a “goal” that is to be set before every Christian when they first believe.*

We can therefore find Paul pointing toward this goal that the Galatians were expected to reach through “faith.” John Wesley has referred to the goal as “Christian perfection.” At this point we will simply say that every Christian is expected to become like Jesus Christ in His nature of love. And as Paul has explained, it is a “goal” that cannot be obtained through a work of our flesh.

Donald Metz, in his book *Studies in Biblical Holiness*, has said, “perfection must be the goal, or end, of religious experience. Otherwise religion becomes largely a matter of emotional preference or of human achievement.” (p. 147) It is not difficult to find people who are basing the state of their religious life either on their emotional experiences or on what they have accomplished through their own efforts. But the real goal of the Christian life is perfect love.

Even people in the holiness movement often measure their religious state by the way they have conformed to certain outward standards. But this is not the standard that God will use to measure our spirituality. As Paul has said, no matter what I have done, if I have not God’s life of divine love within my heart, “it profits me nothing.” (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

Paul’s teaching to the Galatians explains how they were in danger of stepping out of their justified state because they were turning from *the way of faith* and beginning to live by law as the means of attaining the “goal” of righteousness. “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” (Gal. 5:4) Because they were attempting to save themselves from sin and unrighteousness through a work of their own human efforts, they were actually drifting away from the place where God’s powerful grace is able to do its work.

We should note that “law-keepers” naturally choose laws that fall within their ability to obey. They will set up a religious system that can be maintained through human effort. You will seldom find them including in their “must do” list the “standards” that Jesus established within His Sermon on the Mount or the love as described by the apostle Paul in First Corinthians chapter thirteen. Everyone who relies on their own efforts will inevitably set aside the command that says, “You shall be perfect {in love and mercy}, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48) Another command ignored when living by self effort is found in Paul’s letter to the Philippians, “Be anxious for *nothing...*” (Phil. 4:6 Emphasis added)

Christ’s first public address was His Sermon on the Mount. He described a way of life that everyone will manifest in the kingdom of God. In effect, His kingdom teachings were intended to take God’s standards for living beyond the capacity of everyone who tries to live by law. If the followers of Jesus were to “have life, and have it to the full,” they would need to receive the life from Him. And as He has so clearly taught, this would entail a dying out to their old self-originated form of life with its natural sense of self-sufficiency as a means of gaining access to His Kingdom-life from heaven.

I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children {in simple dependence}, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. {Unless you die to your own sufficiency and begin looking to God in childlike faith for everything, you will never have the Kingdom-life of perfect love established within your heart.} (Matt. 18:3 NIV)

Unfortunately, most people, like the Pharisees, prefer to save their flesh-life and produce their own form of righteousness. Yes, they study the Scriptures and establish standards to live by. But they do not come to Christ through the cross so they may have life from heaven. “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me {and point to the one true source of life}. But you are not willing to come to Me {through the cross} that you may have life.” (John 5:39-40)

There is a sense in which we must work out our salvation through our obedience to Christ’s teachings. (Phil. 2:12-13) We will discuss this topic later. But the goal of perfect love {the eternal life that comes from heaven} will need to be received as a *gift*, by faith.

The Galatian Christians did not realize that Jesus was able to save fallen man from sin by filling each one of them with His divine life from heaven—a life that is truly righteous in its very nature. Because they lacked knowledge about the Son and what He had come to do, they were being turned away from the salvation He offers.

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

If we hope to be completely delivered from “this present evil age” and enter into the full salvation of the Lord, it will be necessary to be built up in the one faith that leads to a real deliverance from the fallen life. It will be necessary to “believe” in what the Son has come to do through a supernatural work of God’s grace. Simply stated, this “much more” of salvation can only be accomplished “according to your faith.” (Matt. 9:29) Without faith in the promises, you will not be fully committed to seeking out the life.

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who

diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)

When the Fall occurred, a fallen nature of independence, self-sufficiency and self-seeking entered into the heart of man. It has resulted in a self-centered nature that prevents man from displaying God's spiritual image of perfect {self-sacrificing} love in the world. Jesus was sent to save fallen man from this sinful nature by making His Kingdom-life of perfect love available to all believers.

True belief in Jesus Christ entails both accepting everything that is revealed in God's Word, and then submitting in faith to what it teaches. The rejection of even a single teaching will end up turning us away from the salvation that Jesus offers. Let us therefore believe what the Word of God teaches and look to the Lord in a yielded and childlike faith, so that the reality of the truth may be fully established in our lives. "According to your faith will it be done to you." (Matt. 9:29 NIV)

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. {It is Satan who propagated the independent, self-sufficient and self-seeking way of life in this world.} (1 John 3:8)

Jesus Christ...gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age. (Gal. 1:3-4)

Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God {the Kingdom-life from heaven} is at hand. *Repent, and believe in the gospel.*" (Mark 1:14-15 Emphasis added)

You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. (Matt. 1:21)

If the members of Christ's body are not being shown how to be saved from their sinful nature {self-centeredness} by being perfected in Christ's life of divine love, the true Gospel message is not being taught. They will need to be built up in their knowledge of the Son of God so they may have faith in what He has come to do. They need to realize that He has already destroyed the works of the devil. In other words, He has destroyed the works that led to the independent, self-sufficient and self-seeking nature in fallen man. The sin nature that Satan propagated on the world can be completely removed from our own lives by receiving the Son's Kingdom-life through faith. *This deliverance from sin is the one true salvation of the Lord. Let us believe in the Gospel!*

The One who ascended far above all the heavens, *that He might fill all things...*gave some to be...pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints...till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:10-13 Emphasis added)

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection {His Kingdom-life}, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin {the carnal nature that wants to live for itself according to its own fleshly desires} might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died {to the flesh-life of self-will} has been freed from sin. (Rom. 6:5-7)

What is the faith that justifies? What was causing the Galatians to turn from this faith? It is a faith that looks to Christ to establish His Kingdom-life of perfect love within the

heart. He is the Messiah who has come to set up the kingdom of God in this world. Those who attempt to live by their own efforts to establish a form of righteousness, as the Galatians attempted to do, will find they have fallen far short of the perfect love that Jesus displayed through His mortal body.

How can we remain in a justified state? Abraham is called the father of faith. His example of faith has been given to us so we can know how to remain in a justified state. While this topic will be discussed more fully in the following lessons, we need to note a basic principle here. Simply stated, Abraham believed in what God had promised to do, and so he yielded to the will of God as best he knew how while waiting for God to fulfill the promise. "He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness.'" (Rom. 4:20-22)

How does this principle apply to Christians in this age of fulfillment? Simply stated, *God has promised to reveal the divine life of the Son through every believer.* If we are fully convinced that He can fulfill His promises {even though we may be confused about how it will all work out}, and we surrender to His will while waiting for the promise to be fulfilled, we will be credited with Christ's life of righteousness. It is our faith and hope in what Christ expects to do through us that will enable us to receive the credit. And since our obedience does not make our heart perfect in love, but keeps us on the path that leads to the life of promise, we can see that "eternal life" comes by faith alone. The "light of life" must come down from above through a work of God's grace, and be received by us as a gift. While obedience is a sign of faith, it is not our works that will produce this life from heaven.

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself {the indwelling Kingdom-life of perfect love} to him {as a gift}. (John 14:21)

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

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says... Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:1-2)

Salvation from Sin

The Gospel is a message that explains how Jesus Christ has come to save people from sin. And yet, many of those in the church think that Christ can only save them from the penalty of sin, while they themselves must keep on sinning {living by their own will} daily. In order to believe this way, we must either think that God does not have the power to save us from our fallen state, or that He intends for us to go on living in it.

Here is where we need to pay close attention to the Scriptures. Jesus came to save us “from” our sins, rather than “in” our sins. “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Matt. 1:21) Furthermore, this salvation is to include more than a few of our worst sins. “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him...” (Heb. 7:25)

The term “uttermost” means both completely and without limit. *We can therefore say that Jesus has come to save us from the very nature that produces sin.* As an omnipotent God, He has the power that can enable us to become partakers with Him in His own divine nature.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life {the Kingdom-life of perfect love} and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises {promises that need to be understood and appropriated by faith}, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world {the kingdom of darkness} caused by evil {self-seeking} desires. (2 Pet. 1:3-4 NIV)

In a figurative sense, most Christians believe they are to receive a new life from the Son of God. However, they do not believe that He is able to provide them with the “life” that He received from the Father—the same divine life that overcame sin. This is the point where there needs to be a real renewing of the mind. Christians need to be built up both in their knowledge of the Son and in their faith, so they may look to the Lord in hope to reveal Himself within their hearts in such a way that it becomes possible to “reign in life {zoe} through...Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 5:17) The divine life that comes from Jesus Christ is able to reign over the old sin nature.

The apostle John has explained how believers can be fully saved from sin in these concise words: “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” (1 John 4:9) Similarly, Paul has stated, “The life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” (2 Cor. 4:10) From these Scriptures and others that will follow, we will see how it is possible to be “saved” from our fallen nature by becoming partakers with Christ in His Kingdom-life of perfect love. *The life of Christ does not sin.* And once He has fully established His Kingdom-life of perfect love within our heart, we will begin sharing with Him in His complete victory over sin. This is what is meant by the term *full salvation*.

Jesus remained without sin because He did nothing “out from” Himself. He completely yielded Himself to be led by the Spirit. Although He had a will of His own while living as a man, He surrendered his own will in order to live by the will of the

Father. He thereby revealed how man was created to live “as one” with God, by sharing with the Father in His divine life and will.

If we are living in our own strength according to our own will, which is the essence of Satan’s pride and independence, everything we do is sin. But because of what Jesus has accomplished, we may overcome this old flesh-life. It can be destroyed so that we may be delivered from the self-originated form of life—the root of sin—and begin living under the control and power of the Holy Spirit as Jesus did.

Scripture is clear on this matter. The “body of sin” can be “done away with.” (Rom. 6:6) Paul is not referring to the physical body with its God-given desires. Rather, he is referring to a body of sin that refuses to remain in complete subjection to the Holy Spirit. This fallen nature, which naturally wants to have its own way and live for itself, must be done away with before it is possible to live fully under the control and power of the Holy Spirit. The Son’s life of perfect love will establish God’s complete reign within the heart.

Jesus is called the Second or Last Adam because He has become the firstborn of a new lineage of people who all share in the same divine image. Every child of God is to follow Jesus and learn to live as He did. *There needs to be a complete yielding of the human will. Only in following this path of the Son is it possible to come under the full control of God’s Spirit. And only in this way is it possible to share with God in His Kingdom-life from heaven.*

God possesses the needed power to raise our spiritual life into a state where we can begin sharing with Christ in all the spiritual blessings that are found in His Kingdom-life within the heavenly realms. (Eph. 1:3) By dying out to the old fleshly way of life where people naturally live by their own will, it is possible to become a partaker with Christ in His eternal life of perfect love. This divine life originates in the Father and passes through the Son before it enters into our eternal soul by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This life is so unique and heavenly in nature that Jesus said we would know when we are living through Him. Jesus said, “Because I live {in the eternal Kingdom-life of perfect love}, you will live also {in the same life}. At that day you will know that I am in My Father {receiving the eternal life from Him}, and you in Me, and I in you.” (John 14:19-20) *We are enabled to know that we have entered into this Kingdom-life from heaven when the Son has begun to experientially reveal the Father’s nature of perfect love within our heart.*

I {the Son} have made you {the Father} known to them {by revealing the divine nature of self-sacrificing love in a mortal body}, and will continue to make you known {by filling them with the same Spirit of divine love} in order that the love you have for me {perfect love} may be in them and that I myself {in the Kingdom-life} may be in them. (John 17:26 NIV)

Entering into a justified state places the believer in a position where it is possible to be led by the Spirit into the Son’s “life of promise.” *We therefore should not think that this justified state is the intended salvation of the Lord. Justification does not completely set us free from the sin nature.* While it will provide a real hunger and thirst after true righteousness and holiness, and this initial salvation will enable believers to repress sin, a defect within the heart {the evil root of self-centeredness} will still be noticed. The heart must be “filled” with Christ’s life of perfect love before it is possible to be set “free indeed” from sin. Again, this is the full salvation of the Lord.

Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave to sin. {It reveals how the evil root of self-centeredness has continued to captivate the heart.} And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free {from the self-centeredness that produces sin}, you shall be free indeed. (John 8:34-36)

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin.
(1 John 2:1)

At this point we need to define the kind of sin that is overcome when we are set “free indeed.” John says, “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.” (1 John 3:4-5) Jesus came to take away the “lawlessness” that is in the heart of fallen man. *Because the Fall resulted in a self-centered nature that insists on living by its own will, Jesus must do away with this carnal nature if He is to save us from all sin.*

At the same time, we need to realize that our knowledge will never be perfect in this world. It is therefore possible to be separated from God’s perfect will without realizing it. God does not hold us accountable for this kind of sin because it is not “lawlessness.” We do not enter into “sin” in God’s sight until we have knowingly violated His revealed will.

Jesus has come to enable us to share with Him in His nature of perfect love. In doing so, He is able to provide us with a heart that always yields to the divine will as it is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. Perfect love sets us free from the self-seeking nature and empowers us to continually lay down our lives for the divine will as Jesus did.

It is in this sense that we can remain “blameless” before God. There can be no blame when something is done that we do not know to be wrong. A child cannot be blamed for doing something wrong if they have never been told it is wrong. Thus, it is possible to live blamelessly before God when our hearts have been perfected in love and we begin to live only for the will of God as it has been revealed to us.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and *may your whole spirit, soul and body* {every part of you} *be preserved blameless...* He who calls you {into this life of promise} is faithful, who also will do it. (1 Thess. 5:23-24 Emphasis added)

Just as he chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. (Eph. 1:4)

While the person who keeps falling into sin is given an opportunity to live in the house of God in a reconciled state, he must press on in his faith until he has been set free indeed from the self-centered nature that naturally leads to self-will. *No one can live in a blameless state until they have died to their own will and have fully yielded themselves to live by the divine will as Jesus did.* “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave to sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son {those who have been set free from sin} abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free {through the power of His indwelling life}, you shall be free indeed.” (John 8:34-36)

We must note that self-will leads to self-seeking, and everyone who is living in a “self-seeking” form of life, in the end, will be under the “wrath” of God. He will give “to those who are self-seeking...indignation and wrath.” (Rom. 2:8). Therefore, people who continue to follow this course will not be permitted to remain in the house forever. “The

{self-sacrificing} love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end {living wholly for the will of God} shall be saved.” (Matt. 24:13-14)

Paul knew that a soul filled with perfect love would have power to overcome all the temptations of the devil. And yet he knew that Christians, when they are first justified, have not been strengthened with the Son’s life and nature of self-sacrificing love, which is the source of power over sin. He therefore needed to pray for his converts to be filled with this life of God so they could fully participate with Him in His divine nature.

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

God is love, and he who abides in {divine} love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is {in His nature of self-sacrificing love}, so are we in this world. (1 John 4:16-17)

If we have not become like the Lord in His self-sacrificing nature of love and continue to be so until the end, we will not have boldness on the great Day of Judgment. *God has created us to be a display of His life of love. Those who refuse to yield to becoming a vessel of the Son’s life and nature of love, which will also supply them with an inner compulsion to live by the divine will, should expect to find wrath in the end.*

These Scriptures do not imply that we are to contain the infinite God. But the temple of our body is to be filled to overflowing with His life of divine love. For example, a greenhouse cannot contain the sun. But every part of a greenhouse may be filled with light from the sun. It is in this sense that we may now be “filled” with God’s life and nature of love. We can receive the life in the same sense that Jesus received the life from the Father through the power of the Spirit. And as we can learn from the Scriptures, *the Son’s life does not live for itself in sin.*

When Paul wrote about being “filled to the measure of all the fullness of God,” he knew that he would be stretching the faith of many of his readers. When we look at our wretched and sinful heart, we wonder how this wonderful promise could ever become true in our own life. But it was for this very reason that he went on to say, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory...” (Eph. 3:20-21) *He can do much more than you think or even imagine.*

Yes, the power of the Spirit that has begun to work in you, can bring your hearts into a state of consecration that permits the Lord to fill the temple of your body with His glory. “The riches of the glory of this mystery...is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:27) He is the one who will display this perfect love that surpasses knowledge through the lives of individual Christians. “But we have this treasure in jars of clay {weak mortal bodies} to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” (2 Cor. 4:7 NIV Emphasis added)

The Son completely emptied Himself of His own glory in order to live as a man in a weak mortal body. And yet, all the fullness of the Father’s life of love could still be revealed through Him by a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. In the same sense, we

are to receive our life from the Son. Our inner nature can become “as one” with the nature of love that Jesus revealed through His mortal body. (John 17:22-23, 26) “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given {access to} fullness in Christ...” (Col. 2:9-10 NIV)

We will be nothing but an empty vessel in ourselves. It is only as we permit God to fill the temple with His glory—His life and image of love—that we are made complete or whole. It is the innate sense of incompleteness or emptiness within the soul that produces the evil root of self-seeking. We are by nature covetous {always seeking more for ourselves and not being content very long with what we have, where we are or what we are doing}. Once this body of sin is done away with through an inner manifestation of God’s Kingdom-life of divine love {His life of love satisfies the soul as with the richest of foods}, we are set free from the self-seeking nature. It is Christ’s indwelling life of love that completely sets us free from the independent and self-serving ways of the world, so we can begin living wholly for the will of God and be a vessel of His glory.

Because this eternal life provides a form of love that “surpasses” anything that can be taught through means of human knowledge, or that can be achieved through human effort (1 Cor. 2: 9, Eph. 3:19), we can know that the life needs to be received supernaturally through a work of the Holy Spirit – by faith. This is why we say that salvation from sin must be received as a gift from God. This life is granted to those who have proven their faith by fully yielding to God’s teachings.

The Kingdom-life of promise that Jesus Christ intends to reveal within our heart must be received by following the same spiritual principles that God revealed when He gave the Jews of old a “land of promise.” It is possible to possess a “right” to the inheritance and have access to the “life of promise” before the fullness of the blessing is actually appropriated through a responsive faith. This is why we pray for you as Christians “that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.” (Eph. 1:18-19) *Your justified state, which is the initial salvation of the Lord, is not enough to hold you from the self-seeking way of life to the end. You will need to persistently press forward in your walk of faith, using the grace that God has already granted, until you have entered into the full salvation that Jesus Christ has made available to all true “believers” in this world.*

Pastors and teachers are therefore needed within Christ’s church to build reconciled Christians up “in their faith” so they will be prepared to press forward into the life of promise. “And He Himself gave some to be...pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints...till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man {perfected in love}, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:11-13 Emphasis added)

Yes, the Lord expects each of His followers to “come to” this state of perfect love. “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.” (Luke 6:40)

Therefore, new Christians will need to learn what the life of Jesus Christ is like so they will have an idea of what they must receive through their yielded and dependent faith. Even though the natural mind cannot fully relate to His nature of perfect love, it will be necessary to have some perspective of the goal. Pastors and teachers are expected to help the members of Christ’s body “to grow” in their “knowledge of the Son of God.” And

then, *as an expression of their faith, these believers must be shown the necessity of surrendering their whole being to become a vessel of the same Christ-life.*

The Lord requires His disciples to yield to every point of the divine nature that was revealed through His mortal body. Therefore, the disciple is to be taught what Jesus is like. We must agree to become like Him and then “let” {yield or submit to} the life that was in Jesus to become fully established within our own heart.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who...made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant... And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him... (Phil. 2:5-9 Emphasis added)

If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, *as the truth is in Jesus...put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4:21, 24 Emphasis added)*

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love {taking the form of a bondservant as you pour out your life for others, for the good of God’s kingdom}, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, *an offering and a sacrifice to God* for a sweet smelling aroma. (Eph. 5:1-2 Emphasis added)

Those who refuse to submit to becoming like the Son in His nature of love, will remain sinners. “Sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins {by providing us with His own submissive and loving nature}. And in him is no sin. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.” (1 John 3:4-6 NIV)

In effect, *people who do not hunger and thirst after the Kingdom-life of the Lord have not yet experienced the new birth.* Everyone who is born again has a “seed” from the life of the Son planted within their heart. If they do not experience a longing to be like Him in His divine nature, which will be manifested in a real surrender to His ways, they have obviously not yet begun to taste of the glorious love that comes from the life of God.

No one who is born of God will continue to {willfully} sin, because God’s seed {a seed from the Son’s divine life of love} remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not {continue to} do what is right {as God expands their understanding of what He requires} is not a child of God... (1 John 3:9-10 NIV)

God will not make us like Himself until we have shown that we are willing to yield to the “light of truth” that He has revealed through the life of Jesus. We are required to consciously choose to become like Him at every point. For example, we will need to submit to becoming like Him in the meekness and humility that led Him to become a self-sacrificing servant who lived for the good of others. (Matt. 11:28-29) Of course, we can only receive His “life to the full” by looking to Him in faith to reveal His Kingdom-life of perfect love within our heart.

As we yield to the Son’s way of life, while being led by the Holy Spirit through the time of testing, He will prepare us for a definite entrance into His Kingdom-life of promise. *Those who are willing to “deny” themselves and take the Son’s way of the cross will eventually come to the end of themselves. They will reach the point where they are*

willing to die to all forms of independence and self-sufficiency. Thus, in due time, they will be prepared to be lifted {exalted} by the power of God into His heavenly Kingdom-life.

The point of entering into Christ's Kingdom-life, where the Lord reigns in the heart with His self-sacrificing life of love without rival, will be a sudden crisis experience in the same sense that God was able to miraculously take His called-out people of old across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land. While the way into this blessed land is difficult, the Kingdom-life that is received is well worth the price that must be paid.

For if by the one man's offense death {the loss of divine life from heaven} reigned through the one {Adam}, much more *those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness* {in a second crisis experience} *will reign in life* {in the Kingdom-life from heaven} through the One, Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:17 Emphasis added)

The law and the prophets were until John {the Baptist}. Since that time {since the Old Testament dispensation} the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone {who believes} is pressing into it. (Luke 16:16)

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

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God {by yielding to His teachings}, 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 vessels of His life of 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 Kingdom-life}. (1 Pet. 5:6, 10)

Because of what we see in the church today, there is a real need to keep emphasizing that the Gospel message involves more than being reconciled to God. Jesus came to restore the divine image of perfect love that was lost by Adam at the Fall. The true Gospel message teaches people how they must lose their old flesh-life and learn to live through the life of the Son, by faith, so they may become like Him in His Kingdom-life of love in this world. If we do not deny ourselves and press into this eternal life of love, so we may completely overcome the sin nature {the independent, self-sufficient and self-seeking nature}, then we have effectively neglected the great salvation that Jesus Christ has provided through His death and resurrection.

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord (Heb. 2:1-3)

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. (1 John 2:1)

The Messiah and His Kingdom

Jesus came preaching the Gospel of the “kingdom of God.” Matthew, in his Gospel, refers to this kingdom as the “kingdom of heaven.” Both phrases are speaking about the same Kingdom-life. It refers to the Christ-life that must come down from heaven and fully possess our hearts.

During the Old Testament dispensation God had promised to send a Messiah. He would be sent to establish God’s kingdom. While the kingdom would reveal the “light of life” as an outward manifestation in the world, it would actually need to be established within the heart of each of God’s children.

While this kingdom of God within the heart would not provide perfect knowledge in all matters of life, it would enable the children of God to remain fully yielded to His known will and manifest His Kingdom-life of self-sacrificing love in all their actions. In a sense, the people of His kingdom would be empowered to respond to His revealed will here on earth as it is done in heaven. The Son would enable each of God’s children to display His holy and righteous life.

In this manner, therefore, pray:... “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...” (Matt. 6:9-10)

Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, *when I show myself holy through you before their eyes...* I will put my Spirit {the Spirit of perfect love} in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws... I will save you from all your uncleanness... (Ezk. 36:23-29 Emphasis added NIV)

When Jesus first came preaching the Gospel message, He said, “The time is fulfilled, and *the kingdom of God is at hand*. Repent, and *believe in the gospel*.” (Mark 1: 15 Emphasis added) *What is the true Gospel message? The Kingdom-life of God can now be established within the heart of individual believers*. Everyone therefore needs to turn from their self-directed and self-seeking way of life and begin looking to God to establish the Son’s life of perfect love within their heart. The time is fulfilled when the Lord can fill the eternal soul with His Kingdom-life of righteousness {divine love} and peace and joy. (Rom. 14:17) Yes, “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

While the great Second Coming of the Lord to the whole world is still a future event, the Son can now come to individual believers as “a life-giving spirit.” (1 Cor. 15:45) He is now in a position to manifest the Living Word through every individual member of His body, in the same way that His heavenly Father was able to manifest this Kingdom-life through Him.

The Son received authority to fulfill this long awaited Promise of the Father through the work He did in taking the path of the cross to the throne of power. The Kingdom-life became available to everyone who would believe in the promise and yield to His teachings. He therefore told His disciples to respond to His instructions and to wait for the Promise of the Father. The faithful God of heaven would not let them down. *They too would receive power to walk as He {Jesus} did when He manifested Himself within their individual hearts.*

He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and *speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*. And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to *wait for the Promise of the Father*, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water {a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins}, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (Acts 1:3-5 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. (John 14:21)

Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry...until you are endued with power from on high. (Luke 24:49)

Even though the Holy Spirit had been with the disciples and had separated them from the world, they would need to be clothed with His resurrection power before they could truly enjoy the Lord’s Kingdom-life of perfect love. They could not receive this power until the Son was sitting on the throne of power in a glorified state. (John 7:39)

We should note that a God of perfect love does not force His Kingdom-life on the people of this world. Furthermore, He cannot permit anyone with a self-centered and self-seeking nature within His kingdom. In His eternal kingdom God must be “all in all.” Everyone must live for His will and be willing to display His glory. Therefore, everyone who refuses to enter into the way of life that Jesus revealed through His mortal body, must remain eternally separated from the “light of life.”

It will help to look at how Jesus lived so we will know what it means to be saved from the fallen life. While people of the world live for themselves and seek out the pleasures of this world through their own efforts, people in the kingdom of God receive everything from God as little children receive what is good and necessary from their parents. It is in this sense that Jesus lived by faith in His Father. *When the Son was tempted by the devil to exalt Himself, to enter into a self-seeking way of life and to use His own power to establish His own kingdom in the world, He refused to enter into this self-originated way of life.* And in a similar sense, we must learn to live in the same way that He lived.

A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. {He must wait on God to direct his path rather than live by his own will according to the self-seeking ways of the world.} (John 3:27)

My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. (John 4:34)

Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself {out from Himself}, but what He sees the Father do. {He yields to the life and the will that comes down out of heaven from the Father.} (John 5:19)

I can of Myself do nothing. {The Son could do nothing according to His own will and in His own strength without entering into sin}. As I hear {from the Father}, I judge {and react}; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me. (John 5:30)

I do not receive honor from men. But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you... How can you believe {in Me and My meek,

lowly and submissive way of life}, who receive honor from one another...? (John 5:41-44)

Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you. (John 6:27)

As the living Father sent Me, and I live {in the Kingdom-life from heaven} because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live {in the same life} because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven... (John 6:57-58)

I do nothing of Myself... And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him. (John 8:28-29)

I do not seek My own glory... Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word {by yielding to the same way of life} he shall never see death. (John 8:50-51)

Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life {psuche – Greek. It is the lower form of life that comes from the works of the flesh. Since it has its source in self, it is self-originated and God will not allow it to come into His presence.}... I lay it down of Myself. (John 10:17-18)

The only people who can enter into the eternal kingdom of God are those who have rejected the self-willed, self-seeking, self-sufficient, self-exalting and independent ways of the world. No one with a self-originated form of life can enter. The true children of God, those who will never taste death, surrender themselves fully to become vessels of the Lord's life of self-sacrificing love. This is a key lesson of the Gospel message.

There are many who would like to be forgiven for their sins and go to heaven some day, but they do not want to stop living for themselves in this world. God does not offer this kind of salvation. The Son was sent into the world to save people from the flesh-life that leads people to live by their own will and for their own pleasures. The Scripture is clear on this matter: Everyone who chooses to remain a self-seeker will remain separated from the Kingdom-life that God offers. They will remain under His eternal wrath.

For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body {if you stop living by its desires}, you will live {you will find the eternal Kingdom-life}. (Rom. 8:13)

And you He made alive {through the new birth}, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world... *fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind* {as you lived for your own personal pleasures}, *and were by nature children of wrath...* (Eph. 2:1-3 Emphasis added) {Those who are not willing to stop yielding to the desires of the flesh and the mind – living by their own will – will find in the end, they are still children of wrath.}

God “will give to each person according to what he has done.” To those who by persistence in doing good seek {His} glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. *But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth {the eternal life as revealed through Jesus}...there will be wrath and anger.* (Rom. 2:6, 8 NIV Emphasis added)

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature {the desires of the flesh and the mind}, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. {The eternal Kingdom-life will be fully established within his heart.} And let us not grow weary while doing good {as we yield to the leadings of the Spirit while being tested on our willingness to lay down our lives and our rights for the good of others}, for in due season we shall reap {we shall be fully established in the eternal Kingdom-life} if we do not lose heart. (Gal. 6:7-9 NIV)

Every believer receives the gift of the Spirit at the new birth. This blessing provides a real hunger and thirst after righteousness. The Spirit plants a “Seed” from the life of the Son within the heart to ground these newly regenerated Christians in love. This new life provides sufficient power to overcome the sinful and self-seeking ways of the world. The born again believer therefore has power to begin living for the good of others in sacrificial love. (1 John 3:9)

For this reason I {pray}...that you, being rooted and grounded in love {through the new birth, so you may begin living for the good of others as Jesus did}, may...{come to} know the love of Christ which passes knowledge {the perfect love that is found in His Kingdom-life}; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:14, 17-19)

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. {As born again Christians, they began living for the good of others because of the grace of God that was working within them. They were not receiving God’s grace in vain} For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints... I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich {in this grace of perfect love}. (2 Cor. 8:1-9)

For the love of Christ compels us {when we are receiving our life from Him}...that *those who live should live no longer for themselves*, but for Him who died for them and rose again. (2 Cor. 5:14-15 Emphasis added)

The Corinthians are examples of Christians who had entered into the faith but had neglected to press forward into the Kingdom-life of perfect love. Instead of taking Christ’s way of the cross and dying out to their own will, they continued to live according to their own desires. This prevented them from entering into the path of living for the good of others. Thus, they were being prevented from finding the life of promise by their own selfish desires. And we believe there are many like these Corinthians within the church today.

O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you... {You know the truth and the way that leads to the life of perfect love.} You are not restricted by

us, but you are restricted by your own affections {the desires of the flesh and mind}. (2 Cor. 6:11-12)

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you {with His Seed of self-sacrificing love}—unless, of course, you fail the test? (2 Cor. 13:5)

Christians, after being rooted and grounded in love, are to use the Spirit to put to death the self-centered and self-seeking ways of the “old man” {who is still under the influence of the flesh until there has been a real circumcision [cutting off] of that flesh-life by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit}. If we will “persistently” go on serving the Lord using the grace He has supplied, He will take us into the life of promise by perfecting our heart in love, in due time. “For in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” Since God is faithful, we can know that those who have fully yielded to God’s revealed will, become vessels of the Son’s Kingdom-life of perfect love.

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. {The Lord, who is the way, the truth, and the life, will reveal His life of perfect love within the heart.} (John 14:21)

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God {by submitting to His teachings}, that He may exalt you {lift you into His Kingdom-life} in due time... (1 Pet. 5:6)

God’s people were still living in the Old Testament dispensation when Jesus came preaching the Gospel of the kingdom. Even though the Spirit was uniquely “in” John the Baptist from his birth, he still did not have the divine life of perfect love filling his soul. Today, in this age of fulfillment, everyone who permits Christ to establish His Kingdom-life within their heart, will enter into a spiritual life that is much greater than anything known by the saints of the Old Testament.

For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist {there was not anyone who had received more of the life that comes from the Spirit during the Old Testament dispensation}; *but he who is least in the kingdom of God* is greater than he. (Luke 7:28 Emphasis added) {We should note that no one but God is good or great in themselves. We are enabled to become greater than these saints of old, including John the Baptist, only because we now have an opportunity to have the Lord’s Kingdom-life fully established within our hearts. The degree of the Spirit of God in the soul of man determines his greatness}

And all these {the faithful saints of the Old Testament}, 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 {in love} apart from us {in this age of fulfillment}. (Heb. 11:39)

The new birth implants a seed from the life of the Son within the heart. This seed makes the heart submissive and self-giving in its nature. But it is not the Kingdom-life of perfect love. When Jesus said, “Difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it,” He was referring to the Kingdom-life of perfect love. The only people who will find this higher life are those who deny themselves, take up their cross and lose their

flesh-life. “For... whoever loses his life {psuche – original Greek} for My sake will find it {the Kingdom-life}.” (Matt. 16:25)

God has revealed to us how many of His called-out people have lost their {spiritual} life in the desert testing period because they were unwilling to completely reject the self-willed and self-seeking ways of the world. Jesus confirmed this same principle when He said that those who try to save their life {their flesh-life} will effectively lose their soul to eternal darkness.

This is the Gospel message Paul had received from the Lord and taught to those who had become disciples of Jesus Christ. He knew they would need much exhortation if they were to avoid falling away and returning to the self-willed and self-seeking ways of the world during the desert testing period. He knew that justified Christians could not afford to forget Christ’s clear words on this matter: “Difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

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 though many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:21-22)

The law and the prophets {the Old Testament way of living in a justified state under law} were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. (Luke 16:16)

Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste {physical} death till they see the kingdom of God present with power. (Mark 9:1)

On the day of Pentecost, Jesus came back to His first disciples to establish His Kingdom-life within their hearts. Because they had denied themselves, had lost all hope in their self-originated form of life and had completely surrendered this flesh-life to the cross, the Lord came to manifest His divine life within their hearts as He had promised. (Matt. 16:24; John 14:21)

This new way of knowing Christ as an indwelling life from heaven was actually better than their old relationship with Him. Prior to His Pentecostal return as a “life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45), they were limited to an intellectual understanding of what they could hear from His words and see in His life. Yes, they could see the eternal life displayed before their eyes. (1 John 1:1-3) *But this external way of knowing Him did not supply their own souls with His spiritual life from heaven.* It was only when He came to them in this new way that they could truly become “one spirit with Him.” (1 Cor. 6:17)

There are people today who think it would help them be better Christians if they were given the opportunity to walk in the presence of Jesus as the first disciples were able to do. In effect, everyone who still thinks this way has only known the Son intellectually. And in this state, it probably would help them. But Christ wants to do more for them than He could do by living among them in a mortal body.

The Lord has revealed Himself to these Christians in the sense that they know He is “the Christ,” which was also revealed to Peter before Pentecost. But they do not yet know Him as a revelation of the Kingdom-life from heaven within their eternal souls. As Jesus tried to explain to His first disciples, this revelation of His Kingdom-life within the heart

surpasses even the blessings that could be received by walking with His physical presence in a mortal body.

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away {to sit on the throne of power in a glorified state}... He {the Spirit} will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine {by taking of the heavenly Kingdom-life of perfect love} and making it known to you {by revealing the life within your heart}. (John 16:7, 14 NIV)

I {the Son} have given them the glory {every believer has access to the spiritual life that reveals God's divine image of love} that you {the Father} gave me, that they may be one {sharing in the same life of love} as we are one: I in them and you in me...

I have made you known to them {by revealing the eternal life of perfect love in a mortal body}, and will continue to make you known {by continuing to reveal the same life through fully sanctified Christians} in order that the love you have for me {perfect love} may be in them and that I myself may be in them. (John 17:22-23, 26 NIV)

The true Gospel message is the Gospel of the kingdom of God. Believers, by looking to the promises provided in the Gospel, are able to enter into the firstfruits of the life of heaven. Jesus, as the long awaited Messiah, has come to give an abundantly full measure of this Kingdom-life to everyone who will deny themselves and follow Him through the cross. (Matt. 16:24-25; John 10:10)

As a spiritual type, God provided three great feasts that were to be celebrated under the Old Testament dispensation. "Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me. Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread...for in that month you came out of Egypt... Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field. Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field." (Exodus 23:14-16) These feasts are spiritual types that are related to the salvation of the Lord. The Feast of Unleavened Bread celebrates the "passover" that enables God's people to escape the death that now overshadows fallen man. The second celebration, The Feast of Harvest, is also called the "Feast of Firstfruits." This is the feast that takes place at Pentecost. It represents the time when the "firstfruits" of the life of heaven enter into the hearts of Christ's fully consecrated disciples. The Feast of {final} Ingathering represents the day when Christ will gather all of His church into the fullness of His life of heaven. Christians today are expected to press forward in their faith and enter into the life of promise through their own Pentecost. This feast will enable them to begin eating of the firstfruits of the life of heaven.

Every Christian needs to consider where they are at in their own spiritual walk. Here is a question that will help clarify the matter: Are you still depending on your own resolutions and efforts to make yourself a good Christian? You cannot manifest the Kingdom-life of heaven through your own efforts. The life of perfect love must come down out of heaven and be supernaturally imparted within the heart. The Kingdom-life is not something we do. We must remember that no man has ever climbed into the life of heaven through his own efforts.

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest {the place of promise where He manifests His Kingdom-life through us}, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it... 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. 4:1, 9-11)

Let us remember that Jesus Christ is the only true source of righteousness. He, and He alone is “the light of the world.” (John 8:12) As the “light of men,” the “light of life” must come from Him. He “became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and {full} redemption—that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.’ ”(1 Cor. 1:30) In other words, if we hope to put on the new man and become like God in true righteousness and holiness, we will need to put on the divine life of Jesus Christ through a work of faith. (Eph. 4:24)

We should also note that Jesus did not come to do away with the laws of His kingdom. Quite to the contrary, He came to enable each of His fully consecrated disciples to fulfill all the moral requirements found in His laws. “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10) His indwelling Kingdom-life of “perfect love” naturally fulfills what the moral law would have produced if people could have obeyed it perfectly. “Therefore {divine} love is the fulfillment of the law.” (Rom. 13:10)

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets {the moral teachings found in the Old Testament}. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill... For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees {people who worked hard to outwardly conform themselves to the laws of God}, *you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven* {the Kingdom-life}. (Matt. 5:17, 20)

Jesus is saying that unless we submit to the salvation He has come to impart within our eternal soul, which makes the heart truly righteous in perfect love, we will never experience the Kingdom-life from heaven. It is only when His divine life fills the heart that it becomes possible to fulfill all the righteous requirements that are found in the laws of God’s kingdom.

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son...that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled {fully met} in us who do not walk according to the flesh {by our own efforts} but according to the Spirit {by dependent faith – It’s all by faith and grace}. (Rom. 8:3-4)

The Nature of the Kingdom

We can know what the Kingdom-life of perfect love looks like by examining the way Jesus displayed the “light of life” from heaven through His mortal body. “He is the image of the invisible God...” (Col. 1:15) And He expects to restore this image within the hearts of each of His disciples.

Jesus revealed a primary trait of the Kingdom-life in the way He sacrificed Himself so that others could be blessed. While His death on a physical cross was a full manifestation of how divine love sacrifices itself for the good of others, we should note that He walked daily in the way of the cross. He denied Himself and accepted suffering from the hands of sinful men in order to keep Himself in a position to help lost souls see the “light of life” from heaven. Similarly, when we are participating with Him in His divine nature, we will live the same way so that others may see the light of life from heaven. But in so doing, we will find a deep sense of peace and joy in sacrificing ourselves for the good of others, as the “rivers of living water” begin to flow through our soul.

By this we know love {God’s nature of divine love}, because He laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:16)

And the Word {the Lord in His eternal Kingdom-life} became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory {God’s life of perfect love}...full of grace and truth... And of His fullness {the fullness of His Kingdom-life} we have all received {as a promise to be appropriated by faith}, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth {the eternal life that has its source in God} came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:14, 16-17)

I have come that they may have life {the life of divine love}, and have it to the full. (John 10:10 NIV)

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him... He who says he abides in Him {and receives His spiritual life from Him} ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (1 John 2:5-6)

For the love of Christ compels us {especially when His indwelling life of love fills our heart} ...that those who live should live no longer for themselves... (2 Cor. 5:14-15)

You are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matt. 5:14, 16)

God knows that fallen man does not have the capacity within himself to manifest the divine nature of perfect love. Because of the carnal nature {the fallen flesh-life} that everyone receives through Adam’s family line, there is a self-centeredness within the heart that stands opposed to God’s nature of self-sacrificing love. He therefore sent His Son to save us from this fallen nature so we may display the light that comes from His life of love.

It is this old way of life – the life that wants to live for itself – that must die before Christ’s life of perfect love can truly be revealed through our mortal bodies. This is why

Jesus has so specifically stated: “Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matt. 16:25)

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)

For we who live {in the eternal Kingdom-life} are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (2 Cor. 4:11)

There is a willingness in people of this world to work hard to please others. But they are not necessarily expressing a divine or perfect love. When human love is examined closely, especially when it is taken through trials, we will begin to see how it expects a return for its efforts. The repayment may only be a desire to be noticed, or appreciated, or honored by others, as this kind of love has a tendency to seek out a “reputation” for being “good.” But this human love will fail when it does not receive what it has expected.

The Son, in contrast, lived for the good of others without ever seeking to have a “reputation” that others would “honor.” (John 5:41, 44; 8:50; Phil. 2:7; Matt. 19:17) This is why He was able to continue sacrificing Himself for the good of others, even when He was despised by the people.

In effect, the perfect love that comes from God never fails because it comes with a heavenly spiritual life that keeps the soul satisfied, regardless of the outward conditions. This Kingdom-life from heaven has no need to depend on others, nor on the things of this world to sustain itself. Even when everyone has turned away and begun spurning the love that has been given, this life can go on loving as the Son did. Paul became an example of this love. And he exhorted everyone to enter into the same Kingdom-life.

Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. (1 Cor. 10:33-11:1)

And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved. (2 Cor. 12:15)

This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me {rejecting the love that was expressed toward them}... (2 Tim. 1:15)

At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message {the gospel message of perfect love} might be preached {and displayed} fully through me... (2 Tim. 4:16-17)

Yes, when perfect love is being displayed, nothing from this world can cut it off. The life has its source in God. This is why it does not fail, even when it pours itself out for others but is rejected.

It will also be helpful to understand how all goodness has its source in God. “No one is good but One, that is, God.” (Matt. 19:17) It is because God’s grace is now flowing out to all people in this world that everyone has some sense of how to respond in love. The Holy Spirit, through His convicting work, is able to lead people to act in a loving way. “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to *all men*, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” (Titus 2:11-12 Emphasis added) This is what causes even the most self-centered people to sometimes show love toward others.

Yes, the convicting work of the Spirit is working on the consciences of “all” people in the world. Even though most people do not fully respond to this grace, which will become the basis for their eternal condemnation, this work of the Spirit leads even carnal people to express some forms of love. But again, this love will be mixed with a selfish motive and will inevitably fail under severe testing. *We must be saved from sin* {the self-seeking way of life}, *and be perfected in* {self-sacrificing} *love before we will have a love that never fails.*

We should begin to see why it is so necessary to seek to be saved from our sinful nature by seeking out the Son’s Kingdom-life of perfect love through faith. We will only be able to come before our Maker with boldness on the Day of Judgment when we have permitted Him to fill our heart with this divine love that continues to stand, even in the most difficult circumstances. (1 John 4:17)

Those who do not enter into the Lord’s full salvation will inevitably find themselves falling short of His teachings. The natural self-centeredness that exists within the fallen nature will continue to cause an element of darkness to overshadow even the “good works” of Christians. As long as the flesh-life lives on, even the most earnest Christians will find how they have remained too weak to fulfill all the demands found in the moral laws God has established for His kingdom. (Matt. 5:17-48)

Born again Christians will have a desire to live in true righteousness. But God will be using His providences to expose the remains of the self-centered nature within the heart. He will be showing us *how we do not have the power* to put on the new man that has been created to be like the Son of God in true righteousness and holiness through our own efforts. (Eph. 4:24) *It is a supernatural life that must come from God in heaven.* “But whoever lives by the truth {the way that God has planned for us to live through the Son} comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done {the life of love that he reveals} has been done through God.” (John 3:21 NIV)

Christians seeking out the fullness of Christ’s life will need to take into account the deceitfulness of their own heart. We must avoid making excuses for selfish responses to God’s tests. Only as we humble ourselves under God’s mighty hand and confess our sins before the Lord, can we expect to be cleansed from all unrighteousness and be lifted into the Kingdom-life of perfect love in due time. (1 John 1:9; 1 Pet. 5:6)

Everyone who is still attempting to produce their own righteousness can therefore expect to have their sinful nature exposed while passing through God’s providential tests. There is a natural inclination to revert to humanistic thought processes and try to defend our “rights” in these situations. *There will be an attempt to rationalize why the teachings found in Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, where we are taught to lay down our rights, do not apply in our particular circumstances.* This response comes from a pride that still exists within the heart. It is pride that keeps people separated from the life of perfect love that Jesus has come to reveal through each of His disciples.

God resists the proud, but gives {enabling} grace to the humble.

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you {lift you into His Kingdom life of perfect love} in due time...

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory {to display His life of love} by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while {in dying out to the flesh-life in the time of testing}, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you {in unflinching love}. (1 Pet. 5:5-6, 10)

Paul, in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, has provided a basic description of the Kingdom-life of perfect love. But we should also be reminded that this life of love “passes knowledge.” (Eph. 3:19) *The reality of divine love cannot be displayed simply by resolving to conform ourselves to terms that have been expressed through human words. It requires the creative power of God to impart this “life” within our heart.*

In this same text Paul explains how we remain valueless to the kingdom of God, or “nothing,” if we are not displaying God’s nature of love—His glory—through the temple of our body. He bases this principle on the fact that no one is good but God (Mark 10:18). In ourselves we are nothing, and the carnal nature will continue to bring a shadow of darkness over all our good works. *We take on value only as we surrender our bodies to become vessels of this nature of love that originates in God. Without it, we do not have any value when it comes to furthering the kingdom of God.* It is in this same sense that Jesus spoke about salt losing its flavor: “It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” (Matt. 5:13)

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not {divine} love, I am nothing...

Love {the divine love that comes from God} suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails... (1 Cor. 13:2, 4-8)

It may be helpful to look more closely at how God changes our very nature when He fills our heart with His life of love. It will reveal how love is able to meet all the righteous requirements of the law. Not only does it provide the positive traits of the divine nature, it also eliminates the negative traits of the carnal nature.

“Love suffers long”—it removes all impatience.

“Love is kind”—it leaves no room for unkindness.

“Love does not envy”—all jealousy and resentment is banished.

“Love does not parade itself”—boasting and self-assertion disappear.

“Is not puffed up”—the prideful desire for honor finds no place in the heart.

“Does not behave rudely”—disrespect and foolishness is eliminated.

“Does not seek its own”—all selfish sin {self-seeking} dies when self dies.

“Is not provoked”—self-centered anger and fleshly wrath will not be seen.

“Thinks no evil”—brooding over wrongs and uncharitable feelings are gone.

“Bears all things”—it does away with a complaining spirit.

“Believes all things”—there is no mistrust within the heart to destroy fellowship.

“Hopes all things”—despair, anxiety and despondency vanish.

We have to assume that we are not currently filled with Christ’s Spirit whenever these characteristics of perfect love have failed in our lives. While people of the Wesleyan persuasion reject the doctrine that teaches “once saved, always saved,” they often act as if they believe in a doctrine that teaches “once sanctified, always sanctified.” But those who were “once sanctified” have been known to fail in their expression of this divine love. Whenever this occurs, we must assume that either these Christians are not currently

entirely sanctified and filled with God's Spirit, or that God's love can fail. Let us stand on the Word of God. "Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar." (Rom. 3:4)

Peter is often used as the proof that this life of love can fail, even while claiming to be fully sanctified. His heart had been purified and filled with the pure love of God on the day of Pentecost. But on a later date we find how Paul needed to rebuke Peter for not displaying the nature of God's perfect love. (Gal. 2:11-13) Rather than trying to insist that Peter was fully sanctified and filled with the love of God that "never fails" at this point in his life, which would make God the liar, we should assume that his failure to manifest divine love is proof that He was not currently filled with God's Spirit. He had permitted something to enter back into his life that needed to once again be offered up on the altar of sacrifice. Only then would Peter be in a position for God to reveal His glory through him again.

It is the fullness of the Spirit that removes the carnal nature. If the carnal nature exposes itself through our words and our actions, we should assume that we are not currently "filled" with the Holy Spirit. Whenever love fails, we need to begin examining ourselves for some point of willfulness within our lives. We will find that selfishness comes back into our heart whenever we take our personal will off the altar of sacrifice and have stepped back into a life of self-will {the self-originated life of the flesh}. It will inevitably cause a darkness that overshadows God's nature of love.

While the Wesleyan doctrine teaches how the sinful nature is destroyed when the heart is purified (Rom. 6:6), we need to be careful in our interpretation of this truth. Yes, everything that is opposed to love can be completely done away with when we are filled with God's life of pure love. However, we need to picture this life of God as flowing like a river through the heart of man. The distasteful actions of the carnal nature will come back to life whenever we take our will off the altar of sacrifice. This is what cuts off the Lord's pure river of life.

We will use the example of water flowing through a garden hose to illustrate this point. When a strong supply of clean water is flowing through the hose, it will produce water that is good to drink. But if the water supply is cut off and it becomes stagnate in the hose, it will become distasteful. Furthermore, as the hose is exposed to more heat from the sun, it will become more pronounced in its bad taste. The water takes on the nature of the hose. The bad taste can only be "done away with" or "destroyed" when there is a strong flow of water running through the hose. Similarly, the "body of sin" can only be "done away with" or "destroyed" as the river of life from heaven has a strong flow through the heart. Without this flow, carnality will begin to develop. And yes, the bad "taste" that others notice as a result of this carnality will become stronger in the heat of trial.

Again, God's nature of divine love will never fail when His river of life is flowing freely through the heart. It completely destroys everything that is opposed to perfect love. We can therefore say the Wesleyan doctrine that teaches how the sinful nature can be "annihilated," which means "to reduce to nothing," is in harmony with these scriptural teachings. But do not let this lead you to believe that carnality is beyond the point from which it can come back to life.

At this point, we should also note how God the Father reacted with sternness through the Son when He came up against *religious leaders* who were leading His people astray. Jesus never said anything from Himself. (John 5:19; 5:30; 8:28) The life and words that

were revealed through the Son originated in the Father. Since Jesus did not sin, we can know that these outbursts of anger were not sin. In the same sense that God has been responding in this way throughout the ages, we can expect Him to continue expressing His anger through His fully sanctified children when they run up against false “teachers” who have refused to listen to truth and have continued to lead His people astray with their teachings. It is a righteous anger because it has its source in God, and it is expressed as a concern for His righteous kingdom and glory.

Jesus did not revile back or even defend Himself when it came to being confronted and attacked by lost and sinful people of the world. He never condemned poor lost sinners who were slaves of their sinful nature. Quite to the contrary, He displayed a nature of compassion and forgiveness. “Father forgive them...” (Luke 23:34) Selfish anger is never “righteous anger” in the sight of God. Those who become ill-tempered when their will is crossed or when there is a perception of unfair treatment or violation of their “rights,” still need to be perfected in love. *This need is often displayed by the unkind and unloving words that are spoken in an unguarded or trying moment.*

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps...who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. (1 Pet. 2:21-23)

Jesus also reacted in a way that displayed real concern over the lack of progress in His disciples. We sometimes find a sternness in His response to their actions when He observed how their self-seeking form of life was rising up and desiring to assert itself. We can find this same reaction from God throughout the history of the Old Testament. Jesus did not sin when He had to rebuke his disciples. This was not a failure of love and mercy. Similarly, fully sanctified Christians living in the Son’s life of self-sacrificing love, may sometimes express a real consternation over the self-centeredness they see displayed through Christians who have had plenty of opportunity to learn of the Lord’s way of life. It will not be a selfish concern, but rather a concern for those who are continuing to display darkness in the Lord’s church. It was in this sense that Paul needed to rebuke Peter. (See Galatians 2:11-16)

The fully sanctified Christian has a new inner nature which is empowered by the Holy Spirit to sacrifice itself for the good of others. Even in cases of great persecution or personal loss, these children of perfect love will be found laying down their lives so that others may see the light of life from heaven. *This life of love needs to be displayed without failure so others will be able to see the true salvation of the Lord.* “Love never fails.” *Like Jesus, they fully surrender and die to their “rights” so that others may see the light and be drawn into the same way of life.* (Phil. 2:5-8)

Again, Jesus explained what life in His kingdom is like in His Sermon on the Mount. It reveals a form of righteousness that is beyond the capacity of man’s human efforts. But yet we must yield to the truth in faith, and look to the Lord in hope, to reveal His divine love within our heart, so we will be enabled to fulfill all the righteous requirements of the law.

You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever

compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. {While there is a need for being concerned about doing something that will help others continue in sin, there should never be a sign of self-centeredness in our responses to the actions of others.}

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, *that you may be sons of your Father in heaven*; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust... Therefore you shall be perfect {in love and mercy} just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matt. 5:38-48 Emphasis added)

The Life of Love in Relationship to Law

God has provided moral laws for His kingdom. And He expects everyone to obey these commands. "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15) However, those who set out to be fully obedient will eventually discover how His laws contain standards that are beyond their capacity to obey. The Lord's Sermon on the Mount has effectively removed every hope of living by self-produced righteousness.

While we may conform ourselves to certain outward standards and consider ourselves to be good Christian people, maybe even conservative holiness people, we should realize that God will be judging our lives by the Son's standard of divine love. Consequently, regardless of the standards we live by, if we have permitted a self-centeredness to remain within the heart, we will fail to walk in divine love as Jesus did. This fallen nature will prevent us from fulfilling all the requirements found in His teachings. We should therefore expect to experience fear rather than boldness when we stand before our Maker on the Day of Judgment.

Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained {according to the Son's revealed standard of love}. (Acts 17:31)

This is how we know we are in him {in Christ's body}: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. (1 John 2:5-6 NIV)

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)

As Paul has stated, there is nothing wrong with God's moral laws. They explain how people will live when they have entered into the kingdom of God. The problem is, there are certain standards in them which are simply too high for the flesh to carry out. This is why we must rely on Jesus Christ—the Living Word—to manifest His Kingdom-life of perfect love through us.

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come {until Christ was able to impart the Kingdom-life of perfect love within the hearts of God's people}... Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! {The moral law describes how God intended for His children to live in love.} For if there had been a law given which could have given life {the Kingdom-life of perfect love}, truly righteousness would have been by the law. {In effect, the law will only reveal our weakness.}... Therefore the law was our tutor {schoolmaster} to bring us to Christ... (Gal. 3:19, 21, 24)

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son {as the long awaited Messiah}...that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled {fully met} in us... (Rom. 8:3-4)

Laws are still needed for the purpose of providing a basic level of moral order in the world. Because there is an evil self-centeredness within the heart of fallen man, we would be surrounded by chaos without some form of law. Self-centered people naturally think

of themselves first. They are more concerned about their own desires than they are about the good of others. We can therefore say that people who have not been perfected in the Lord's Kingdom-life of love will continue to need "law" for the purpose of regulating their lives.

This lesson will also help us understand why we are expected to pray for the governments of this world. We need good written laws on the books for the purpose of keeping the world in some semblance of order until the great day when Christ places all things under His feet. In that day, the heavenly Kingdom-life will be fully established within every heart and God will do away with all external governments. "Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all {external} rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet {either by destroying them or by setting up His reign within their heart}... Now when all things are made subject to Him {when every person's heart has been perfected in love}, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." (1 Cor. 15:24-25, 28)

In the beginning, God did not intend for His true children to live by law. Like the Son, they were to receive their spiritual life from the heavenly realms and reflect the divine image—the "light of life" from heaven—in everything they did. The righteousness of God was to be a part of their very nature. True righteousness and holiness would naturally flow out of their lives in everything they did. In the same way a bird naturally acts like a bird because of the inner nature it receives from God, man would act like the Son of God because of the divine nature that was within his heart.

Again, the life would come from the Spirit of God, and not from law. "For if there had been a law given which could have given life {the eternal Kingdom-life of perfect love}, truly righteousness would have been by the law." (Gal. 3:21) Since "law" cannot give divine life, people who are still trying to live by laws will not have the capacity to display the divine image of God.

We are not implying that God does not have a need for an established system of truth and order in His universe. God told Adam how life was to be lived in His created world. And when the heart is perfect in love, it will respond to His revealed truth for the glory of God and the good of His kingdom. For example, in a world with many vehicles, there would still need to be a system of signs and traffic signals. But it would not be necessary to have written laws to enforce their proper use. A heart perfected in love would naturally respond to what God has revealed as right.

Furthermore, perfect love looks out for the good of other people. Selfishness and self-seeking does not exist in the eternal kingdom of God. As the children of the kingdom of God would continue to live by the Spirit and receive the Son's heavenly Kingdom-life through dependent faith, the nature of the Son's self-sacrificing love would be reflected in all their actions.

The kingdom of God is truly a glorious place to live because, even as each individual lays down their rights for the good of others, they still remain filled with a heavenly peace and joy. "For the kingdom of God is...righteousness {pure and complete love} and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 14:17) It is a kingdom where God's selfless, self-sacrificing love reigns in our hearts.

Someone might ask, "If perfect love always responds to God's revealed will, why did Adam fall into sin? After all, he was created in God's image, which implies his heart was

originally perfected in love.” As we will later discuss, even after the heart has been perfected in love, it needs to be placed under trial as a means of increasing its strength. For example, Jesus, who lived in God’s image with a heart of perfect love, came under severe trials from the devil. He actually increased in the divine love that provides an obedient heart through suffering. (Heb. 5:8) It was a growing heart of perfect love that enabled Him to keep responding to His Father’s will as the persecution and suffering increased. And yet, like the first Adam, He could have responded to the devil’s temptations and chose to follow a will that was separate from the Father’s will.

There will be a day when God has a universe filled with people whose hearts have been perfected and deeply strengthened in love. Not only will our sinful nature be “destroyed,” but Satan himself will be “destroyed.” It will be a place of eternal bliss because there is no conflict between light and darkness. It is in preparation for that day that God will be taking us through trials as a means of strengthening our life of love.

The laws of God tell us how to live. However, the temptations that come from Satan and the world are continually trying to draw us away from the life of love that would fulfill all righteousness. The self-centered nature causes us to sometimes succumb to these temptations. *And so we will find that our resolutions and human efforts do not enable us to always respond in perfect love.*

Using our own efforts {living by the flesh} to try to fulfill the laws of God, does not provide the nature that is needed to always respond in perfect love under every trial. We will discover that we can only perfect God’s power in our lives as we die to the self-originated ways of the flesh and learn to depend on Christ to be the source of our life. Christ is still saying, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in {your} weakness.” (2 Cor. 12:9) “I am the vine, you are the branches... *for without Me you can do nothing.*” (John 15:5 Emphasis added)

New Christians who set out in their own strength to fully obey their Lord, will soon find they are too weak in the flesh to respond to all truth. Their selfish and covetous nature cannot love in the self-sacrificing way that God requires. It is in this sense that God’s laws are intended to turn convicted people to Christ for both the justification and the divine life that comes from Him through dependent faith. Paul has revealed this truth in his personal testimony:

I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet {Always wanting more for oneself. It is impossible to be content without God’s eternal life of love filling the soul}.”... For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal {naturally self-centered}, sold under sin... I find then a law, that evil {the self-centered and self-seeking nature} is present with me, the one who wills to do good {to live in perfect love as God intended}... O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Rom.7:7, 14, 21, 24-25)

Let us remember that we have been *commanded* to be holy like God is holy and to be perfect in love like our heavenly Father. (1 Pet. 1:15-16; Matt. 5:48) *But the impure heart has an innate self-centeredness that prevents us from fulfilling the requirements.*

The fallen nature expresses itself in a natural tendency to live for the personal desires of the flesh. The carnal nature, when it is not repressed, will therefore tend to give way to

the lust {desires} of the flesh and the lust {desires} of the eye and begin to covet {desire and long for} what it wants and what it sees. And because man has an inner emptiness when he is not filled with the life of God, which is a result of the Fall, his whole life is a life of self-seeking {covetousness} as he seeks to fill that inner void in his life by “feeding” on things from the temporal realm, “the food which perishes.” (John 6: 27)

Similar to what Paul expressed in his testimony, we will find ourselves coveting even when God commands us not to do it. We begin to become more and more aware of the evil nature that everyone has inherited from Adam. We will find how this fleshly nature still becomes angry or upset when something or someone has crossed the plans it has made to fulfill its desires. And while law can keep this tendency toward self-seeking under some control, it will never “destroy” or “annihilate” the fallen nature. And so, we eventually discover how the presence of this evil within the heart will prevent us, even as earnest believers, from revealing God’s image of divine love in all we say and do.

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit... For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks... But I say to you that for every idle word {every careless word that reveals a selfish or unloving thought} men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. (Matt. 12:33-37)

Yes, this is a very high standard of love. But Christ has come to save us from a bad heart that occasionally spews out unloving remarks. “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people *from their sins*.” (Matt. 1:21 Emphasis added) We can become perfected in His nature of self-sacrificing love and thereby fulfill all the moral requirements of the law.

God is able to speak and make things from nothing. Once we have presented Him with a vessel that we have acknowledged as being nothing in itself, He will speak forth His powerful Word and turn the vessel into a display of His own glory—His life of perfect love.

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God {revealing His perfect love within our heart} in the face of Jesus Christ {to reveal His spiritual image}. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels {weak mortal bodies}, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us...*that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.* (2 Cor. 4:6-7, 10 Emphasis added)

Again, we need to note that perfect love does not imply perfect knowledge. While it does provide a heart that can remain fully yielded to all known truth, and the believer will be enabled to continue sacrificing himself for the good of God’s kingdom as he lives to bless others, he will not always have sufficient knowledge to respond perfectly in every situation. We will therefore need to remain totally dependent on God to both keep our heart filled with His life of love and to provide the understanding we will need to respond to various situations. While love never needs to fail, and won’t as we depend on God in child-like {simplistic and unreserved} faith to keep us filled, our knowledge and understanding will sometimes fail.

We also know that God's light is infinite. In the same sense that a greenhouse may be enlarged to provide an area with more light from the sun, the heart may be enlarged so it may hold more of the infinite "light of life" from heaven. *A heart once filled will therefore need to keep on being filled as it is enlarged with more understanding.* We can continue to grow with ever-increasing glory as more and more light is revealed. (2 Cor. 3:16-18)

J. A. Wood, in his book *Perfect Love*, has said, "After love is made perfect, it may abound more and yet more... The capacities of the soul are expansive and progressive, and holiness in measure can increase corresponding to increasing capacity. Faith, love, humility, and patience, may be perfect in *kind*, and yet increase in *volume* and *power*, or in measure harmonizing with increasing capacity. A tree may be perfectly sound, healthy, and vigorous in its branches, leaves, and fruit, and yet year by year increase perpetually its capacity and fruitfulness." (p. 56)

The sinner is able to enter into a justified state the moment he makes a decision to fully yield himself to the teachings of Jesus. This is the first sign of a real faith in Him. True faith will also recognize its need to depend on Jesus Christ to fulfill His promises. If we truly believe that Jesus has come to reconcile us to God through His shed blood, to save us from our sinful nature by perfecting our heart in love (Rom. 5:10), and are trusting in Him to do the work through a yielded faith, we will continue to walk in a justified state. It is this dependent and expectant faith that enables us to receive "credit" for Christ's own life of righteousness before we have gained a full entrance into His Kingdom-life of promise. Therefore, even when we have found ourselves saying unloving words, we can be forgiven by confessing our sin and continuing to depend on Christ to save us from the sinful nature that produces this evil.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness... My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. (1 John 1:9; 2:1)

We are required to continually look to Christ to be the source of our spiritual life. Jesus is "the way, the truth, and *the life*." (John 14:6 Emphasis added) *We will actually separate ourselves from the grace that provides access to His Kingdom-life of perfect love when we begin to depend on our own efforts to produce a human form of righteousness. In other words, living by law will never make our heart perfect in love.*

I am the vine, you are the branches. {The divine life and fruit must come from Christ.} He who abides in Me {looks for life from above through faith}, and I in him, bears much fruit {the divine fruit of the Spirit}; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me {and turns to his own efforts to make himself righteous}, he is cast out as a branch and is withered... (John 15:5-6)

You have become estranged {separated} from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law {through your own human efforts}; you have fallen from grace. (Gal. 5:4)

Even though the new Christian is not yet like Christ in His Kingdom-life of perfect love, he can be fully convinced that Christ will take him into this life of promise as he yields to the truth through a dependent faith. This is the faith that justifies.

Trusting in the Word of God, the child of faith is willing to pass through a death to his flesh-life so he may enter into the resurrection life that is found in God's eternal

kingdom. He believes in a “God who raises the dead.” (2 Cor. 1:9) *He knows that in the kingdom of God, everyone lives wholly for the glory of God.* And since he can only reveal the glory of God by losing his self-centeredness and displaying the Son’s life and nature of perfect love, he surrenders his body to be a vessel of this Kingdom-life.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice {once forever, and then continually – daily and moment by moment}, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (Rom. 12:1)

The Obedience of Faith

God expects His called-out children to respond to His teachings. But we need to differentiate between the *legal way* that deceives people into thinking they can produce their own righteousness by keeping God's laws, and the *faith way* that yields to God's teachings while looking to the Lord to manifest His Kingdom-life of true righteousness and holiness within the heart.

People who live by laws in order to make themselves righteous on the outside will have a heart that remains basically self-centered. So in spite of all they do for God and others, their lives will be overshadowed by an element of selfishness. Each occasional outbreak of unloving words will reveal the presence of an evil still residing within their heart. This darkness will prevent the heavenly Kingdom-life of perfect love from being seen. The Scribes and Pharisees are examples of this kind of self-produced righteousness.

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish {by making yourselves look righteous in appearance}, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. {This covetous nature will continue to reveal a selfish shadow of darkness, even while serving God.} Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish {by having the heart perfected in the divine life of self-sacrificing love} and then the outside also will be clean. (Matt. 23:25-26 NIV)

People who live by law tend to focus their religion on external laws they are able to keep through their own efforts. They do not "seek first" the Kingdom-life that will establish God's life of love within their heart. And since their heart remains self-centered, all of their actions remain overshadowed by a selfish darkness.

Again, the Kingdom-life of perfect love can only be received through faith. We do not produce the life through our own efforts. Paul said to the Galatians, "For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." (Gal. 5:5) *True righteousness and holiness needs to be imparted within the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

The wording found in this Scripture does not necessarily mean that Paul himself was still waiting for the gift of true righteousness. John Wesley, in one of his sermons, used this Scripture in the context that "we" {referring to Christians in general} are to "wait" on the Lord to grant us the blessing of true righteousness *while we remain in this world.* While the life of righteousness is held for us in heaven {within the life of Christ}, this Kingdom-life needs to come down out of heaven and be revealed within our heart today.

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God... "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them..." (Rev. 21:2-3)

For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them..." Therefore "Come out from among them {the idolatrous and self-seeking ways of the world} and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you {into the heavenly Kingdom-life of promise}. (2 Cor. 6:16-17)

But you {as Christians in this current age of fulfillment} have come {present tense} to Mount Zion and *to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*, to an innumerable company of angels {who will begin working with you}, to the general assembly and the church of the firstborn...*to the spirits of just men made perfect* {in love}... (Heb. 12:22-23 Emphasis added) {Yes, the tabernacle of God is now with men. And so, we can now become “one spirit with Him” in His Kingdom-life of perfect love when we come out from all unclean things, including all heart idols}.

But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste {physical} death till they see the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:27)

Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. (Matt. 16:28)

Again, the Lord’s return in His full glory to all the world and our reception of glorified bodies will take place in the future. But the Son’s Kingdom-life can now come down out of heaven and enter into the hearts of individual believers in this age of fulfillment. “Today” is the day of salvation. We are therefore expected to press forward in our faith until “the gift of righteousness” has been revealed within our heart so we may “reign in life {in the Kingdom-life of perfect love} through...Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 5:17) *Therefore, after becoming believers in Jesus, we are to begin yielding to our Lord’s teachings, laying aside every unholy thing as we “wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”*

We will return to this important subject of obedience in a moment. But we want to continue to emphasize the importance of receiving this gift of the Lord’s eternal Kingdom-life from heaven. *Once we realize that we must become like our Lord in this world, we will be more prepared to do whatever is necessary to submit to His teachings.*

While we will naturally look forward to the day when we will be set free from both our fallen bodies and this cursed world, *justified Christians should enter into the more important hope of looking for the Son to reveal His Kingdom-life of perfect love within their eternal soul.* It is His indwelling life of perfect love alone that can provide us with a sense of boldness on the Day of Judgment. (1 John 4:17)

Jesus says there will be many “workers” who will be turned away from Him on the Day of Judgment. They will claim to have done great works for Him, which includes preaching, teaching, singing and performing miraculous signs and doing wonders in His name. Unfortunately, they have never sought to become like Him in love. Jesus is therefore going to tell them plainly that He never knew them. (Matt. 7:22-23) *They will be turned away because they never sought to be saved from their self-seeking nature.* (Rom. 2:6-8)

We can find people in the church today who are working hard for the Lord. But this does not mean they are known by the Lord. People can actually serve God with an evil motive that originates from pride and self-seeking. Because of the deceitfulness of the heart, we will need help from the Spirit of God to judge our hearts, so we may determine if our service is motivated by the desire to be praised by others. Again, *we must die to the self-seeking ways of the world if we are to become like Jesus. He never sought honor or a reputation of His own.*

I {the Son} have made you {the Father} known to them {by revealing the heavenly Kingdom-life in a mortal body}, and will continue to make you known {by revealing the same life in fully sanctified Christians} in order that the love you have for me may be in them, and that I myself {with the light of truth} may be in them. (John 17:26)

I do not receive honor from men. But I know you, that you do not have the love of God {the nature of love as revealed by the Son} in you... I do not seek my own glory... (John 5:41-42; 8:50) {If you still desire to be recognized, honored or praised, or are still seeking a reputation, even a reputation for being good, then the Son's life of love is not yet in you.}

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God...made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant... He humbled Himself, and became obedient to the point of death... (Phil. 2:5-8)

How can you believe {in the Christ who has been revealed through the Scriptures}, who receive honor from one another...? (John 5:44)

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, *but have not* {the Son's life and nature of divine} *love, I am nothing.* (1 Cor. 13:2 Emphasis added)

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the {one true} faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you {with His self-emptying and self-sacrificing way of life}—unless, of course, you fail the test? (2 Cor. 13:5 NIV)

“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (Amos 3:3)

The only way to become a true disciple of Jesus Christ is by choosing to empty ourselves of our own glory {to become nothing in ourselves} and to die to our carnal desires to be someone in ourselves, so we will be in a position to be filled with God's Spirit. *This is our only value as God's creation. We are here to enter into His plans and to reveal the glory of His life of love. Those who refuse to accept this way of life are effectively rejecting God's purpose for creating man. They end up turning aside from the only salvation that Jesus Christ offers.* “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has {from His self-life} cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:33)

The Lord is looking for people who are willing to surrender themselves in a way that will permit Him to reveal His heavenly life of true righteousness and holiness in this world. “Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.” (Ezk. 36:23) “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them...” *If we have not presented ourselves to Him for the purpose of becoming a vessel of His life of love, either we have never heard the true message of the Gospel, or we have rejected it.*

Like Abraham, newly justified Christians are therefore expected to set out in a responsive obedience to God's revealed will and depend on the Holy Spirit to lead them into the life of promise. And it should be obvious that the only way to be led into this life is by fully yielding to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. *The pride that leads God's called-out people to turn away from Christ's instructions will inevitably keep them separated from His Kingdom-life of perfect love.*

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself to him {reveal myself within him as a new nature of divine love}. (John 14:21 Emphasis added)

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (1 John 2:5-6 Emphasis added)

God resists the proud {those who reject His instructions and live by their own desires}, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God {by submitting to His Word and His Spirit}, that He may exalt you {lift you into His Kingdom-life of perfect love} in due time. (1 Pet. 5:5-6)

It is our “walk of faith,” a faith that needs to be tested and proven through our obedience, that enables us to remain in a justified state. Let us never forget that Jesus Christ “became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.” (Heb. 5:9) He will only reveal His eternal Kingdom-life of perfect love within those who have taken His way of the cross and have stayed the course through the ensuing trials and scourgings.

For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives {into His Kingdom-life}...for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness... It yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness {divine love} to those who have been trained by it. (Heb. 12:6-11)

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; *for when he has been approved*, he will receive the crown of life {the firstfruits of the Kingdom-life will be revealed within His heart} which the Lord has promised to those who love Him {to those who obey Him}. (Jam. 1:12 Emphasis added)

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory {His life of 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 His Kingdom-life}. (1 Pet. 5:10)

We can say that true faith will respond to all known truth because it believes in the Word of God. Any unwillingness to fully obey the leadings of the Spirit, as God opens His Word and will to the mind, is a clear sign of unbelief. A person cannot truly believe in Christ while at the same time rejecting some of His teachings.

And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest {the Promised Land}, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in {to the life of promise} because of unbelief. (Heb. 3:18-19)

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” (John 8:31-32 Emphasis added) {It is a response to truth that will lead us into the life of promise where we are perfected in love and set free from the sinful nature. (v. 34-36; John 14:21; 1 John 2:5-6)}

If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine. {The reality of the promise will be fulfilled in everyone who truly walks in a faith that fully submits to God’s revealed will.} (John 7:17)

The just shall *live by faith*. {They shall remain in a justified state because their faith in God leads them to respond to His revealed truth, even before they see the reality of the promise.} (Gal. 3:11 Emphasis added)

God directly links disobedience to unbelief. If we truly believe in God's promises {including His promise to fill the temple of our body with the Son's divine life from heaven}, we will begin to "live by faith." Like Abraham, we will step out in faith and permit the Spirit to lead us into the blessing. "*By faith Abraham obeyed* when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance." (Heb. 11:8 Emphasis added) Even though he could not fully comprehend the life of promise in his mind, he began to respond in faith to the leading of God's Spirit.

We can see over and over again that any refusal to respond to God's revealed will becomes a clear sign of unbelief. Even those who have been called-out by God to be Christians will be cut off from the life of promise if they turn away from known light.

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice truth. (1 John 1:6)

He who is of God hears God's word {and responds}, therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God... Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death. (John 8:47, 51)

J. A. Wood, in his book *Perfect Love*, has explained what justifying faith really means. He said, "If a man is a Christian and in a justified state, he has the heart of a child of God and desires to render him a *present, full and unreserved obedience*. This is implied in the very nature of true religion. A desire for holiness [living wholly for God's will] is a spontaneity of the regenerate heart." (p. 29) The Word of God confirms this fact: "Whoever has been born of God does not [go on in willful] sin." (1 John 3:9) He also said, "There is a vital union between justifying faith and an obedient heart... There must be a continued obedience to all the known will of God if we would retain his favor."

In other words, *the new birth provides the believer with an obedient heart*. But this does not imply we cannot reject truth. Regenerated Christians are able to turn away from God's revealed light, which results in a turning away from God and His enabling grace in the same sense that Adam turned from God and His revealed will in the Garden of Eden. *It will inevitably result in a loss of the spiritual life that was previously received through the new birth.*

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins {because we have rejected the Lord's means of salvation}, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment. (Heb. 10:26)

For if you live according to the flesh {if you live by your self-centered desires according to your own self-originated will} you will die {have a dying spiritual life in this world, and then forever in eternity}... For as many as are led by the Spirit of God {and not "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" – Eph. 2:3}, these are sons of God. (Rom. 8:13-14)

We need to differentiate between a decision to consciously reject God's revealed will and the act of falling into sin under the pressure and distractions of powerful temptations. Those who fall into sin, no matter how bad it has been, can be forgiven for what they have done. *The Lord has provided a way to have our sins completely blotted out of His*

memory through confession and repentance. (1 John 1:9) But He cannot forgive our sins while we are choosing to live in them. The atonement provided by Jesus does not cover ongoing and willful rebellion against God's known will.

Whoever {willfully} commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. (1 John 3:4)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:23)

Everyone who has fully submitted to the teachings of Christ *and is thereby walking by faith*, can expect to be lifted into the Son's Kingdom-life of perfect love in due time. They will receive the "eternal life" and be enabled to display the light of perfect love, after they have been "approved" in the time of testing. (Jam. 1:12) The Lord will come to them individually, according to His perfect timing, for the purpose of manifesting the firstfruits of His divine life from heaven within their eternal soul. Those who do not press forward in their faith until they have found this life of divine love from heaven cannot expect to have boldness when they stand before their Maker on the Day of Judgment.

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared {in the heavenly realms} for those who love him {for those who obey Him}—but God has revealed it {the Kingdom-life} to us {as fully sanctified Christians} by his Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:9-10 NIV)

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely... He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. (1 Thess. 5:23-24)

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God {by responding to His teachings}, that He may exalt you {lift you into His Kingdom-life of perfect love} *in due time*... Be sober, be vigilant {by resisting temptations and by responding to all known truth in the desert testing period}; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him {as Jesus resisted similar temptations in His desert testing period through His obedience to the Word of God}, *steadfast in the faith*... But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory {to His life of perfect love} by Christ Jesus, *after you have suffered a while* {as you deny yourself and submit your flesh-life to the cross}, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you {in the Kingdom-life of promise}. (1 Pet. 5:6-10 Emphasis added)

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust {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)

But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while {by following after the Lord} and in the time of temptation {in the desert testing period when they are required to deny themselves and begin yielding their flesh-life to the way of the cross} fall away. (Luke 8:13) {They often remain in the church, but they go back to the self-seeking ways of the world. They respond to [by indulging] the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes and the pride of life, in an attempt to develop their own form of spiritual life. And these desires include all the seemingly

“innocent” ones, not just the “grosser” ones. They are all heart idols in God’s eyes. }

Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance {as you take the way of the cross}, *so that after you have done the will of God* {after you have fully yielded to His covenant conditions}, *you may receive the promise* {the Kingdom-life of promise}: “For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. {He will manifest His Kingdom-life of perfect love within your heart.} Now the just shall live by faith {by responding to all known truth}; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of *those who believe to the saving of the soul*. {We must press forward in our responsive faith until the Son’s Kingdom-life of promise has been fully established within our hearts.} (Heb. 10:35-39 Emphasis added)

Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste {physical} death till they *see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom*. (Matt. 16:28 Emphasis added)

A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, *but you will see Me*. Because I live {in the Kingdom-life of heaven}, you will live also {in the same life}. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. (John 14:19-20 Emphasis added)

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection... Do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through {responsive} faith and patience inherit the promises {also translated “the promise”}. For when God made a promise to Abraham... He swore by Himself, saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” *And so, after he had patiently endured* {during the time his faith was being tested}, *he obtained the promise...* This hope we have as an anchor of the soul {while going through our trials on our journey into the life of promise}, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence {the Kingdom-life of perfect love} behind the veil {in due time}. (Heb. 6:1, 12-15, 19 Emphasis added)

Turning to God in faith involves turning from a self-directed life to a Spirit-directed life. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Rom. 8:14) The Spirit can only lead God’s called-out people into the life of promise as they respond to His Word.

There are many people within the church who have not yet surrendered themselves to be led by the Spirit of God as He has purposed for their lives. They are still directing their own affairs. They go to church and they profess to believe in Jesus, but they do not walk as He did. Yes, there are tares among the wheat. Those who do not surrender to be led by the Spirit into the life of promise are not sons of God because they have not yet submitted to the one salvation that Jesus Christ offers.

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that

we are in Him {in Christ}. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (1 John 2:3-6)

Jesus Christ came to save people from their sins. *And if we are to be saved from sin, we must permit Him to take control of our lives and direct our steps however He pleases. The person who chooses his own course in life is not walking as Jesus did.* According to the Scriptures, we can therefore know that such persons do not know the Lord.

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)

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, *and you are not your own?* (1 Cor. 6:19 Emphasis added)

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous... He who sins {chooses to turn from God's revealed will} is of the devil. (1 John 3:7-8)

Pursue peace with all people {follow the way of self-sacrificing love}, and holiness {which implies living by the Divine will}, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God. (Heb. 12:14-15)

Those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness {the Kingdom-life of perfect love} will reign in life {reign over self-will, the essence of all sin} through the One, Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:17)

God placed the desert wilderness between Egypt and the life of promise to provide a time of testing. True believers will understand how they must come out from the ways of the world and lose their old self-seeking and self-directed way of life before they will have an opportunity to become a vessel of Christ's Kingdom-life of perfect love.

From the history provided to us in the Old Testament, we can also learn how there were many of God's "called-out" people who lost their life in the desert testing period. They did not receive the promise because they chose to live by the desires of the flesh. Stephen called these people "the church in the wilderness." (Acts 7:38) He said of them, *"our fathers would not obey, but rejected [God].* And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt" {a type of the world}. (Acts 7: 39 Emphasis added) By merely keeping their eyes on the things of this world, they were rejecting God's attempt to lead them, by truth, into the life of promise.

Jesus has applied the same principle to Christians in this age of fulfillment. We are God's "called-out" people in the New Testament dispensation. We have also been prohibited from looking back to the self-seeking ways of the world. *According to the clear teachings of Scripture, even Christians who have been called out from the world by a work of God's grace should not expect to find the Lord's Kingdom-life of perfect love if they continue to look back to the temporal things of this world for their spiritual fulfillment.*

Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife. {She merely looked back to the things of this world through the lust/desires of the eye, and lost her life} Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. (Luke 17:32-33)

No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:62)

Many of the Old Testament children of God ended up yielding to the idolatrous ways of the world. We can find how they tried to create their own form of spiritual life by using temporal sources. Rather than looking to God alone to be their source of spiritual sustenance, they turned to other means. Stephen said they turned to idolatry when they “rejoiced in the works of their own hands.” (Acts 7:41)

Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, “Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!” Then He said to him, “A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’ {in this New Testament age of fulfillment} But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground {as a new property owner}, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused {because my concerns are for the property}.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen {as a new business owner}, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused {because my business must come first}.’ Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come {because my spouse doesn’t like the Lord’s will}.’ So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’ {He receives those who sense a need and are willing to turn from the self-seeking ways of the world to eat at His table.}... For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.” (Luke 14:15-24 Emphasis added)

There are people in the church today who are making the same mistake. Instead of obeying the Lord by denying themselves and taking His way of the cross, so they may become vessels of His life of self-sacrificing love, they go back to the self-seeking ways of the world and begin making idols for themselves through the work of their own hands, even in their service to God. You will find them spending their time working on their own little kingdoms. Instead of looking to God alone for the spiritual life He has promised from heaven, they end up looking back to this world’s resources {its objects of desire and its self-seeking ways} to sustain themselves spiritually. As they follow this path that was taken by the Israelites in the wilderness testing period, they end up going around in circles without ever having their spiritual thirst truly satisfied. This is why they keep dying spiritually.

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord... (Heb. 2:1-3)

Why do you spend money for what is not bread, 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. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live {in the eternal Kingdom-life from heaven}... (Isa. 55:2-3)

These teachings clearly reveal how “obedience” is God’s chosen path into His “life of promise.” As John the Baptist taught in his wilderness preaching, there is a need to show signs of repentance as we prepare to be completely saved from the flesh-life by an inner revelation of the Lord’s life of perfect love. Those who do not respond to Christ’s teachings, by persistently living for the good of others as they seek out His immortal life of glory, should expect to be turned back from the life of promise.

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness ... saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven {the Kingdom-life} is at hand... ‘Prepare the way of the Lord...’

Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ {Or today, “We are safe because we are in the [visible] Christian church.”}... (Matt. 3:1, 3, 8-9)

God “will give to each person according to what he has done.” To those who by persistence in doing good seek {God’s} glory, {God’s} honor and immortality {by choosing to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” with His submissive and self-sacrificing nature}, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth {as it was revealed through Christ’s life} and follow evil {their own selfish desires}, there will be wrath and anger. (Rom. 2:6-8)

The Lord expects us to seek out His way of life with a higher priority than even the natural tendency to seek out the basic necessities of life. “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after {because they do not trust in God and His promises}, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek {first} the kingdom of God {become a vessel of His life of self-sacrificing love}, and all these things {the basic necessities for physical life} shall be added to you.” (Luke 12:29-31)

Those who refuse to yield to Christ’s way of self-sacrificing love because they insist on providing for themselves and their family, have rejected the Word of God. Their self-seeking way of life will actually prevent God from working out all things for their eternal good. God knows our needs. He loves both our families and us. But He also knows that we will inevitably remain “self-seekers” if we focus on living for our own needs. And His eternal Word says that self-seeking will always result in wrath. (Rom. 2:8)

The Christianity of today focuses on the family rather than on the kingdom of God. We have actually used the family as an excuse to remain selfish. It makes it easier to rationalize our selfish actions by insisting that we are doing what is best for our family. But when these actions are truly examined by the light of truth, it will be plainly seen how the things we have done have actually trained the members of our family to live by the self-seeking ways of this world. This focus on the family is actually separating people from the life of the Son.

Yes, God requires us to provide for our families. We are to lay down our self-life for their good also. But if they never see the light of life from heaven being displayed through us, we should not expect them to recognize the need of being saved from their darkness.

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we {including the whole family} also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:16)

For the love of Christ compels us...that those who live should live no longer for themselves... (2 Cor. 5:14-15)

Has your family been trained in the way of righteousness by your example? Have they seen the light of truth as it was revealed through Jesus in your life? Do they know what salvation looks like by what they have seen in your daily life? Or are they still living for themselves because this is the standard you have brought into the home with the rationalization that it was necessary to provide first for the family?

Individual Christians are expected to seek first the Kingdom-life of perfect love. They must begin to sacrifice themselves for the good of others in everything they do. If the members of our family reject this way of light, it would be foolish to cave into their pressures and follow them in the way of darkness.

Furthermore, the only hope of ever leading others out of the self-seeking ways of this world and out of eternal wrath, is by first seeking to have the Kingdom-life of perfect love established within our own heart. And yes, as Jesus has so clearly taught, those who truly follow Him into the light of eternal life can expect to find their families being split apart.

Do you think I came to bring peace on earth {a peace between light and darkness}? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. (Luke 12:51-52)

I tell you, no! But unless you repent {which involves turning from the self-seeking ways of this world}, you too will all perish. (Luke 13:3)

If we will present ourselves to God to be a vessel of the Son's life of love, we can expect Him to use His providences to lead us into the work He has planned for us to do. He has the power to care for every essential need, including the basic needs of our family. Let us therefore trust and obey Him on this matter. This obedience begins by "seeking first" His kingdom and His righteousness. When we stop living for ourselves and begin living for the good of others, as Jesus did, we can *then* expect Him to begin working out all things for our good.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God {to those who obey Him}, to those who are the called according to His purpose...to be conformed to the image of the Son... (Rom. 8:28-29)

Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. (Heb. 5:8-9)

Three Stages of Christian Experience

Christ's disciples, when they truly follow Him through the cross, will generally pass through two preparatory stages of Christian experience prior to entering into His full salvation. God has revealed these different works of His grace within the Scriptures. His teachings will appear to conflict in places if we do not consider these early works of grace.

As a spiritual type, God's people in the Old Testament were initially "saved" from death when they were "passed over" while still in Egypt. Simply by responding to God's instructions, which included placing the "blood" of the lamb on the frame of their door and depending on the Lord to save them, they did not experience the "death" that overcame the Egyptians. However, this initial state of salvation would have been short-lived if they had refused to leave Egypt {the ways of the world}.

The thief on the cross has been used as an example of how people are "saved" by faith alone. But Christians have often misinterpreted this truth and used it as a proof of how obedience is not necessary for salvation. They fall into deception when they do not consider the various parts of God's salvation of the soul. Because of the deceitfulness that exists within the impure heart, they have a tendency to reject {or ignore} certain Scriptures when they are contrary to their beliefs.

For example, we are told that Jesus Christ "*became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.*" (Heb. 5:10 Emphasis added) But there are many who reject this truth and cry "legalism" whenever someone teaches how God will test their willingness to respond to His plan of full salvation. In spite of their protests, however, the Scriptures plainly teach of the necessity of responding to all revealed truth as the one means of entering into our Lord's "eternal salvation." He will only manifest His eternal Kingdom-life of perfect love within the hearts of those who obey Him. (John 14:21)

Those who are willing to search out all truth in the Scriptures will begin to see how the thief on the cross would have been required to obey the teachings of his Lord if he had been permitted to go on living in this world. *People who were once justified will end up stepping out of their justified state if they begin to rebel against newly revealed light.*

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. (2 Pet. 2:20-21)

For if we sin willfully {if we stop obeying the Lord} after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment. (Heb. 10:26-27)

The Jews were driven out of Egypt by fear in ranks of five {a number representing grace}. Similarly, Christians who have first looked to Christ's shed blood to be reconciled with God will begin to see certain areas of their life that are not right. Through a work of God's grace, they will begin to sense the need to flee from their old sinful ways, and their early responses will generally be in fear. These new believers in Jesus,

during this beginning stage of salvation, will generally find themselves under the heavy weight of the law.

John Wesley's early life provides an example of this first stage of salvation. As a young man he believed in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, he felt compelled to honor God by trying to live a holy life. He lived in this obedience under law, and in fear, for a number of years before he entered into what he later referred to as a "fully justifying faith." While he had a faith that enabled him to look to Jesus Christ to be forgiven for his sins before he entered into this greater salvation, and although he desired to live righteously before God, he naively attempted to produce the needed righteousness in his own strength. While living in this initial state of grace, he would have continued to find himself under the condemnation of the law.

We should also note that Wesley's outward righteousness in this early state of salvation {his willingness to serve the Lord and respond to His teachings} was much greater than the righteousness that can now be seen in many Christians who claim they have the Son's Spirit in them. The difference is that Wesley was truly concerned about studying the Word of God and responding to all of its teachings. *Many people today want to be saved from hell, but they do not want to submit to Christ's teachings. By insisting that obedience to all of His teachings is not necessary for salvation, they have been enabled to effectively sear over their consciences and avoid being greatly bothered when their life remains in conflict with God's Word.*

The question now arises as to whether someone can be "accepted" by God before experiencing the new birth that frees the believer from the condemnation of the law. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) Based on this teaching about the new birth, some scholars have said that God cannot "accept" anyone prior to receiving power to live above all outward sin. For "whoever has been born of God does not sin..." (1 John 3:9) But we need to remember that Christ's own disciples did not have the capacity to "see" the true kingdom of God when they first began listening to His teachings. They were "accepted" by Jesus when He began telling them about His kingdom. But without the Spirit breathed into them, which didn't occur until after His resurrection, they were unable to "see" His kingdom or understand what the presence of the kingdom would accomplish in their hearts. Nor had they received a power from the Spirit through the new birth, that enables regenerated believers to repress the self-seeking nature—the root of all sin.

The new birth produces a much higher life than many Christians today seem to think. Bishop Foster, in his book *Christian Purity* says, "With respect to regeneration, that is a work done in us, in the way of changing our inward nature; a work by which a spiritual life is infused into the soul, whereby he {the regenerate person}...has victory over sin, is enabled to resist corrupt tendencies, and has peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; a radical change by which the preponderating tendencies of the soul are turned towards God...by which the love of sin is destroyed, its dominion broken...and longing after holiness implanted." (p. 43)

We should begin to see how there are infant Christians within the church today who have not received this "seed" from the life of the Son that destroys the love of sin. We can still find them living for their own selfish desires. They acknowledge Jesus as the Christ who came as a Savior, and they trust in His shed blood for the forgiveness of their

sins, but they still do not “long for holiness” {a life lived wholly to God}. It becomes obvious how they have not yet been “blessed” by God with a deep “hunger and thirst after righteousness” by how little time they spend reading their Bibles and in earnest prayer.

Wesleyan doctrine has emphasized two experiential works of grace in the salvation of a believer. There is a work of grace that “fully justifies” {the new birth}, and a work of grace that “fully sanctifies” {entire sanctification}. In the first work, the believer receives the gift of the Holy Spirit which provides him with a deep hunger and thirst after righteousness. In the second work, he becomes “filled” with Christ’s Spirit of true righteousness and holiness.

Both of these definite works of grace are said to occur at a point of “crisis” {a definite moment in time}. In both cases, the Spirit provides a supernatural witness to the fact that the work has been done by God. Through an inner witness provided by the Spirit, the believer knows he has been raised by the power of God into a higher spiritual life.

But we also need to note how Wesley, in various passages of his writings (e.g., Works, vol. vii. 199-201), has explained how the Methodists had erred at the outset by declaring that followers of Christ who had not experienced what he described as “full justifying faith” {the experience of the new birth}, had no faith at all. The following passage from his writings explains both the reality and the nature of the reconciling faith that many believers possess before they ever receive the witness of the indwelling Spirit.

Still, let it be observed [for it is a point of no small importance], that his faith is only the faith of a servant, *and not the faith of a son*. [Emphasis added] Because this is a point many do not clearly understand, I will endeavor to make it a little plainer. The faith of a servant implies a divine evidence of the invisible and the eternal world; yea, and an evidence of the spiritual world, *so far as it can exist without living experience*. [Emphasis added] Whoever has attained this, the faith of a servant, “feareth God and worketh righteousness.” In consequence of which he is, in a degree, as the Apostle observes, “accepted with him.”... Even one who has gone thus far in religion, *who obeys God out of fear*, is not in anywise to be despised; seeing “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” [Emphasis added] Nevertheless, he should be exhorted not to stop there; not to rest till he obtains the adoption of sons... Exhort him to press on, by all possible means, till he passes “from faith to faith”; from the faith of a servant to the faith of a son [to the crisis of the new birth, when a seed from the life of the Son is planted within the heart, which results in a real hunger and thirst after righteousness]; from the spirit of bondage unto fear to the spirit of childlike love.

While there are some people who insist that John Wesley was not “saved” before his Aldersgate experience, it is quite apparent that he was truly submitted to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. He was honestly concerned about yielding to God’s will. In effect, he had entered into an Old Testament type of repentance as taught by John the Baptist that led him to become devoted to the true God as best he knew how. But his obedience came from a fear of disobeying God rather than from a real inner hunger to become like God in true righteousness and holiness. In other words, he could not yet

“see” the true kingdom of God because he had not yet been born again {into God’s spiritual kingdom}.

“John {the Baptist} came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance *for the remission of sins.*” (Mark 1:4 Emphasis added) Concerned “believers” during this Old Testament dispensation were turning to God and being forgiven for their sins. John the Baptist then said to them: “Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.” (Matt. 3:8) He then described the kind of obedience that would be required of these believers {generosity, honesty, meekness and contentment – Luke 3:10-14} in order to “prepare” for the Lord. They began to show signs of repentance because they feared the consequences of not obeying God’s revealed will.

We can find the apostle John referring to believers who have entered into this first stage of saving faith as “little children.” “I write to you, little children, because yours sins are forgiven for His name’s sake.” (1 John 2:12) Through faith, they have begun to trust in the Christ who died for their sins. In essence, they are looking to Christ’s shed blood in the same manner as the Israelites looked to the blood on their doorposts while still in Egypt {a type of the world}. But they will find themselves living by law without the needed power to keep their sin nature fully repressed. They will therefore tend to find themselves in the bondage that Paul has described in Romans seven.

John Fletcher, a leader of the early Methodist movement, referred to this stage of salvation as “the age of the father.” He spoke of the “age of the Father,” “the age of the Son” and “the age of the Spirit” in describing the three stages of Christian experience. In the age of the Father, all believers are still responding to God under a fear of being punished for disobedience. They are in an Old Testament type of faith and are still attempting to live by law {trying to obey the Bible in their own strength and sufficiency, through resolutions and willpower}.

After being driven out of Egypt {the world} in fear, God’s called-out people are eventually brought to the point where they must take a much greater step of faith. *Even though they have been taught from early childhood to depend on their own efforts to make themselves right according to the accepted standards of society, they will discover that the self-sufficient ways of this world are futile when it comes to truly overcoming sin.* They therefore begin to sense a need for a deeper, God-given deliverance from the Egyptians {who represent sin and the self-reliant ways of the world}. While they may have been provided with an ability to flee from the Egyptians {sins}, these same Egyptians are still on their backs {with the potential to take them back into bondage}.

Christians in the first phase of salvation need to find freedom from the bondage of sin and death that is still experienced while attempting to live by law {trying to obey God’s laws by their own human efforts}. Because fallen man has an innate sense of pride that leads to self-sufficiency, he naturally thinks he can save himself from his sinful tendencies {through his own resolutions and willpower}. But this self-sufficient spirit, if it is permitted to live on, will continue to manifest a dying spiritual life. *The initial purpose of the law, therefore, is to expose this carnal nature.* The law, when properly understood and applied, will eventually lead these believers to a deeper understanding of their need to depend upon Christ. They will begin to see how their only real hope of obtaining power over sin and a freedom from the condemnation that occurs when living by law is through a more dependent faith in Christ.

Once they have been set free from the overt pride that results in an independent spirit, they will begin living by the kind of dependent faith that overcomes sin and the world. (1 John 3:9; 5:4) It is the point when the Lord breathes His Holy Spirit into the believer and provides sufficient power to overcome all outward sin. Wesley, after his own Aldersgate experience, referred to this second stage of salvation as being “fully justified.” It is the point when the believer “overcomes” the “wicked one.”

In what Fletcher describes as the “age of the Father,” the Holy Spirit is “with” the believer. But it’s when the believer recognizes his failure under law, begins to see his need to fully trust in the Son as his only hope of being saved from sin and then gives himself up to Christ for deliverance, that the Spirit enters into the temple of his body. According to Fletcher, it is at this miraculous Red Sea crossing that Christians enter into the “age of the Son”.

Again, this is a much greater step of faith that takes earnest believers through a miraculous deliverance from the overwhelming threat of the Egyptians at the Red Sea. These believers agree to go down into the watery grave of baptism and begin to reckon themselves to be dead to their old independent and self-sufficient form of life. The moment that God sees they have truly taken this step, He will put His Spirit within them so they may begin walking in newness of life.

There are many people within the holiness movement who think they have been fully sanctified when they enter into this higher spiritual state. Because it produces so much more inward freedom than they had ever experienced while still trying to live by law, they naturally think they have been set “free indeed” from sin. But when they begin to honestly examine themselves for the remains of the self-seeking nature with all of its selfish desires, they will begin to realize their hearts have not yet been perfected in love. They will still find traces of pride that leads to some self-will, along with a tendency to become irritated and upset whenever their will has been crossed. Yes, they have submitted themselves to wholeheartedly serve the Lord and to live for God’s glory, but there are still traces of the old self-life within that keeps causing them trouble.

God used the Red Sea as a spiritual type to represent this new birth that delivers His called-out children from the threat of the Egyptians. It is the place where Christians agree to die to their own will and begin living wholly for the Lord’s will. God has provided water baptism to help new believers picture what is taking place.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, *even so we also should walk in newness of life...* For he who has died {to self-will, in order to fully submit to the leading of the Spirit} has been freed from sin. (Rom. 6:3-4, 7 Emphasis added)

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed {the submissive Spirit of the Son} remains in him; and he cannot sin {He has power to repress the self-seeking ways of the world that produce sin}, because he has been born of God... For whatever is born of God overcomes the world {the ways of the “wicked one”}. And this is the victory that has overcome the world {the showcase of the devil’s ways}—our faith. (1 John 3:9; 5:4)

There are many people within the church who have not yet experienced this higher life that truly overcomes sin and the self-directed ways of the world. Because they have not reached the point where they are prepared to completely die to self-will, in order to be fully led by the Spirit of God as He pleases, they do not experience the overcoming life that occurs when the Spirit is breathed into the soul at the new birth. This is why they keep finding themselves returning to the self-seeking practices of this world and falling under the condemnation of the law.

We believe the following description by George A. Hubbell depicts “believers” who are still in the age of the Father. Because they have not yet submitted to the baptism that truly surrenders the old self-directed way of life to the grave, so they may live under the control and power of the Holy Spirit, they will be found trying to obey God to the best of their ability, in their own efforts. It clearly describes someone who has not yet “overcome” sin and the “wicked one.”

They go to their homes and daily vocations. Secular cares and duties meet them. Their high-wrought emotions [the emotions that were pumped up in their worship services] subside. Temptations assail them. They are chafed by the frictions of life. Former appetites and passions which they have habitually indulged in, begin to stir and clamor for their usual gratification.

Thus beset on every side, and impelled by the strength of their animal or earthly nature, they yield [to Satan’s temptations], and fall into sin and condemnation. But the Spirit [in His convicting work] still strives with them, their conscience is aroused, they quickly repent and turn to God; and he restores their peace and confidence. Again they fall, and again they rise.

Thus they go on in a vacillating way, now repenting, then sinning again—swinging, pendulum-like, between the world and the spiritual life... Their life and character are mixed. Good and evil are contending in them for the mastery. “When they would do good, evil is present with them.” They find a law [of sin and death] in their members warring against the law of their mind and bringing them into bondage... They are in the experience so graphically given in the seventh chapter of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans...

Romans seven describes a man who is still attempting to live by law. He can honestly say, “The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good... I agree with the law.” (Rom. 7:12, 16) However, he also must say, “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.” (v. 14) John Wesley lived this way until he had entered into a “fully justifying faith” that gave him power over sin and freedom from condemnation.

Again, this is an Old Testament stage of salvation. While the sins of this believer can be forgiven through confession and repentance, he is still unable to find true freedom from the condemnation that occurs while trying to live by human effort under the weight of the law.

The first disciples, as an example, were supernaturally taken out of the Old Testament dispensation {living under God’s laws in fear} on the day of Christ’s resurrection. Prior to this point, they were already considered to be “clean” in God’s sight. (John 13:10)

They also had the Spirit of God “with” them. (John 14:17) The Spirit had turned them from the world and had enabled them to follow Christ as their Lord. (John 6:44) He had also helped them to understand some of the Lord’s teachings. But we can still find the self-life remaining prominent in many of their actions. And there was a natural tendency to revert back to their old ways and their old thought processes when they were confused and without the presence of the Lord.

It was not until after Jesus was raised from the dead that He was able to come to them in a new way. On resurrection day He was in a position to breathe His Spirit into their eternal soul. (John 20:21-22) They still experienced some confusion about the will of God, but they did not fall back into living by their own will, according to their own pleasures, after this Seed of life was placed within them.

When Jesus breathed the Spirit into His disciples, He said, “Peace to you!” It was then they could begin to “experience” a real sense of inner peace with God. Their conscience could be supernaturally cleansed by the shed blood. (Heb. 9:14) They moved from Romans chapter seven and the bondage of living under law, into a life where they could begin living under the control and power of the Holy Spirit as described in Romans chapter eight. “There is therefore now *no condemnation* {no experience of it} to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh {in their own strength and efforts}, but according to the Spirit {through the weakness of dependent faith}.” (Rom. 8:1 Emphasis added) They experience the new birth that provides them with power to overcome the world and sin.

Everyone who fully surrenders their life in a way that submits to the complete Lordship of Jesus Christ, will find this refreshing new life in the Lord. They will begin living under the control and the power of the Holy Spirit. Again, they enter into what John Fletcher refers to as the “age of the Son.”

There can be no real sense of deep peace in the Christian life, which includes a real inward freedom “from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2), until the believer is able to take this great step of faith. He must turn from his old independent and self-sufficient form of life, which includes trying to be a child of God through human works {“dead works”}, and submit to living under the control and power of the Holy Spirit.

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God {to serve Him under the control and power of His Spirit}? (Heb. 9:14)

There are many people within the church who are trying to come out from under a sense of condemnation by searing over their consciences through incorrect beliefs. Even though they are trusting in Jesus’ shed blood, *they are still directing their own lives*. They do not seem to realize that the Red Sea represents a supernatural miracle that God works within the heart when they truly permit Christ to take over their life. In spite of all their “good works” {which are dead works in the sight of God because they originate in self}, they should expect the Spirit Himself to continue convicting them of something still deeply wrong within their heart. The Spirit will keep them under conviction and condemnation until this great step of faith has taken place. *A person cannot continue to be self-centered and live by self-will without the Spirit working to reveal this evil darkness within the heart.*

Furthermore, the new believer cannot expect to remain in this state for long without going into rebellion against revealed light. The “salvation” that takes place between Egypt and the Red Sea is a very short lived experience. The Egyptians {the old life of sin} will catch up to the believer and destroy him if he does not find the deliverance from sin that comes through the new birth.

God miraculously opens the Red Sea when He sees the reality of a faith that permits this greater surrender to the Lord. When the believer is willing to go down into the watery grave of baptism, knowing that he must die to self-will so he may be fully led by the Holy Spirit, God will give him the gift of His indwelling Spirit. These true “sons of God” will then receive the needed power to reject the self-seeking ways of the world and overcome the temptations of the devil.

While this greater deliverance from the power of darkness {an empowerment to overcome the world and live above sin} *is the sign of the new birth*, the apostle John in his three-part analogy has referred to Christians in this state of salvation as “young men.” “I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you {which implies an obedience from the heart to all revealed truth}, and *you have overcome the wicked one.*” (1 John 2:14 Emphasis added)

According to Wesley, these “overcoming” Christians begin to enjoy a “living experience” of the Lord’s work of salvation. In contrast, according to the apostle John, the “little children” had not yet overcome the world and the wicked one. They only knew that their sins were forgiven. (1 John 2:12-14)

The “young men” are sanctified in one sense. They have turned from the independent ways of the world and have set out to live wholeheartedly for God. And yet we believe these earnest Christians will still find some elements of selfishness within their hearts. Even while seeking to live wholly for God, many of their decisions will still be influenced by their own personal desires.

During the early period of this sanctified state, while their first love is still strong, these “young men” of the Christian faith are prepared to go through any kind of sacrifice for the Lord. But if they do not go on to be perfected in the Lord’s Kingdom-life of love, they will eventually find themselves looking for *more comfortable ways* to serve God. Yes, they continue to perseveringly labor for the Lord, but the self-life will also begin to reassert itself and become noticeable in many of their activities.

I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are {willfully}evil {which are some signs of the new birth}... Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen {when you first served the Lord without any desire to live for yourself and when no sacrifice seemed too great}; repent and do the first works {in undivided devotion to the work of the kingdom}, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand {the source of light} from its place—unless you repent... To him who overcomes {the flesh-life} I will give to eat from the tree of life {the Son’s Kingdom-life}, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. (Rev. 2:2-7)

The Paradise of God is a place where people walk with God and display His spiritual image of perfect love. The Son, who is the source of this eternal life {He is the Tree of Life}, will reveal the Paradise of God within the eternal soul when He establishes His

Kingdom-life within the heart. *Everyone who overcomes the flesh-life will be lifted by the power of God into this life of promise.*

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians describes Christians in the second stage of salvation. The love of God had been shed abroad in their heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. His indwelling presence had empowered them to begin living sacrificially for the good of others while suffering considerable hardship themselves. Paul, in speaking of their transformed lives said he knew of "your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. 1:3) Again, this inward desire to continually sacrifice themselves for the good of others is a sign of the new birth.

When Paul speaks of their "labor" which was prompted by love, he means more than small deeds of kindness that are common to man. The word *kopos* denotes the "laborious toil" and the "unceasing hardship" that comes from living for the good of others. He could also say of these devoted Christians, "For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance." (v. 5)

However, even after entering into this Spirit-empowered life, these Christians still had a need to wait on the Lord for the full salvation He imparts to the soul when He establishes His eternal Kingdom-life within the heart. The letter is addressed to Christians who still had a need to receive something more from the Lord. Paul therefore prayed that he might be able to "perfect what is lacking" in their faith. (1 Thess. 3:10)

Even with their "much assurance" and their "patience of hope," they still needed to wait for the manifestation of His indwelling presence. It was their "faith" and "hope" that enabled them to endure suffering while they labored for the good of others and waited for the Lord to truly reveal His glory within the temple of their body. As Christians in the one true faith, they had begun to "serve the living and true God" while they continued to "wait for His Son from heaven." (1 Thess. 1:9-10) He would come in due time to sanctify them fully and establish His eternal Kingdom-life within their hearts.

One of the great debates in Wesleyan theology concerns how quickly Christians can enter into the life of promise through their faith. Some people have said that the child of faith simply needs to offer themselves on the altar of sacrifice and believe the work has been done. They "take" the blessing by their faith. And without question there have been believers who were prepared to receive the blessing in this way the moment they were shown the truth. These Christians were already fully yielded to the ways of the Lord and they had proven their love for God through their labor of love for others. You will also find they had come to the end of themselves and were prepared to die to everything of this world in order to be filled with Christ's life of perfect love. However, we will find that most new believers have not yet reached a point where they are prepared to offer themselves as an "unblemished" offering on the altar of sacrifice. *God is required to take most believers through a period of suffering before they are prepared to pay the full price for the heavenly Pearl.*

In an old Methodist manual of Discipline from the mid 1860s, there is a discussion of the "gradual work" that generally takes place before the heart is prepared to be perfected in love. The emphasis of the discussion however, is on the hope of being perfected through a sudden work of grace. It explains how it is this "hope" of receiving the life of promise that will spur Christians on to a more complete obedience. Following the example of the Thessalonians, these believers will become more willing to respond to every leading of the Spirit as they "wait for His Son from heaven."

Constant experience shows the more earnestly they expect this, the more swiftly and steadily does the gradual work go on in their soul, the more careful are they to grow in grace, the more zealous of good works, and the more punctual in their attendance on the ordinances of God. Whereas just the contrary effects are observed whenever this expectation ceases. They are saved by hope—by this hope of a total change... Destroy this hope, and that salvation stands still, or rather decreases daily. Therefore whoever would advance the gradual change in believers should strongly insist on the instantaneous.

The Lord has promised to manifest Himself to everyone who obeys Him. “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” (John 14:21) Because of the promise of this inner manifestation of His Kingdom-life from heaven, *true believers are willing to do whatever God requires of them. God is always working to bring each one of His children to the point where they are prepared to pay the full price for the heavenly Pearl.*

At this point we should again distinguish the difference between waiting on the Lord for the great Second Coming when He will reveal Himself to the whole world, and the “coming of the Lord” in His Kingdom-life to individual believers. Throughout the many years since the first Pentecost, when Christ’s disciples began waiting in the upper room for the Lord to come back to them in His Kingdom-life from heaven, there have been Christians who have entered into this same period of waiting. They have begun to look for Jesus Christ to reveal His life of perfect love within their hearts.

Andrew Murray once said that the only people who will be qualified for the “rapture” are those who have already become “one” with the Lord in His life of perfect love. Those who have not already waited on the Lord to come to them in the power of His Kingdom-life of perfect love, will generally need to go through a period of great tribulation before they will be prepared to sell everything in order to buy the Pearl of Great Price. The Lord is coming for a pure and spotless bride.

Waiting for this revelation of the Lord’s Kingdom-life from heaven will entail some deep suffering of the soul. Similar to what Jesus went through on His way to the cross, His followers should expect to go through some severe trials and painful scourgings. This suffering is designed to destroy the remains of the self-sufficient spirit.

During this time when patient endurance must have an opportunity to do its work, it will be necessary to remember that we can only perfect the power of God in our lives when we are truly weak in ourselves. A real death to the self-originated form of life {the self-sufficient and independent Adam-life} needs to take place before there can be a full-grown faith that lays hold of the eternal life of perfect love.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be {made} perfect and complete {in divine love}, lacking nothing... Blessed is the man who endures temptation; *for when he has been approved* {after passing through some great tribulations in the desert testing period}, he will receive the crown of life {the Kingdom-life} which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (Jam. 1:2-4, 12)

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings {as you take His way of the cross}, that when His glory is revealed {when His Kingdom-life of perfect love is revealed within your heart}, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. (1 Pet. 4:12-13)

For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives {into His heavenly Kingdom-life}...for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. (Heb. 12:6, 10)

Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste {physical} death till they see the kingdom of God present with power. (Mark 9:1)

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord {in His kingdom-life of love} is at hand. (Jam. 5:7-8)

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life. (1 Tim. 6:12)

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest {show} Myself to him {as a new nature}. (John 14:21)

Therefore you now have sorrow; *but I will see you again* and your heart will rejoice {in the new Kingdom-life from heaven}, and your joy {because it comes from a heavenly and eternal source} no one will take from you. (John 16:22 Emphasis added)

The Jordan River represents a real death to the old self-originated form of life. The Jordan was backed up to "Adam" when God cut it off in order to take His people into the land of promise. (Josh. 3:16) When this event occurs in the life of a Christian, God does His work of completely cutting off the old nature that was originally received from Adam. *Christians who have truly experienced this death and resurrection, come to know the eternal life of perfect love.*

The apostle John refers to Christians who have entered into this third stage of salvation as "fathers." "I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning." (1 John 2:14) They know in personal experience the divine life of God. *This is the eternal spiritual life He has purposed to give to His children from the beginning.*

He chose us in Him {to live through the eternal life of the Son} before the foundation of the world, that we should be {and now can be} holy and without blame before Him in {perfect} love. (Eph. 1:4)

Believers will not be able to enter into the fullness of this Kingdom-life until the Spirit has had an opportunity to destroy every tendency that leads the self-life {the flesh} to think it can do something good for God. Since God is the only one who is good, and since He waits on us to permit Him to manifest His life and works through our mortal body {as the Father did through the Son}, He will therefore need to expose the fruitlessness of our own human works.

In what sounds like a conflict of words, Christians will need to make “every effort” to “cease” from their own works so they may enter into the Sabbath-rest of God. (Heb. 4:9-10) After the six days of man, during which time we must use our efforts to prepare the temple according to God’s specifications, we are to enter into a “rest” where the Spirit of God alone does the work of revealing the glory of God. As we can learn from the Old Testament type, once the glory of the Lord filled the temple, the priest “ceased” from his works. As priests of the most Holy God (1 Pet. 2:9) who have entered into His Sabbath-rest in this age of fulfillment, we are then enabled to truly worship God for what He is doing through our active lives, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by {which includes living by} the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus {for what He is doing through our lives}, and who put no confidence in the flesh {or self-originated efforts}. (Phil. 3:3-4 NIV)

But 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 Emphasis added)

The “fathers” have sold everything from their self-originated form of life in order to buy into the life of heaven. This is how they “find” the Kingdom-life of perfect love and come to a real knowledge of Christ’s heavenly nature.

But what things were gain to me {according to the self-exalting thought processes of this world}, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ {His Kingdom-life}...that I may know Him and power of His resurrection... (Phil. 3:7-10)

Those who have come to know this divine life from heaven, which is known as Christian perfection, will no longer permit a concern for the comforts of this world to interfere with their service to God. *The indwelling presence of the Lord is able to satisfy their soul in such a way that they do not need to turn back to the temporal things of this world to find a source of spiritual sustenance.* While they may still go through periods of severe physical suffering in the body, their spiritual life is in a state where they can “rejoice always, pray {commune with God} without ceasing, {and} in everything give thanks.” (1 Thess. 5:16-18)

Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst {for temporal sources of fulfillment}. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to {a display of} eternal life. (John 4:14)

Man's Part in Salvation

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.} I {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)

The Error of the Galatians

Paul came to the Galatians with the indwelling life of Jesus Christ. He could say, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” (Gal 2:20) He had received the life of promise. “It pleased God...to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.” (Gal. 1:15-16) *The Gospel he preached actually worked.* This is why he was so insistent that the Galatians adhere to his teachings.

The Galatians, however, were being turned from the true gospel message. Some false teachers had come to the church and were leading them into a “law keeping” form of salvation. This error had turned them away from a faith that depends on the Son to reveal His Kingdom-life of perfect love within the heart and thereby save them from their fallen nature.

There have always been people within the Lord’s church who prefer the way of law because it permits them to save their flesh-life. It has become a stumbling block to both Jews and Gentiles alike. While they do not mind studying the Scriptures and committing themselves to many of its ways, they have generally been unwilling to die to their old self-originated form of life in order to find the Lord’s Kingdom-life from heaven.

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me {the Messiah who has come to establish the eternal Kingdom-life of perfect love within the hearts of God’s people}. But you are not willing to come to Me {through the cross} that you may have life {the divine life from heaven}. (John 5:39-40)

Once people in the church have seared over their consciences concerning the deeper things of God, it is possible to find a sense of fulfillment in a law-keeping form of righteousness. Like the Pharisees, these people end up choosing certain “standards” that are within the capacity of their human efforts. We will then find them insisting that holiness consists of conforming to the laws they have accepted.

It takes pride to think we have the ability to produce a right kind of life. This pride will also tend to foster a spirit that tends to judge others based on the righteousness we have developed for ourselves. However, if we truly compare ourselves to Jesus, we will begin to see how there is still an evil spirit within our heart that has kept us separated from our Lord’s meek and loving nature.

People who depend on their own efforts to keep the law actually separate themselves from the life that comes from Christ. “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” (Gal. 5:4) This separation from grace will prevent the heart from becoming perfect in love.

The Divine love that suffers long, is gentle and will not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax, comes from the grace of God. You will find that law-keepers do not possess this grace. There will be a hardness in them that tends to condemn others for not living by the same standards.

People who have not entered into the Kingdom-life of perfect love that comes down from heaven cannot lead others into the Lord’s saving life. While they may hold up many of the laws found in God’s Word and expose people to the Scriptures, they never lead them into full salvation. Consequently, their converts eventually take on the same critical and condemning spirit.

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell, as you are. (Matt. 23:15)

Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice {a haranguing voice} in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory; And in His name Gentiles will trust. (Matt. 12:18-21)

Again, perfect love does produce righteousness. It is able to reveal a standard of living that clearly comes from heaven. And those who live through it will reveal a light that shows justice breaking forth into victorious Christian living. In the sense that Jesus had compassion, it will show compassion for the multitudes it sees lost in sin. It is capable of expressing the truth with a real sense of mercy and concern for the hearer.

Give no offense...just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. (1 Cor. 10:32-11:1)

You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials...how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying...repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ...

And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God... For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock...

So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified... I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak... (Acts 20:18-35)

Paul knew that people who live by law would become “conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” (Gal. 5:26) He therefore said, “But if you bite and devour one another {with your unloving words}, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” (Gal. 5:15) Do you criticize others {perhaps only in your thoughts and not openly} for not living as you do? If so, it is evidence you have developed your “own righteousness, which is of the law” and know nothing of “the righteousness which is from God by faith.” (Phil. 3:9) When you live among law-keepers, you can expect others to criticize you for not following one of their standards. Everyone will have something they can use to judge others. Again, the perfect love of God will not be found in a church {or denomination, or any other religious organization} where people think that holiness consists of conforming to certain laws.

Whenever pastors and teachers display a severe and judgmental approach in pressing certain laws on others, it will become obvious how they have become “estranged from Christ” and “fallen from grace.” (Gal 5:4) *Their efforts to establish a form of*

righteousness through their own endeavors will result in a pride that separates them from the grace that supplies the heart with the Son's divine nature. God can only give His grace to the humble. (1 Pet. 5:5)

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits... A good tree cannot bear bad fruit... Therefore by their fruits you will know them. (Matt. 7:15-20)

People who have based their righteousness on keeping the law will not understand the Sabbath-rest of God where God's children "cease" from their own works. (Heb. 4:9-10) They are unwilling to count everything from the self-life as loss and become nothing in themselves so that Christ may become "all in all" and be the source of their spiritual life. They are still looking to have some of the glory.

Again, the way of finding divine life from heaven by following Christ through the cross, remains a real stumbling block to people who insist on living by law. Rather than glorying in what can be received from the Son by taking His way of the cross, they glory in the righteousness that comes from keeping the law. But regardless of how far they progress, people who live by their own human efforts {in the same sense that Abraham tried to help God produce the "life of promise" through his own efforts – but instead produced Ishmael, a life that ultimately had to be cast out} will not have the capacity to "put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." (Eph. 4:24) They cannot become perfect in love and mercy like their heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt. 5:48)

We need to realize that even Jesus, while living in a mortal body, did not produce the Kingdom-life by His own efforts. Everything He did came from the Father through faith. He said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself." (John 5:19) This literally means that He did not do anything "out from" Himself.

Jesus did not live by a self-originated form of life. While He was required to surrender His will to the will of the Father in order to remain free from sin, and He had to choose to submit to truth, He was dependent on the Father to manifest the "light of life" from heaven through Him. And in this same sense He says to us, "Without Me you can do nothing."

This does not mean that we will not find people working hard for the Lord. We will find them doing many things in the name of Jesus. But these works do not necessarily reveal the divine life of perfect love. And without this revelation of perfect love through our daily life, our works will remain valueless. (1 Cor. 13:3) They are called "dead works" because they do not reveal the divine life from heaven.

Human benevolent works are unable to further the kingdom of God because they will inevitably be overshadowed by the darkness that comes from a self-centered nature. *A life that is still centered around self will display various signs of selfishness, and this corruption will divert others away from the Lord's Kingdom-life of promise. The disciple will find reasons to excuse himself from pressing forward through the cross and into Christ's life of perfect love as long as he still senses that his teacher is living for himself. And so, because of his opportunity to see the true meaning of light from his reading of the Scriptures, he becomes "twice as much a son of hell" as he was before being converted.*

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ {and they have seen what

His life is like}, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. (2 Pet. 2:20-21)

Again, there is a vast difference between the works that man does as a benevolent person and the work that God does through people who have been perfected in love. *The work that is accomplished in God's kingdom is intended to have a supernatural quality to it.* There needs to be such a degree of selflessness revealed that others can plainly see how this "light of life" is coming from the Son of God in heaven.

But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God {through the Son's life of love}. (John 3:21 NIV)

But we have this treasure in jars of clay {weak mortal bodies} to show that this all-surpassing power {to live in perfect love} is from God and not from us. (2 Cor. 4:7 NIV)

There was a reason why Paul did not preach with "persuasive words of human wisdom." (1 Cor. 2:4-5) *One cannot develop the Christian life in the same way that teachers of this world help people develop their lives.* In the world, everyone must depend on his or her own efforts to raise themselves into a better life. In contrast, the simplest child of dependent faith can enter into a position that permits God to raise them into the highest levels of spiritual life in the kingdom of God. Paul therefore preached "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." (v. 5)

Unfortunately, the Galatians had turned from this way of childlike faith in God's power and had begun to rely on their own strength to produce the "goal" of righteousness. (Gal. 3:3) And just as unfortunately, this has been the same error committed by many earnest Christians in the church today.

I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like {dependent and trusting} little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 18:3)

We can only enter into the Kingdom-life of God through a childlike faith in the Lord. *While we are required to meet His covenant conditions, which includes submitting to His teachings, this submission will never produce the life of heaven.* Again, "Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life {the Kingdom-life of heavenly righteousness}, truly righteousness would have been by the law." (Gal. 3:21) Paul was trying to teach the Galatians to look to Christ as their only hope of truly enjoying the righteousness that exists within the kingdom of God.

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes... For in the gospel *a righteousness from God is revealed*, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last... (Rom. 1:16-17 NIV Emphasis added)

But now *a righteousness from God, apart from the law*, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. *This righteousness from God comes through faith* in Jesus Christ to all who believe. (Rom. 3:21 NIV Emphasis added)

But whatever was to my profit {everything that led to a strict religious life} I now consider loss for the sake of Christ...that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, *not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.* (Phil. 3:7-9 NIV Emphasis added)

The granting of this righteousness that comes from Christ is an act of our Sovereign God that comes through a work of His grace, when the conditions are met. Again, meeting the conditions can only prepare the way that will lead to the life of promise. We receive this “gift” of true righteousness by receiving an “abundance of grace.” Only in this way can we ever expect to “reign in life through...Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 5:17)

Paul uses Abraham, “the father of faith,” as an example to distinguish the difference between the “way of faith” and “the way of human effort.” He assures the Galatians that everyone who follows Abraham’s way of faith will receive the long awaited “promise of the Father.” “For if the inheritance {the life of promise} is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” (Gal. 3:18) While the great saints of the Old Testament dispensation died in the faith without actually receiving the Kingdom-life of “promise” in this world (Heb. 11:39-40), they continued to walk in a justified state because they continued to submit to God’s will as best they knew how *while waiting on Him for the fulfillment.*

Yes, they responded to the known will of God. But their hope of truly becoming righteous was in the coming Messiah. The law had revealed to them their need for a Savior who could deliver them from the law of sin and death and enable them to display the true righteousness and holiness that God had originally planned to reveal through His children. *They had learned by their efforts to keep the law how this life could not be produced through human efforts.*

“What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come...” (Gal. 3:19) Again, there needs to be some way to control the corruption that tends to rise out of the fallen nature. But law-keeping could never produce the divine life of God. (Gal. 3:21) *The Kingdom-life of perfect love would need to be received from the Son of God by dependent faith.*

Abraham’s personal life provides a spiritual example to demonstrate this principle. God promised to manifest a son through him. Because his wife was past the age when she could bear children, it was impossible for them to produce the child through their own works {efforts}. The life of the “son” would need to be received as a supernatural gift from God through faith.

Even though Abraham became confused and thought it was necessary to help God produce the promised life of the son, which is the same mistake that most Christians are now making, he still continued to believe in God’s promise. In effect, “most” of his hope continued to be in God. Paul could therefore say, “He did not waiver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised he was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ ” (Rom. 4:20-21)

This spiritual “type” is fulfilled in God’s promise to manifest the life of His Son through our mortal bodies (2 Cor. 4:10-11) in this world. Even though it is impossible for us to do, the promise can be fulfilled by receiving an abundant measure of grace and the “gift of righteousness” through our dependent faith in the Lord. As long as we remain

“fully convinced” that God is able to do the work, we too will continue to be “credited” with Christ’s righteousness during the time of testing when we are waiting for Him to fulfill the promise. Like Abraham, there will be a period when we must learn to distinguish between our efforts to help God fulfill the promise and *the true way of faith*. God will need to put our self-sufficient spirit to death before we will be prepared to receive the promise by faith alone.

We should note that Abraham continued to obey God as best he knew how while he was waiting for the promise to be fulfilled. (Heb. 11:8) We should also note that it was not until he was “as good as dead” that he received the promise. (Heb. 11:12) As long as he had some hope in his human efforts, and still thought he could help God produce the life of the son, he was not yet in a place where he could receive the promise by pure faith. Similarly, God cannot manifest the Son’s Kingdom-life of perfect love within our heart until we are “as good as dead” to the ways of human {or self} sufficiency.

This was Paul’s meaning when he referred to the suffering that the Galatians were experiencing: “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh {by your own efforts}? *Have you suffered so many things in vain...?*” (Gal. 3:3-4 Emphasis added) The suffering that God sends into our lives during the desert testing period is designed to break our self-sufficient spirit and destroy the old self-originated form of life. And yet, these scourgings can very easily be in vain if we do not understand what God is attempting to do. Let us therefore yield to His work and permit the Holy Spirit to put our self-sufficient spirit to death so we are in a position to receive the promise of His eternal Kingdom-life by pure faith.

As children of promise, Christians must not make the mistake of trying to help God produce the life of the Son. Everyone who enters into this struggle by human effort will have to go through a longer period of suffering than would normally be necessary. And in the end, they will find that they can only produce a life that is represented by Ishmael. In other words, they will never be truly set free from the self-centered {fleshly} nature. Instead of entering into a real enjoyment of the spiritual life of promise, these believers will continue to find themselves going through a wilderness of spiritual suffering and dryness.

We should note that Ishmael was around even after Isaac was born. And as long as this illegitimate son remained in the camp, the true son of promise was in danger. Sarah began to perceive that Ishmael’s presence {the self-originated flesh-life} would not only threaten their peace and happiness, but would also place the life of her God-given son in danger. To Abraham however, it was disturbing to think about completely casting out Ishmael. After all, this part of his life had come from his own efforts! Abraham would naturally have had a sense of pride in what he had accomplished through his own work.

How does this lesson apply to us? Even after we have experienced a miraculous new birth and we know that a “Seed” from the life of the Son has been planted within our heart, there is still a tendency to use our own resolutions and efforts to help produce the mature fruit of Christ’s Spirit. But as we have mentioned, *a spirit that is contrary to the spirit of perfect love will remain within the heart of everyone who lives by law in an attempt to make themselves righteous*.

Yes, we may even build great edifices in honor of the Lord. In fact, there is a tendency to enjoy these works because we like to be honored for what we have done. But regardless of what we have accomplished, and unless we have totally seared over our

conscience, we will continue to sense that something is still wrong within our heart. We will still have a sense of Ishmael {the remains of the flesh-life} causing trouble. Consequently, *we will find that we are not always overflowing with Christ's divine life of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* {over the carnal nature, which will still have its "say" in unguarded or trying moments}. (Gal. 5:22-23)

The presence of Ishmael {the self-originated form of life} will continue to threaten a full revelation of the Son's divine life. Even though it will be painful, let us cast out this old form of self-produced righteousness and enter into the fullness of the promise through the way of faith.

Ishmael's inheritance was the desert wilderness. While we may be greatly distressed over the thought of truly dying out to the old self-sufficient form of life, we need to realize that keeping him around will inevitably result in an ever-returning spiritual thirst and a never-ending struggle against the old self-centered nature. This is why God has insisted that we "cast out" the old life that we created through our human efforts. "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise... What does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman." (Gal. 4:28, 30)

This casting out will entail counting everything from our self-life as loss, so we may truly look to Christ as our only hope of being made perfect in love. "For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." (Gal. 5:5) Yes, salvation from the fallen life is by grace, through dependent faith in the completed work of Jesus Christ.

This provides a better understanding of Paul's message about the cross. There was only one way for him to become qualified to preach the Gospel. He too had to follow His Lord's instructions to deny himself and take the path of the cross. It enabled him to "find" the Lord's Kingdom-life and become an effective minister of the Gospel message. "It pleased God...to reveal His Son in me." (Gal. 1:16) "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20)

Paul, as one who preached the true Gospel, knew how important it was to reveal the saving life of Jesus Christ before the eyes of his hearers. He could say, "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." (Gal. 2:9) This visible display of a self-sacrificing life—the Lord's "light" from heaven—will always bring deep conviction within the hearts of fallen man as the implications of the Gospel are being revealed through the Word of God. In other words, this display of selflessness will place a conviction on the hearts of those who still possess a self-centered nature.

There is only one means for preaching the word of God in a way that leads to a deep conviction within the heart of self-centered man. We must first receive a power from on high that enables us to display the self-sacrificing life and nature of Jesus Christ. It was in this sense that Paul could say to the Thessalonians: "For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, *as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.*" (1 Thess. 1:5 Emphasis added) As the Thessalonians observed a visible display of the Gospel message in the life of Paul, the word of God worked powerfully within their hearts.

Paul had discovered the secret that had long been veiled in the Old Testament Scriptures. The mystery was that Christ Himself would begin to reveal the light from His

Kingdom-life through the saints, so that others would see the true salvation of the Lord and sense the need to surrender to the same light of life. When Christ is not able to reveal His glory—His life of perfect love—through the members of His body, the world will never see this great mystery of true salvation.

{It is} the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; *which is Christ in you, the hope of glory* {the hope of revealing God’s Kingdom-life of perfect love}. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all {spiritual, not earthly} wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (Col. 1:26-28 Emphasis added)

It is not the words we speak that will have the greatest impact on the world. This is why a “law-keeping” form of salvation has very little impact. The world can see the conflict between what we teach and how we often act in a spirit that is not perfect in love, a spirit that still evidences the remains of a self-seeking and self-indulgent nature, which is easily detected by others. The people we are teaching must see the Kingdom-life of perfect {self-sacrificing} love being expressed through our lives before they can understand the true Gospel message and be drawn into the same light of life. What we say will matter, but what we “are” is what enables the Spirit to truly convict those who have seen the light.

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk {just words to give intellectual assent to} but of power {the “power of an endless life”} (1 Cor. 4:20 NIV)

For the kingdom of God is...righteousness {divine love} and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 14:17)

Some people think it would be possible for them to be a better Christian if their religious upbringing would have been a little better. Others tend to think that a better God-centered religious education would help them improve their spiritual life. There are others who think that more zeal for God would enable them to accomplish more for the kingdom of God. While there is nothing wrong with these things, we need to note that they are exactly what Paul had to count “as loss” in order to fully depend on Christ and live in the resurrection power of God’s Spirit. By turning from a dependence on all these things, he was able to find the Kingdom-life from heaven. *Let us not turn away from the true hope of glory, which is Christ’s indwelling presence, by acting as if some other means would improve our spiritual life.*

If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so; {based on such thing as a good moral upbringing, a good religious education and a tremendous zeal for God; and}...concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, *not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;* that

I may know Him and the power of His resurrection... (Phil. 3:4–10
Emphasis added)

Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. (Ezk. 36:23 NIV)

The message of Galatians, in harmony with the rest of the Scriptures, is all about receiving a whole new form of life from Jesus Christ by following Him through the cross. *Like the Galatians, we make a serious mistake when we begin to place our emphasis on living by certain standards that we equate with true righteousness.* It naturally leads to a concentration on the standards we have chosen to amplify rather than on the life of perfect love we need to receive by uniting with Christ at the cross.

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world {and all of its self-originated ways} has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal. 6:14)

Everyone who will take the way of the cross is assured of finding Christ's Kingdom-life of perfect love. (Matt. 16:24-25) It is only through His "exceedingly great and precious promises" that we can become "partakers of the divine nature" and escape "the corruption that is in the world through lust" – {desires for things temporal}. (2 Pet. 1:4) Thus, it is by faith. Yes, "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life {so we may be a display of His Kingdom-life from heaven} and godliness." (2 Pet. 1:3) *Let us therefore praise the Lord for what He has already accomplished for us and look to Him for the fulfillment in our own lives.*

At the same time, we must not forget about the need to yield to all truth as we prepare the way for the Lord and His life of promise. James describes this as the faith that works. (Jam. 2:14-26) God will be testing our willingness to become like Jesus. He expects us to fully submit to being led by His Spirit. It will be necessary to yield to the ways of the Lord during this time of testing. There is no other way to be led into the fullness of the blessing.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, {self-sacrificing} love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. (2 Pet. 1:5-9)

This preparation that demonstrates the true fruit of repentance is a necessary part of the six days of man. God is looking for a yielded heart that is willing to prepare the temple according to His specifications. But in the end, we are still dependent upon Him to manifest His glory within the temple of our body. There is no other way to reveal His life of perfect love in this world. We should therefore never rest short of the promised "Sabbath-rest" where it is possible to "cease" from our own works and begin living through the promised Kingdom-life of our Lord.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life {the first-fruits of the life of

heaven} which the Lord has promised to those who love Him {to those who submit to His ways}. (Jam. 1:12)

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 Emphasis added)

Appendix A

Salvation Examined

Steve Bray

God planned from the beginning to have human children who manifested His image of holy love in this world. Adam was created with this divine image. But his fall into sin separated both himself and his lineage from the eternal life of God. The purpose of salvation is to restore this lost image. To help clarify what needs to take place in the part of salvation that needs to occur in this world, we will examine its various stages and processes.

A. The Goal of Salvation

Jer 2:11-13

11 "...But My people have changed their Glory for what does not profit. 12 Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; Be very desolate," says the Lord. 13 "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."

1. Man was created to be a vessel of God's Glory. The glory is the eternal life that reveals God's image of holy love.
2. Man separated himself from God's Glory—the eternal life—when he turned from God to the world to find an earthly form of spiritual life. These two evils encompass all evil.
3. The life that comes from this world is not everlasting. It continues to run out of the soul like water out of a cracked cistern. It is the reason why people experience spiritual dryness.

John 4:14 NIV

14 But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

1. The Son came for the specific purpose of giving everyone access to the glory that Adam lost. "I have given them {access to} the glory that you gave me...in order that the {holy or perfect} love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." (John 17:22, 26 NIV)
2. Christians who are being taken through the wilderness testing period only experience wells of refreshment from the Lord's living water. Those who find the Lord's full salvation, where there is an endless supply of living water, "never thirst." They live beyond the arid desert.
3. It requires an endless flow of living water to produce a consistent display of the eternal life.

John 7:37-39

37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture

has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” 9 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given {in the fullness of the eternal life}, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Eph 4:10

10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.

1. Christ could not fill the temple of the body with His glory until after He was glorified.
2. The glory restored is directly related to the “fountain of living water” that Adam lost.
3. To experience the “rivers” of living water flowing through the soul, one must completely turn from the world and its sources of spiritual sustenance—the original cause of Adam’s fall.

Eph 1:3-4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

Col 3:1-2

1 If then you were raised with Christ {by the new birth}, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

1. Christ has perfected the eternal Kingdom-life in bodily form {in a mortal body}. (Col 2:9-10) Every blessing needed to manifest this divine life is now available in Christ within the heavenly realms.
2. God planned from the beginning to have His children live through the Son of Man and share with Him in His eternal life of holy love. But the life is not available to those who are still attempting to find their life from this world. (Phil. 3:18-20)
3. We must turn from the world and seek out the eternal Kingdom-life that comes from above. “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have {the heart idols that bind you to this world and its ways} and give alms, provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail... (Luke 12:29-33)

Eph 3:17-19

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you {may}... 19 know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

1 John 4:17

17 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. Christians are expected to seek out the Kingdom-life that comes from above. Those who truly learn to live through Jesus and find their life from Him – will be filled with God’s eternal life.
2. Full salvation restores God’s image of perfect love. This full salvation needs to be received in this world if we hope to stand before Him with boldness in the Day of Judgment.

B. Reconciliation through the Blood

Mark 1:4-5

4 John {the Baptist, while under the Old Testament dispensation} came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

1. God has always had a means to forgive sins. He was able to forgive men like Enoch by looking at “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Rev. 13:8)
2. Anyone who turned to God and submitted to Him according to the light available in their generation received remission of sins.

Rom 5:10

10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

1. We are reconciled to God through the Son’s shed blood. But this is not His full salvation.
2. In this age of fulfillment, He has purposed to make us partakers with Him in His eternal life of holy love. This “much more” of salvation is how He actually saves us from our fallen nature.

1 John 2:12

12 I have written to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for His name’s sake.

1. The apostle John speaks of little children, young men, and Fathers when speaking of three different stages of salvation. The little children have turned to the Lord and trusted in Him to forgive their sins.
2. In the Old Testament type, the Jews first came under the protection of the blood while still in Egypt. The Jewish people were “passed over” when they put the blood on the door frame. But even with this elementary and justifying faith in God, they were still slaves in Egypt.

John 8:34-36

34 Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. 35 And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. 36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

1. The “slaves” are permitted to enter into the household of God. But they cannot abide in the house forever in this state. The slaves are those who are still attempting to live by law. They have not yet come to the place where they are “delivered from the law” so they may “serve in the newness of the Spirit.” (Rom. 7:6)
2. John Wesley served God in this legal state of spiritual bondage for a number of years. He believed in God, trusted in Christ’s shed blood for the forgiveness of his sins, submitted to the laws of God, prayed to God, and served the Lord as best he knew how. But he did not come into “the newness of the Spirit” until his Aldersgate conversion.
3. Those who live in this state will find themselves stumbling into sin {the self-centered and self-willed nature is still too strong to be overcome by their own efforts} and confessing on a regular basis. As long as they do not choose to live in it, and allow their conscience to be seared over, they can receive forgiveness through confession. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

Acts 10:22, 30, 34-35

22 They said, “Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation...” 30 So Cornelius said, “...a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God...’” ...34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. 35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him...”

1. We must not reject the “little children” who are attempting to serve the Lord as best they know how with their limited light. Even though it is clear they have not yet discovered how to enter into a Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered way of life, God accepts them if they fear Him and are attempting to serve Him.
2. Many people are in this state. Even though they are living by God’s laws, they feel like they are still slaves to their own desires. It is the reason they keep going forward for “relief” when they are brought under conviction from strong preaching. The Spirit is with them and they are clean in God’s sight (see John 13:10; 14:16, 17), but the Comforter has not come with His deep peace to dwell in their heart and to completely cleanse their conscience. (Heb. 9:14)
3. We should again note that slaves will not remain in the household forever. The old self-seeking and self-exalting nature—carnality—still has too much power to hold it back forever. Unless they have Wesley’s discipline, the spirit of the world will eventually turn their hearts from the ways of God.
4. Many of those who have had strong convictions to follow the Lord have hardened their hearts against the light of truth as revealed by Jesus. They may still be religious and in the church, but they are now living for self and the pleasures of this world. “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ {rejecting His way of dying to self}: whose end is destruction...who set their mind on earthly things.” (Phil. 3:18-19)

C. Walking in the Newness of the Spirit

Rom 6:3-11

3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin... 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. When Paul says that Jesus died to “sin” once for all, it means that He went all the way to the cross in dying to self-will. He never did anything out from Himself in His own will. His whole life was given up to being led by the Spirit. And by following this course all the way through the cross, He perfected the eternal Kingdom-life in bodily form {in a mortal body}.
2. God gave baptism to the church as a means to symbolize the necessity of dying to the old self-willed way of life. It is intended to help the new believer—the slave under law—consciously acknowledge his choice to die to self will. He chooses to seek to be led by the Spirit in all matters. The Spirit comes to dwell within the heart of those who make this choice. Having died to sin, those who are born of the Spirit walk in the newness of the Spirit.

1 John 3:8-9

8 He who sins {chooses to live in sin} is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

1. The devil chose to live by his own will and to seek his own honor. He wanted to have an independent life. It would enable him to direct his own steps and to exalt himself through his own works. This self-seeking and self-exalting form of life is the essence of sin.
2. The devil persuaded man to follow his self-directed way of life. It resulted in a world filled with people who think they are their own gods. It leads them to take charge of their life and direct their steps according to their own desires. “This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic {of the devil}. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.” (Jam. 3:15) This self-seeking way of life is what leads to wrath and separation from the Presence of God. “God...will render to each one according to his deeds...to those who are self-seeking...and do not obey the truth {as revealed through Jesus}...indignation and wrath.” (Rom. 2:5-8)
3. Those who are born of God stop living for self. They have chosen to go down into the watery grave and die to self-will, so they may be led by the Spirit according to

the Lord's will. "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, *that those who live should live no longer for themselves*, but for Him..." (2 Cor. 5:14-15 Emphasis added)

1 John 5:3-4

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world.

1. When the Spirit comes to dwell in the heart, He brings with Him the divine nature of Jesus. The life of Christ's Spirit is naturally in harmony with God and His ways. He comes to put within the heart a real desire to live for God and His purposes.
2. Those who overcome the world and its self-seeking way of life are set apart to live for God. They are "sanctified." They experience a real victory over the sin of self-will.

1 John 2:14

14 ...I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

1. The miraculous crossing of the Red Sea represents the point of salvation where God's children enter into a Spirit-directed way of life. After being passed over in Egypt, they are driven out in fear under law. A person will die in their sins if they then choose to stay in the self-seeking and self-exalting ways of Egypt, even though they were once forgiven. It was because John Wesley continued to serve God in fear in his legal state that he remained justified.
2. Because the miracle at the Red Sea represents the place where the Spirit comes to dwell in the heart, the motivation to move forward is changed from fear under law, to an inward "hunger and thirst after righteousness." (Matt. 5:6) This supernatural blessing identifies the point where the believer enters into the desert testing period.
3. Those who have overcome the self-directed ways of the devil and have entered into this Spirit-directed way of life will experience "dry spells" mixed with periodic "wells of refreshment." These times of refreshing are referred to as "the touches of the Lord." While this "living water" is necessary to keep advancing, it falls short of Christ's endless rivers of living water.
4. Christians with a hunger and thirst after righteousness naturally love to read their Bibles. Being highly motivated, these overcomers press the "little children" to spend more time with the Word. They know how this "manna" is able to sustain the soul in the desert.

Rom 8:12-17

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

1. Those who have overcome the world are free to live by the Spirit. They no longer experience the bondage of fear that comes from trying to live by law {serving God in their own strength through their own efforts and resolutions}.
2. Christians who have the Spirit dwelling within them do not need to respond to the desires of the flesh. But that does not mean the devil cannot tempt them. The wilderness is where the devil comes with his full arsenal in attempt to turn these new Spirit-directed children of God back to the self-seeking ways of the world. And many of them fall from God as Adam did. “For if you live according to the flesh {after receiving the Spirit}, you will die.” (v. 13)
3. Those who respond to the desires of the flesh will naturally manifest the works of the flesh. Some of the works of a self-willed way of life include “contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath {selfish anger}, selfish ambitions, dissensions.” (Gal. 5:20) Paul says that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (v. 21) These carnal traits are in conflict with Christ’s light of life. People die to the Spirit when they choose to yield to them.
4. The wilderness testing period is the time when Christians are expected to “put to death” every carnal trait. There must be a much deeper dying to everything that is self-originated before there is complete freedom from these subtle forms of carnality. There needs to be a looking to Christ to come in the power of His endless life so that the heart can be perfected in love. (Heb. 7:16, 19) Only in this way is it possible to completely overcome all these carnal traits.

1 Peter 5:6, 10

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time... 10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

1. The full salvation that perfects and establishes the heart in holy love is not a work that man does. Even if we could memorize every Scripture and commit ourselves to conform to its every requirement with the greatest of zeal, we would still fall short of God’s standard. God intends to manifest His eternal glory—His life of perfect love—through each of our lives.
2. Born again Christians, having overcome the hold of the world, are expected to seek to enter into the Son’s eternal Kingdom-life. Because they possess the Spirit {after a genuine new birth} they have the capacity to prepare the temple of their body according to God’s specifications. When the work of preparation is done, and the body is presented to God without any present or future reservations, the Lord will fill it with His glory. *It is the Living Word dwelling within the temple that makes it possible to live as God requires.*

Matt 5:39-48

39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. 41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away... 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that

you may be sons of your Father in heaven... 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

1. In God's Kingdom, His children live by the Spirit rather than by "law". These commands that describe the character of "life" in the Kingdom of God need to be obeyed. But they cannot be fulfilled when we try to conform to them as laws. Jesus has purposed to make this way of life an innate part of our inner nature. By establishing His eternal Kingdom-life within our heart, He enables us to respond to every situation with the Father's perfect love. We then have a nature that naturally fulfills all the righteous requirements of the Kingdom of God.
2. The way of law had to be annulled because it could not make anyone perfect in holy love. (Heb. 7:18-19) "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son {in the power of an endless life}...that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh {by our own efforts} but according to the Spirit {through faith in God's power to manifest His life through our mortal bodies}" (Rom. 8:3-4)

1 Thess. 5:16-18

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Phil. 4:4-7

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

1. The fully sanctified believer, because his life comes directly from God, will have a nature that naturally responds to these commands. "For the kingdom of God...is righteousness {the natural ability to fulfill God's righteous requirements} and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 14:17)
2. God expects His children to submit to all truth in the time of testing. There must be a submission, even when carnal tendencies are still resisting the truth. God has only promised to lift those who obey Him into the Son's life of holy love. (1 Pet. 5:6) "He who has My commandments and keeps them {in the time of testing}, it is he who love Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." (John 14:21)
3. We can determine if our heart has been entirely separated from the world {entirely sanctified}, by the way we react when our rights are violated. Those who are fully sanctified have become like the Lamb of God on the way to the cross. Having given up all right to themselves, they permit the Sovereign God to do whatever He pleases. Have you been enabled to "joyfully accept the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven"? (Heb. 10:34) It reflects a sanctified heart.
4. The only reason people experience a sense of loss when their goods are plundered is because those things were idols of the heart. Whenever a loss causes a void in

the heart, you can know that it was the loss of an idol. When everything has truly been surrendered to God, so that He is able to become All in All, there is never a void in the heart, regardless of our losses in this world.

5. “Rejoice in the Lord always... Be anxious for nothing...” It is not possible to obey these commands from the heart without first finding an abundant entrance into God’s everlasting kingdom, where the Lord reigns sovereign within the heart. Until every heart idol has been given over to God, along with all personal preferences and desires, it is only natural to become anxious and upset when these things are threatened or taken away.

D. Living in the Eternal Kingdom-Life

Col 3:1-3

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

1. Even though the born again child of God is partially sanctified and is free to live for God’s will alone, his heart will still have attachments to this world. These earthly things will be used for spiritual support. The wilderness testing period is where each of these idol must be removed from the heart. *God must destroy the old life that attempts to find life from the world through independence and self-sufficiency.* Until there has been a complete conversion to childlike dependence upon God for everything, it is not possible to enter into His eternal Kingdom-life. (Matt. 18:3)
2. We are initially raised up through the new birth. It provides an opportunity to take our mind off earthly things and look for the supernatural life that comes from God. Every weight from this world must be surrendered before our spirit is able to rise into the heavenly realms. God will only provide an abundant entrance into His heavenly life when we have let go of every “unclean thing.” The unclean thing in His sight is everything that is not wholly given over to Him. It also requires a complete surrender to holy love. “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)

1 John 2:14

14 I have written to you, Fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning.

1. To know God is to know His eternal life of holy love. His presence within our soul makes our nature like that found in Jesus when He revealed Himself as the Lamb of God. It is a nature that naturally sacrifices itself and everything it has for the good of God’s eternal kingdom. It is a heart free from attachments to this world and filled to its capacity with the eternal life.
2. The Son came specifically to enable God’s children to share with Him in His eternal life. “And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.” (1

John 2:25) “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” (1 John 5:11)

3. It is not possible to share with God in the eternal life while still attempting to find our life from this world. Adam lost the eternal life by taking this worldly course. God will only perfect the heart in holy love when there has been a real letting go of everything from this world, including self-sufficiency, self-seeking, self-will and independence {the right to direct one’s own life}.

1 Thess 5:23-24

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely {set you apart for His exclusive use}; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

1. God has purposed to take complete possession of our spirit, soul and body. When Adam was first created in God’s image, the Holy Spirit was at the control center of his life. The Spirit worked through Adam’s spirit to keep the soul and body under the complete dominion of God. But when Adam turned to self-will—the essence of sin—he separated himself from the Spirit of God. The Lord cannot “dwell in” and “walk in” someone when they are directing their own steps. At that point, the soul with its emotional needs and the body with its physical needs, began to control the activities of man. *He lived in a self-originated form of life that was moved by personal desires. This is the body of sin.*
2. God has purposed to restore the lost image by filling the temple with His glory. Once man has chosen to let go of all control over his life and surrender his every possession to God, the Lord will make His eternal life known within the heart. The endless flow of His “rivers” of Living Water is what completely satisfies the soul. Whoever has this life will “never thirst” for the things of this world. They begin to share with Christ in every spiritual blessing found in His heavenly life. (Eph. 1:3) “But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:14)

John 14:18-21

18 ...I will come to you. 19 A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. 20 At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.

1. *The key to a full salvation of the soul in this world is in this belief that Christ intends to manifest His life of holy love within us today.* “Then the nations {of this world} will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.” (Ezk. 36:23) “According to your faith it will be done to you.” (Matt. 9:29)
2. There is a salvation that makes us like God in holy love in this world. We must not overlook this divine life that is now available to everyone who will press into the Kingdom-life of promise and live through Christ. (1 John 4:9)

3. There is a real lifting up in due time after we have proven our willingness to fully submit to the leading of the Spirit through the wilderness testing period.
“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time... but may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” (1 Pet. 5:6, 10)

1 Peter 1:6-16

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. 10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow... 13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

1. Christ has promised to show Himself holy through us. This divine life of holiness was to be revealed to the nations in this world. Those who follow Him through the cross will be filled with His “light of life.” (John 8:12) *The life is received after dying to the world and its ways.*
2. Trials prove the genuineness of our purpose to serve the Lord both today and throughout eternity. Life in the eternal kingdom of God is reserved for those who have proven their faith in this world. These true children of faith hold onto the promises and continue to submit, even when they are not yet sharing with Christ in His eternal life.
3. Christians are therefore required to stop living by their own desires and to soberly press into the eternal Kingdom-life. “The law and the prophets were until John {the Baptist}. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.” (Luke 16:16)

James 1:2-4, 12

2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing... Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

1. The crown of life is held for us in heaven. But this never fading life can now be communicated to those who enter the life of promise. It always comes after a period of trials. The trials are intended to take away our independent and self-

sufficient spirit. Only by living as dependent and trusting little children can we be “perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

2. Even though the believer is required to step out in faith, living in all revealed light, it is the Sovereign God who chooses when He will reveal the eternal life within the soul. After girding up your mind to reject the self-seeking and self-exalting ways of this world, you are to “rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” He will come to you to reveal Himself within your soul as “rivers” of Living Water.

Heb. 10:35-39

35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God {while your faith is being tested}, you may receive the promise: 37 “For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

1. The Lord has promised to manifest Himself to those who obey Him. (John 14:21) We must not fall short of this great salvation. While there is a time of preparation we must press through with our responsive faith, we can also know that an ongoing experience of dryness in the wilderness is a sure sign of unbelief. There has been a lack of response in some area. There is still an idol in the heart, some area that still needs surrendered to God. “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 in because of unbelief.” (Heb. 3:18-19)
2. Daniel Steele has provided some excellent advise to those who have given themselves and everything they possess to the Lord, but have not yet received the promise:

“Keep on believing the promise and insisting that God is true. He may delay for days and weeks the declaration of your complete acceptance in order to develop and test your faith. The longer the delay, if you trust unwaveringly, the more marvelous the manifestation of Christ to your soul as your complete Saviour, when the Comforter takes the things of Christ and shows them to you. The Syrophenician woman lost nothing by pressing her suit against chilling discouragements. Faint not. Just here thousands have failed. They did not grasp the prize because they did not persistently believe.

“Others fail through a subtle legality. They trust in their consecration, and not in Jesus only. They take a commercial view [having a wide popular appeal] of the matter, and present the offering of their hearts as the meritorious ground of receiving the fullness of the Spirit. This is a piece of folly and presumption...”

“Others fail because of their seeking the gift [an experience], and not the Giver [the eternal life of holy love]. You must desire Jesus only [and all that He is]. You must pray this prayer: “Lord Jesus, glorify Thyself in me.” When you are seeking for some delicious ecstasy, you are not seeking to glorify Christ... There must be an absolute resignation of self and selfish desires in order to be a perfect believer...”

Appendix B

Salvation Illustrated

Steve Bray

The apostle Paul spoke of the experiences of the children of Israel in their deliverance from Egypt and their journey to the Land of Promise as being “examples” provided for our benefit. (1 Cor. 10:1-11) These examples, or spiritual types, provide lessons that can help New Testament Christians see where God has them in His work of salvation. Paul said “they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”

In this New Testament age of fulfillment, the real {spiritual} life of promise is now available to every believer. But only a “few” ever receive what has been promised. “Many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matt. 22:14)

Many of those who were once delivered out of Egypt {a type of the world and the bondage of sin} by the power of God, end up losing their first love while passing through the desert testing period. They turn away from Christ’s way of the cross and go back to living for earthly things. This is what led to Paul’s conclusion: “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (v. 12)

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud {they were all being led by the Spirit}...all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. (1 Cor. 10:1-5)

With these thoughts in mind, let us look more closely at some of the spiritual principles that are taught in this God-given example of salvation. The Lord delivered His people from their bondage in Egypt for the purpose of taking them into a life of promise. Everything He did had the objective of settling them in the land of Canaan.

The Land of Egypt. We begin by noting the helplessness of the people when it came to delivering themselves from the Egyptians. God permitted the captives in Egypt, which represents the world, to become more and more miserable in their worldly condition. He did not try to deliver them until they were fully aware of their need for it. He was willing to use the corruption of this world to expose their miserable state.

In preparing people to seek out His salvation, He also permits them to experience the weight of the law. The law of God will begin to reveal how the self-seeking and self-exalting nature is both evil and slated for destruction. (Rom. 2:5-8) It leads to a sense of fear and foreboding, helping us to recognize our great need for a supernatural deliverance through a work of God’s grace.

It was law that led Paul to this same conclusion. *Although he was a very religious man, he could not deliver himself from the covetous nature that always wants more for oneself.* The law was used to expose this evil and his powerlessness to deliver himself from it. So we find him saying, “For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin...produced in me all manner of evil desire {the self-seeking and self-exalting nature}... O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me

from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:7-8, 24) Those who take God’s Word seriously, will eventually be turned to Christ for the gift and power of His Spirit.

The Israelites were required to look to the blood of the lamb before they could make any further progress. The Passover lamb was a type of Christ. “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” (1 Cor. 5:7) The lamb was slain and the blood was shed. That was substitution. A Jew might have said with a believer today, “That lamb dies instead of me.”

Christ shed His blood to save the whole world. It is because of His shed blood that everyone under the age of accountability and everyone who is truly developmentally disabled will be saved. But there comes a point when most people become morally responsible for their actions. It is then necessary to personally appropriate Christ’s blood.

The believer was forgiven by God when he sprinkled the shed blood of the lamb on the door-frame. That is to say, each individual must acknowledge that their only hope is in Jesus and His shed blood. Only the blood sprinkled saved individuals from death.

This God-given lesson also teaches us that the Israelites first came under the blood while still back in Egypt. This was their Passover. They did not experience the death that came upon the Egyptians because they were in a forgiven state. But they were not yet set free from their bondage to sin.

John Wesley referred to people in this relationship with Christ as servants, rather than sons. He had lived in this kind of relationship with God until he had his Aldersgate experience. While these individuals can become quite disciplined in their religion, as the Pharisees did, those who are serious about their relationship with God will eventually acknowledge there is something wrong in their heart. They will not have the power to truly live above sin as long as self is at the center of everything.

Many of those in the church have never gotten beyond looking to the shed blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. If they are truly trying to serve the Lord as Wesley did in this condition, it appears they could be taken to heaven as the thief on the cross. But a person cannot expect to remain in this bondage for long without falling into the temptations of the devil. God will not permit someone who has remained a “slave” to sin to go on living in His house forever without seeking to be delivered.

Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave to sin.

And a slave does not abide in the house {of God} forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free {from sin}, you shall be free indeed. (John 8:34-36)

The Red Sea. The Israelites would have remained in bondage to sin if they had not chosen to come out of Egypt after receiving their Passover. Those who do not take advantage of the means that God has provided for victory over sin, can expect to die in their sins and end up in eternal spiritual death.

Again, we will admit that some people, like John Wesley, have spent many years trying to get out of Egypt in their own strength. But this is not how God planned for it to be.

We are driven out of Egypt by the law, in fear, because we know that our sins will eventually destroy us. *Our Passover will not have a lasting effect if we refuse to separate from the ways of the world.* “Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” (Jam. 4:4)

The crossing of the Red Sea was another significant step forward in God's work of saving His people. This is where they experienced a real deliverance from the power of sin. It represents the place where God's people receive the gift of His indwelling Spirit.

The Spirit is with the believer from the very beginning, as He was "with" Christ's first disciples prior to His death and resurrection. "But you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." (John 14:17) Those who are honestly seeking to be a disciple of Jesus will recognize His work in their lives. But this is not enough to gain victory over sin. The Spirit must be received within the heart before the believer will begin to experience a real sense of inward freedom and be able to serve God in the Spirit.

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and *given us the Spirit in our hearts* as a guarantee. (2 Cor. 1:21-22 Emphasis added)

When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within the heart, He comes as the dove of peace. His indwelling presence provides a deep sense of being at peace with God. He witnesses with our Spirit that we are children of God. This inner witness is our assurance or guarantee that we are living in a right relationship with our heavenly Father.

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. (Rom. 8:15-16)

We can only expect to have this inner witness of being right with God as we walk by the Spirit. We will experience either peace with God, or condemnation, depending on whether we are being led by the Spirit or are directing our own steps according to the desires of the flesh. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Rom. 8:1)

Those who still sense fear and condemnation because of their powerlessness to walk in harmony with Jesus, need to receive the gift of His indwelling Spirit. We are speaking of those who experience what Paul describes in Romans seven. While the Spirit is working "with" them, He is not yet "in" them.

I find then a law {an inward law of sin}, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good... But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (Rom. 7:21-23)

Paul said, "I would not have known sin except through the law." (Rom. 7:7) The Spirit uses the law to reveal the carnal mind. (Rom. 7:14) This condemnation of the law prepares God's called-out people to enter into this deeper level of salvation where they find freedom from sin and a deep sense of peace with God.

While Wesley referred to this step in God's work of salvation as moving from the state of a servant to that of a son, others, like John Fletcher and Daniel Steel referred to it as moving from the age of the Father to the age of the Son. It is the "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" that provides power over the flesh and gives the assurance that all our sins are forgiven. Through the eyes of faith we see all the dead and harmless Egyptians {who once held us captive in bondage} floating up on the shore.

Whoever has been born of God {when the Spirit comes to dwell within the heart} does not sin {does not willfully sin}, for His seed {the Holy Spirit} remains in him; and he cannot sin {willfully}, because he has been

born of God {and the indwelling Spirit has come to assist us in giving up our rebellion against God's ways and plans}. (1 John 3:9)

...If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live {in a new and higher spiritual life}. (Rom. 8:13)

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. (Rom. 8:2)

This deliverance from the experience of Romans seven to the freedom revealed in Romans eight is the first step in being sanctified. It is sanctification begun. It qualifies the believer to be called a saint, or one who is holy.

In fact, many of those who experience this sudden power over sin often believe they are fully sanctified. But this great miracle of the new birth does not perfect the heart in holy love.

Because this miracle that takes place at the Red Sea is representative of baptism, we need to take a closer look at how God intended for it to be used. "Our fathers were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (1 Cor. 10:2) Every believer needs to be led to this place where they are prepared to be baptized.

Most people see baptism as nothing more than a ritual. But God had a purpose for it. After the Ethiopian eunuch had heard the gospel message, believed in it, and saw water, he requested to be baptized. (Acts 8:35-38) In the same way that the Jews did not put off their crossing of the Red Sea, the eunuch knew from what he had heard that it would be helpful to submit to baptism. "So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him." (v. 38)

The apostle Paul's description of baptism helps reveal its purpose. He depicts it as going down into a watery grave where we die to self-will. It is this choice to die and be buried that prepares us to come out of the grave in a whole new form of life – a life of being led by the Spirit alone. Therefore, if it is to be effective, it will need to be understood as more than a mere ritual. Many of those in the church never find their way out of a Romans seven experience because they do not submit to what baptism represents.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death {choosing to die to self-will as Jesus did}, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection... For the death that he died, He died to sin {to self-will} once for all; but *the life that He lives, He lives to God*. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin {to self-will}, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:3-5, 10-11 Emphasis added)

At this point, we will acknowledge that it is not necessary to be immersed in water to accomplish what baptism is intended to do. But immersion, when used symbolically as a death and burial of the old self-willed way of life, is intended to help the new believer see more clearly what needs to take place in order to receive the gift of the Spirit. *Without this conscious choice to die to self-will, it is not possible to be born of the Spirit.*

The people of this fallen world naturally live by their own will. Self-will is the essence of sin. And they cannot become Spirit-led children of God until they choose to

reckon themselves dead to this old self-willed way of life. *God looks into the heart and can see when this true conversion has taken place.*

But present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as instruments of righteousness to God...* But now having been set free from sin {self-will}, and *having become slaves of God*, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin {self-will} is death {it results in an ever-dying spiritual life – “psuche” Greek}, *but the gift of God* is eternal life {“zoe” – Greek} in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:22-23)

Dying to the sin of self-will “once for all,” is what Christ’s death meant to our Lord. “He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.” (Rom. 6:10) He submitted His will absolutely to God. “Behold, I have come...to do Your will, O God.” (Heb. 10:9) “Not My will, but Yours, be done.” (Luke 22:42) Once there has been this unconditional surrender of the will to God, making possible an entrance into this Spirit-directed way of life, then “sin shall not have dominion over you.” (Rom. 6:14) “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin {the self-directed way of life}, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 6:11)

Those who choose to go down into the grave and die to self will, whether it is done in water, in a field or at an altar of their choosing, can expect to experience the miracle that takes place at the Red Sea. As they come up in faith to walk in the newness of a Spirit-directed way of life, they can expect the Spirit to begin dwelling within them. He comes to provide power over sin.

The Wilderness Testing Period. The Passover represents a deliverance from the Penalty of sin. The Miracle at the Red Sea provides the gift of the Holy Spirit and power over sin. But this is not the point at which God’s people are taken into the promised life of perfect love. There is still a period of testing that needs to be traversed.

Jesus is our forerunner. He has revealed the course that each of His followers must take. After the Spirit came to Him in the form of a dove {representing “peace with God”}, He was led into the wilderness testing period. It was then that He was required to make a conscious decision to resist the devil’s temptations to live by the lust {desires} of the flesh, the lust {desires} of the eyes and the pride of life.

This is where many of those who had a clear new birth experience have failed. Because there has been a lack of faithful teachers to tell them what came next, they were tempted by the devil to go back to living by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. They were deceived into thinking it was possible to serve two masters. You can therefore find them serving themselves while trying to work in some service for the Lord. But it never works in the end. While they may still go to church and remain in their religion, the spiritual life they once possessed is lost.

God’s children naturally come out of their conversion experience at the Red Sea singing praises to the Lord. The change is so great that many initially consider it the life of promise. But it is not long before they sense being in a desert wilderness where people still find themselves with a thirst for the things of this world, including its self-sufficient and self-gratifying ways. While the Lord does provide these earnest souls with periodic wells of refreshment to keep them moving forward, it is clearly not the life of promise where God’s children “never thirst.”

As the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. (John 7:38)

But whoever drinks of the water that I give him will *never thirst*. (John 4:14 Emphasis added)

You shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. (Isa. 58:11)

Those who have entered into the wilderness testing period are first blessed with a real hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is not the fear of punishment that moves them forward, but a deep desire to be filled with the Son's life of true righteousness. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5:6) But we must say again, if they begin sustaining themselves on the world {"the food which perishes" – John 6: 27}, this hunger for righteousness will soon be lost, along with their hope of being "filled" with Christ's life of heavenly righteousness.

It is in the wilderness, after receiving the gift of the Spirit, that God permits us to be fully tested. "Therefore, brethren, we are not debtors – not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh {after receiving the gift of the Spirit} you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body {the desires of the flesh and of the mind – Eph. 2:3}, you will live." (Rom. 8:12-13) You will be taken into the eternal "zoe" life.

While the new birth definitely supplies power over the flesh, it is not yet dead to the world and its things. This is where the "psuche" life must be lost before Christ's eternal "zoe" life can be found. Again, with Jesus setting the course to follow, we must choose to deny ourselves and lose the old "psuche" life that has its source in the temporal realm before we can find His eternal life. (Matt. 16:24-25). "My Father loves Me, because I lay down My {"psuche"} life... I lay it down of Myself..." (John 10:17-18)

God permits us to come out of Egypt with some of our old dependencies. He never requires us to give up more than He has prepared us to bear. But He cannot take us into the life of promise until these things have been lost in the wilderness. Every heart idol – everything that is not fully devoted to the Lord and His purposes – must be surrendered before the eternal soul can find the heavenly life of promise.

For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them..." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean {all heart idols must be given over to God for destruction}, and I will receive you." (2 Cor. 6:16-17)

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal {"zoe"} life, to which you were also called... (1 Tim. 6:12)

Once the supplies taken out of Egypt are gone and we begin to lose our self-sufficiency, God teaches us to live on manna alone. This manna represents His Word. We learn to sustain ourselves on the promises while the Lord teaches us His ways and tests us to see if we will fully surrender to the Kingdom-life He has described in His Sermon on the Mount, where the self-sacrificing love as depicted in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is being held up as the standard of love in God's kingdom. We are to seek first this kingdom of God and His righteousness above even the necessities of life. (Matt. 6:33) If we will take our eyes off the world and its things, He will make sure we have everything that is needed to sustain us physically.

It often takes some time to renew the mind and fully surrender to Christ's way of life. We soon begin to see how the ways of this world are diametrically opposed to the way of life in God's eternal kingdom. "For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:16) *We must choose to continue rejecting the spirit of the world as God increases our light in this time of testing. He will be preparing us to make the kind of full surrender that He requires.*

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. 12:2)

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 out to the flesh-life in the time of testing}, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (1 Pet. 5:10)

The Lord has only promised to manifest His heavenly life within those who have shown their willingness to yield to all revealed light. "He who has My commandments and keeps them {through the power of the Spirit}, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." (John 14:21) This promise is to those who have already received the gift of the Spirit.

Those who press forward in their faith during this time of testing, will soon come to the place where they are willing to live through the life of Christ alone. It is this deeper surrender that results in a complete healing of the inner nature. God fills the temple of these fully consecrated believers with His glory and begins to manifest His nature of holy love in everything they do.

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather healed. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God. (Heb. 12:12-15)

I will come to you... Because I live {in the eternal "zoe" life}, you will live also {in the same life}. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. (John 14:18-20)

We also need to recognize that group of believers who were permitted to live out their life in the desert wilderness without being destroyed. While they did not enter the life of promise, neither did they fall into the sin of living by their own fleshly desires. These earnest souls lived as pilgrims and strangers in the world, looking forward to their future life in heaven. They represent the Christians who are unable to lay hold of Christ's eternal life of promise by faith in this world. Instead of living wholly by the Spirit in faith, they continue in a mixed life of trying to serve the Lord in their own strength. Because they do not have a faith that looks for the firstfruits of heaven to come down into their heart, all their faith is in the future heaven.

These all died in the 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.... 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. (Heb. 11:13-16 Emphasis added)

Everyone who truly desires to live in holiness with the Lord will receive the life of promise in the end. *But the Christians we are now speaking about spend their lives serving the Lord in an arid land. They depend on the temporal wells of refreshment they periodically receive from the Lord to keep them going. They are like Moses. They are restricted from entering into the life of promise because they attempt to produce the Living Water from the Rock of Christ through their own efforts. They have never entered into the rest of faith by ceasing from their own works and learning to live through the life of Christ alone.*

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to come short of it... There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest... (Heb. 4:1, 9-11)

The Life of Promise. It will be helpful to provide a general description of “the life of promise” so we may avoid misconceptions. We have limited ourselves to Scriptural statements that reveal what is now available to everyone who believes. Each individual will need to search their own heart to determine if they have found what has been promised through the New Covenant:

1.) God has promised better things for us than a wilderness life of dryness and doubt. It is a life where the soul remains blessed, with all discontentment vanishing. We can now receive a constant and abiding supply of Christ’s “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 14:17)

2.) It is a life of deep rest of soul. “Come to Me...and I will give you rest... Learn from Me...and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matt. 11:28-29) Soul rest does away with “spiritual” weariness.

3.) It is a life where the soul enjoys the “peace of God.” (Phil. 4:7) This is much greater than “peace with God.” “*My peace* I give to you.” (John 14:27 Emphasis added) Those who experience anything other than a Christ-like peace—even under opposition, oppression, loss and perplexity—should seek to gain an abundant entrance into the life of promise.

4.) It is a life where the fruit of Christ’s Spirit flows without ceasing. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Gal. 5:22-23) If you find a contrary spirit periodically rising out of your heart, there is still a need to have it purified through a filling with Christ’s Spirit. “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit.” (Matt. 7:18)

5.) This fruit from Christ’s Spirit includes the presence of His joy. “My joy may remain in you...your joy may be full.” (John 15:11) “I will see you again {as an indwelling life} and your heart will rejoice, *and your joy no one will take from you.*” (John 16:22 Emphasis added) This divine life that comes down from the heavenly realms is not overcome by the things of this world. An inward sense of “joy in the Holy Spirit” “may remain in you,” even while passing through severe hardships.

6.) The Presence of God within the soul provides an intimate knowledge of His divine nature. “We {the triune God} will come to him and make our home with him.” (John 15:23) The Spirit imparts “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face {the image} of Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. 4:6) We become filled with His life of holy love. “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 17:22-23, 26) “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory...*to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge*; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Eph. 3:16-19 Emphasis added) Being filled with the fullness of God is what enables us to “know God” and reveal His spiritual image.

You should not put off pressing into this life of promise until you can learn more about where it may lead. Like the Jews of old, there are still those who insist on having reports from the new territory before they go forward. *To God it represents unbelief and distrust in Him.* Once He has prepared His called-out people to enter His life of promise, He expects them to go forward by consecrating themselves completely to Him regardless of where it may lead. *You will need the trust of a little child that is willing to go wherever it is led by its parent if you hope to have God raise you spiritually into His heavenly life.* Many have failed to enter the life of promise because they hesitated to move forward after God had led them up to the Jordan. He has sent many back into the wilderness for a few more years of dryness and struggle for hesitating at this point.

God eventually prepared a people who would step out in faith. With the flooded river before them, and the full realization that it could not be crossed without divine intervention, they stepped forward, trusting in God. The Lord performed the miracle when the first step touched the water. Without this step of faith, the river will not open.

No sooner had they entered the life of promise than the Lord appeared to Joshua. He came as a Commander to take complete control of their lives. Once He manifests {reveals} Himself {within the soul}, He becomes the source of power and victory over every situation. He said to Joshua, “As Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” (Joshua 5:14)

Christ is now far above all other principalities and power. He has a life that nothing from this world or the world of evil spirits can touch. *And He has given everyone access to this victorious life through faith.* Every spiritual blessing in His life is now at our disposal. (Eph. 1:3) Once we have counted everything as loss, including our own righteousness and zeal, and have learned to live through Him alone, we will find that we can do “all things through Christ.” (Phil 4:13) “I will come to you... Because I live, you will live also.” (John 14:18, 20)

This crossing of the Jordan is truly a miraculous event in the spiritual progress of a Christian. *We should note that the river was backed up to “Adam.”* (Josh. 3:16) *The Lord comes to fill the vessel of our body with the glory that Adam originally lost. The lost image is regained when we are once again living through the heavenly life of the Son.* (Rom. 5:17)

This does not imply that we have “arrived.” God is infinite, and there is lots of room for growth in His eternal life. For example, Jesus revealed the image of the Father through His mortal body from a very young age. From the point He was old enough to walk by the Spirit, the life of His Father could be revealed through Him. We are also told that He grew in wisdom and stature. As He received more light and responded to His Father’s will, more and more of His Father’s life could be revealed through His mortal body. Similarly, with an infinite God of light before us, we are to grow with ever-increasing glory into His heavenly life.

Christ, as He lives in His glorified state, is now in a position to pour out His heavenly life and fill every vessel. “He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all

the heavens, that He might fill all things.” (Eph. 4:10) “And of His fullness we have all received {we all have access to the same life}, and grace for grace.” (John 1:16) And praise the dear Lord Jesus, it is a vessel that can just continue to expand and be filled as we yield to what God is working out in our life. *Why go on living in your own strength with its wilderness experience {a dry and thirsty land} when you can now share with Christ in His heavenly life?*

The Son will become your life once His power has been perfected through the weakness of dependent faith. Be prepared to come to that place where you can honestly say that you no longer live and that Christ has become your life. Count that old oppressive “psuche” life as loss and seek the eternal “zoe” life that comes from above.

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form {the life of the Trinity was reestablished in a human body, the Second Adam}, and you have been given {access to} fullness in Christ {to every blessing in Him}, who is the head over every power and authority. (Col. 2:9-10 NIV)

Appendix C

Jesus is very clear in His teaching about finding His life. He insists we must deny ourselves and take His way of the cross. Because of the importance of this specific teaching, we have provided the following lessons about the working of the cross. They were extracted from articles published in the October 1999 edition of the *Herald of His Coming*.

How Do You See the Cross – by Robert E. Coleman

Jesus said that whoever would come after Him must “give up all right to himself.” (Mark 8:34 Phillips) He must lose his life to find it. (Mark 8: 35)

When the Christian faces this fact, he is made aware of an inner disposition that does not want to submit. His human inclination is to try to work out a compromise whereby both self-centeredness and devotion to Christ are made to live together. But the trouble is that Christ will not be satisfied with less than all. The cross demands that self must die.

There can be no getting around it. “The flesh with the affections and lusts” must be crucified with Christ. (Gal. 5:24; 6:14)...

But is not this the secret of true, deep, abiding joy? Only as we die with Christ can we truly live with Him. Or, to put it another way, only as we are emptied of self can we be filled with His Spirit...

This is the issue before us. It is well enough for us in the church to talk about the cross, but what is more to the point is for us to come down from our selfishness and pride and die on that cross ourselves...

Probably, though, the most difficult thing for us to realize about total commitment is that it involves us in a practical life of service. Jesus called His disciples to “follow” Him...

Human thinking is staggered before such a challenge. The worldly-minded chief priests reflected the way men look at it when they mockingly said of Jesus on the cross, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save.” (Mark 15:31)

What they failed to comprehend in their smugness, of course, was that Jesus had not come to save Himself. He came to save them. He “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:28)...

This was the only reason for His earthly existence... Continually setting Himself apart for this work was His sanctification, and He prayed that it also might be the commitment of His followers. “As Thou has sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” (John 17:18-19)... {His sanctified life will produce the same kind of self-sacrificing life in us when we are fully sanctified and living in the light of His truth.}

His sanctification, as the Scripture reveals, was not for any inherent need in His person. It was for “their sakes.” It was a commitment to the task for which He had been sent into the world. It was a daily giving of Himself for us, even unto death.

Surely this is a dimension of life in Christ which needs to be understood. Without this daily giving of ourselves in service, our dedication is not going to mean much to others or to ourselves. The victory of the crucified life comes in no other way...

Whether we are to accept the challenge or not will depend on the way we look at the cross... But if we want to know the power of the resurrection life, we will have to

renounce our self-sufficiency, abandon everything to Christ, and go in His name to serve those He died to save...

The Blood of the Cross – by Andrew Murray

We are so accustomed in speaking about the Cross of Christ to think only of the work that was done there for us. We take too little notice of that from which that work derives its value – the inner disposition of our Lord of which the cross was only the outward expression. Scripture does not place in the foreground as most important the weighty and bitter suffering of the Lord. These are often emphasized for the purpose of awaking religious feelings. Scripture emphasizes the inner disposition of the Lord which led Him to the cross...

It [also] directs special attention to the work that the cross accomplished in Him, and which through Him must yet be accomplished in us also... This appears not only from our Lord's words which He spoke from the cross, but from what He said when on three different occasions He had previously told His disciples that they must take up their cross and follow Him...

And that this did not consist in merely outward sufferings and persecutions, but in an inward disposition, appears from what He often added, "Deny yourselves and take up the cross." This is what he desired them to do.

Our Lord further teaches us that neither for Him nor for His disciples does the bearing of the cross begin when a material cross is laid upon the shoulders. No! He carried the cross all through His life. What became visible on Golgotha was a manifestation of the disposition which inspired His whole life...

From His baptism with the Holy Spirit and the temptation of Satan which followed, up to the fearful soul agony in Gethsemane and the offering of Himself on the cross, His life was a ceaseless strife against self-will and self-honor, against the temptation of the flesh and of the world. He was tempted to reach by fleshly or worldly means His goal of setting up His kingdom. Every day He had to take up and carry His cross, that is, to lose His own life and will by going out of Himself and doing and speaking nothing but what He had seen or heard from the Father...

He was tempted to the sin of self-assertion, but He overcame the temptation... He offered up Himself and His life. He denied Himself and took up His cross... In His own person He gained complete victory over the power of sin {the self-originated form of life} till He was able to testify that the evil one, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me."

The Lord Jesus desired to deliver man from his sin. He could not do this save by suffering death... *The cross is the divine sign, proclaiming to us that the way, the only way to the life of God is through the yielding up in sacrifice of the self-life.*

This spirit of obedience, this sacrifice of self, which bestowed on the cross its infinite value, bestowed that value also on the blood of the cross. Here again God reveals to us the secret of the power of that blood. That blood is the proof of obedience unto death of the Beloved Son. *It is proof of that disposition which chose to offer the blood, to shed it, to lose His own life rather than commit the sin of pleasing Himself.* It is proof of the sacrifice of everything, even life itself, to glorify the Father {that is, to display His life of perfect love}...

But as the blood could not have been shed apart from the sacrifice of “self” on the cross, so it cannot be received or enjoyed apart from a similar sacrifice of “self.” That blood will bring to us a “self” sacrificing disposition, and in our work there will be a conformity to and an imitation of the crucified One, making self-sacrifice the highest and most blessed law of our lives...

Let us meditate upon the power which the blood exercised in heaven till our unbelief itself is conquered and our right to these heavenly powers, by faith, fills our lives with joy...

Scripture teaches us that the cross not only works out a disposition or desire to make such sacrifice, but it really bestows the power to do so, and completes the work... This appears with wonderful clearness in the Epistle of the Galatians... “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” (Gal. 2:20)... “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Gal. 6:14)...

To understand this, we must remember that when Jesus chose the cross, and took it up and carried it, and finally died on it, he did this as the second Adam, as the Head and Surety of His people. That which He did, had, and retains power for them, and exercises that power in those who understand and believe this. The life which He bestows on them is a life in which the cross is the most outstanding characteristic...

As the believer is united to Him and receives His life, he receives a life that through the cross has overthrown the power of sin, and he can henceforth say, “I am crucified with Christ.” “I know that my old man is crucified with Christ”; “I am dead to sin” [dead to living for self and self-will]; “I have crucified the flesh”; “I am crucified to the world.” (Rom. 6:6, 11)...

The Spirit and life of Jesus bestow on believers their share in the victory over sin which was achieved on the cross. And now in the power of this participation and fellowship, they live as Jesus lived. They live always as those crucified to themselves, as those who know that their “old man” and “flesh” are crucified so as to be put to death...

The law of life for Jesus was the surrender of His own will to that of the Father by giving up that life to death, so as to enter upon the heavenly life of redemption—by the cross, to the throne... The marvelous power by which Jesus subdued sin [self-will] on the cross, lives and works in us. It not only calls us to live as He lived, but enables us to do so, to adopt the cross as the motto and law of our lives...

What we need is a right view of Jesus Himself and of His all-conquering, eternal love. The blood is the earthly token of the heavenly glory of that love; the blood points to that love. What we need is to behold Jesus Himself in the light of the cross {and then fully surrender to the objective of receiving His life into our heart}...

Glorious cross! It brings to us and makes known to us the eternal love... *Beloved Christian whose hope is in the blood of the cross, give yourself up to experience its full blessing. Each drop of that blood points to the surrender and death of self will, of the “I” life, as the way to God and life in Him. Each drop of that blood assures you of the power of a life, a heavenly life, obtained by Jesus on the cross, to maintain that disposition, that crucified life, in you. Each drop of that blood brings Jesus and His eternal love to you to work out all the blessing of the cross in you and to keep you in that {perfect} love.*

The Gain of The Cross: “Not I, But Christ” – by J. Gregory Mantle

The goal to which the Holy Spirit leads every new-born soul is that which is so strikingly expressed by Paul in the familiar words, “Not I, but Christ.” The human “I” is not perfected by...progress, as some have so strangely concluded. The human “I” is delivered over to death, and by the power of the Holy Ghost is ever kept in the place of death, while Christ takes the place of the “I” and reigns supremely on the throne of the being, the entire government of which is on His shoulders. {When the self-life dies, Christ’s Kingdom-life of perfect love begins its eternal reign within the heart.}

There is no more important question among the many which gather around this subject than this: How is it possible so to live that those around us will always see “Not I, but Christ.” We believe the answer is largely found in what Paul calls the “putting on” of Christ...

When Ignatius exclaimed: “My love is crucified!” he meant that his natural, earthly affection – with all the passions pertaining to it – hung on the cross, and that he had claimed and received in its stead, a heavenly and immortal love. Why is there such a lack of {perfect} love among Christians? *Why is the badge of true discipleship so seldom seen? Is it not because God’s children have not learned to put off the old love that is so limited in its power of expression and so easily provoked, and put on the love of Jesus “which is not provoked, which thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, which never faitheth”?*

Whoever dies to the natural, says Tauler, the outflow as well as the inflow of his life is Divine love. Men who are not dead to themselves, he continues, often love by nature, thinking it is by grace, and when they are blamed for this, they are troubled and become angry. This should tell them that their love is natural. “Divine love is at all times patient and suffers all things. It lets itself be hated, but it hates no one and puts the best construction on all things. *Men not dead to themselves are agitated when contradicted, and distracted from their peace.*” ...

The secret of possessing an unfailling love is to claim the fulfillment, moment by moment, of Christ’s own desire, “That the love wherewith Thou has loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:26) The indwelling of Jesus and the indwelling of Divine Love are conceived of here as one and the same thing, and they truly are inseparable...

We cannot put on the new over the old, as some have strangely taught. The old man waxes corrupt according to the lusts of deceit, and if we do not put him off he will wrap his poisonous vesture about us – which according to its inmost nature, will wax more and more corrupt *{and will expose itself in selfish words and actions}*... The new man, on the contrary, is by a continuous process “being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him.” (Col. 3:9)... We cannot be too frequently reminded that it is only by “putting on” Christ that we “put off” self...

“We must ‘put away’ our old self,” writes Dr. R. W. Dale. “It is not in a single limb or a single organ that we are affected; the very springs of life are foul... We are to ‘put on’ Christ. We are to make our own, every separate element of His righteousness and holiness. We are to make His humility ours...His gentleness and His invincible integrity...the quiet submission with which He endured His own sufferings, and His compassion for the sufferings of others; His indifference to ease and wealth and honor, and His passion for the salvation of men from all their sins and all their sorrows... He is

living still. The fountains of my life are in Him. It is the eternal purpose of the Father that as the branch receives and reveals the life which is in the vine, I should receive and reveal the life which is in Christ...”

The Cross and Prayer – by F. J. Huegel

Let us consider prayer in the light of our crucifixion with Christ... True communion {*which is an experiential communion with God in the heavenly realms*} is only possible when the old life is terminated.

The only reason why many find prayer so unsatisfactory and the life of prayer so unattractive is because they have attempted to enter into prayer’s celestial realm in the strength of the “old man.” The “old man” can no more wield these weapons which are “not carnal but mighty through God,” than he can “love his enemies,” or “rejoice always,” or “have the mind which was in Christ Jesus... The “old man” may imitate these graces, but he can never actually possess them.

They are “the fruit of the Spirit.” They come from above. They are the outworkings of the Christ-nature, imparted to the believer and incorporated in his being on the basis of the cross, that is, a removal of the old nature by a participation in Christ’s death.

True prayer {the kind that regularly moves the hand of God} can only be inaugurated on the basis of our crucifixion with Christ. This is the prime condition. “If you abide in Me and I in you, you shall ask whatever you will and it shall be done unto you.”... But we cannot be in Christ in the fullest sense without committing to death the “old life” in the power of the Savior’s death...

It is then that our spirits, liberated by the power of the cross from the fleshly and the soulish entanglements, “mount up on wings as eagles.” It is then that communion with the infinitely adorable One who inhabits Eternity, comes spontaneously and naturally to its fullest expression. It is then that the injunction, “Pray without ceasing,” ceases to be an unintelligible command, for the spirit released from the... “flesh life”... rises to take its place with Christ in the Heavenlies, where prayer is the continuous in-breathing of the life of God.

It is then that prayer, energized by the Spirit of the living God, which it cannot be until it is freed from all selfish ingredients, becomes at times a groaning which is unutterable, and which does not fail to move mountains, and achieve the impossible. It is then that prayer becomes a working out of the will of God and therefore must prevail, be the difficulties what they may, however staggering the problem, however great the need...

The crying need of the day, as it has been of all times, is the expulsion of the monster of selfishness from the hearts of men, and the opening up of the floodgates in the life of the nations for the free circulation of the great love of Christ. There is no other healing for the nations, there is no other hope for the individual soul.

Shall we not then give place to a pure Christianity? Christ cannot possess us and cause the rivers of Living Water which He has promised to flow forth from our hearts with healing, renovating, transforming, abounding force, unless we are willing to be dispossessed of our own life. Christ will not rear His edifices upon the old foundations of selfishness. *It is not a case of simply denying ourselves certain things, but of a complete renunciation of ourselves.*

Christ took us with Himself to the cross. The so-called Adamic life, the “old man,” was potentially terminated at Calvary... If we are followers of Christ, His death to sin {self-will} is our death to sin {self-will}; His resurrection our resurrection; His victory our victory... God grant to us the grace to claim our full heritage that thus we may be more than conquerors...

“Worthy Is The Lamb of God” – by Lois J. Stucky

Jesus clearly tells us, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” (Luke 9:23) We need our Lord so greatly in order to live the crucified life victoriously. And it is when we need Him greatly and seek Him intensely that we “find” him, and oh what a “find!”...

God help us not to evade the cross but to embrace it, not to stagger beneath it but to accept it in faith, to thank God for it, to praise Him for it, even to rejoice in it. The Apostle Paul said he gloried in the cross. (Gal. 6:14) Do we mean it when we sing the words, “In the cross of Christ I glory”...? That includes rejoicing in it...

There is heavenly reward for bearing the cross. And there are gains in this life, one being the power to live a life impossible for us to live in the natural {by our own strength}... Oh, what a salvation – “Not I, but Christ who liveth in me.”

It is the cross operating in our lives which sets us free from selfishness to serve God. Our commission is to go into all the world with the Gospel of Christ. *It was a cross that provides the Good News of salvation and it takes, as someone has written, a crucified man to preach a crucified Savior.* It takes a heart set free from its own plans and desires to be available to God for wherever He has need of him or her.

Our calling as Christians is to honor the Lamb of God, who resigned His own will to do the will of the Father, the meek and lowly Lamb who did always those things that pleased the Father. And we are to give honor to this Lamb, and follow Him in a society that honors self-assertiveness, and independence, and self-indulgence.

Oh young people, watch yourself against self-indulgence, when Christ calls us to a life of self-denial {self-renunciation}... And certainly young people are not the only ones who must guard against self-indulgence when it is self-denial {self-renunciation} that will enable us to serve God fully...

God gives to each of us tests to prove our devotion to Him and our willingness to deny ourselves in order to serve Him in that particular niche where He has need for us... But in the measure in which we are tested for the sake of the self-sacrificing Lamb of God, may we prove to be those willing and obedient, counting even cherished things but loss for His sake, and loving not even our lives more than we love our dear Savior.

Appendix D

J. A. Wood, in his book *Perfect Love*, has provided a number of insightful lessons “concerning the doctrine, experience, profession and practice of Christian holiness.” The following extracts are intended to provide further clarification of the teachings already presented. While the quotes include statements from other writers, the page numbers are from Wood’s book.

B. W. Gorham, in his book *God’s Method with Man*, said, “Entire sanctification is the complete purification of the heart, resulting, through the blood of Jesus Christ, from the pervading presence and governing power of the Holy Spirit, continually possessing and occupying the nature, and subduing all things therein unto Himself.” (p. 37)

William McDonald, in his book *Scriptural Views*, said, “It is the removal from our moral natures, through faith in Christ, all sinful desires and tempers – all pride, {selfish} anger, envy, unbelief, and love of the world; and the possession in these purified natures of the unmixed graces of faith, humility, resignation, patience, meekness, self-denial, and love.” (p. 38)

Wood says, “Perfect love is distinguished by the character of its enjoyments. It craves the spiritual, the holy, and the divine. Its enjoyments are purely religious; they are sought by prayer, reading the Scriptures, pious meditations, and by acts of Christian duty and usefulness. The enjoyments of a pure heart are sweet, rational, and unwasting.” (p. 67)

In responding to his own question, “Does Christian perfection exclude a liability to temptation?” Wood answers, “It does not. Adam and Eve were tempted in Eden... Even Jesus ‘suffered being tempted,’ (Heb. 2:18). If temptation is incompatible with holiness, then he was unholy. He had a long and bitter siege of temptation... He was ‘in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.’... A liability to temptation is an unchangeable condition of probation.” (p. 61)

Wood also said, “The idea that deliverance from indwelling sin, and a state of entire sanctification may be secured by the ordinary process of growth, we regard as a serious mistake...” At the same time he said, “the preparatory process is usually more or less gradual... Preceding entire sanctification there is a gradual process of obtaining light, receiving conviction, hungering after purity, confession, prayer, and faith. These do not gradually sanctify the soul, but precede that work.” (p. 82)

Concerning the believer’s part in seeking holiness of heart, Wood says, “The process is a humbling, sifting, searching, crucifying one. When the believer begins to pray for holiness, instead of receiving at once a baptism of sweet heavenly fire and glory, the soul begins to see more and more of its own vileness, deformity, and inward corruption. God makes to the soul a more clear and painful discovery of remaining impurity. The soul has no more depravity now than it had before, but is becoming more thoroughly acquainted with itself. It has now a clearer view of the tendency in itself to evil, and of the fact that it is shut up to the grace of God for help. Hence it is that, when a believer begins to pray for purity, he appears to himself to grow worse and worse. *This spiritual poverty and crucifixion is sometimes very distressing, but in the nature of the case is a necessary process.* At this point there is much danger of getting discouraged and giving up; here many fail at the very threshold of success.” (p. 114)

In a warning to Christians who have failed to press into the Canaan of perfect love after reaching its borders, Wood says, “The Israelites were ordered back into the wilderness; Christians begin to backslide when they feel it their duty, and see it their privilege, to seek holiness, and refuse to do it. As Israel could not stay on the borders of the promised land and not go over, so believers will backslide if they do not go on unto perfection.” (p. 181)

Again, he says, “It is usually the case that persons who have been repeatedly convicted of their need of holiness and of their duty to seek it, and have refused to do it or have put forth at times some slight efforts to obtain it and then relapsed into indifference upon the subject, become its worst enemies. They become displeased with those who faithfully preach it, and dislike to hear it personally professed. This is the natural result of neglected duty and of grieving the Holy Spirit. They become opposed to holiness because holiness is opposed to them.” (p. 220-221) {They have become “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18), not the cross that Jesus died on, but enemies of the one we must offer our self-life on}.

Simply stated, the spirit of the world and the spirit of holiness are at war with each other. Wood says, “The Spirit of God and the spirit of the world can never harmonize... There is no sympathy between sin and holiness and no medium ground for any one to occupy... God, in infinite mercy, has instituted a way of salvation by which wicked men may be redeemed from sin, but never in sin. Those whom God has saved hate sin {self-will} and love holiness {being separated to God for his exclusive use}... The more fully the children of God are possessed of the Spirit of Christ, the more vigorous is their contest with the world; and vice versa... (p. 288-289)

Appendix E

The Saving Life of Our Lord

Steve Bray

Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” (John 6:28-29 NKJV)

Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” John 8:27-29

The Son of God came into the world to provide a perfect sacrifice for our sins. He was the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world. It is in this sense that the Hebrew writers asks, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb. 9:14) Yes, through the justification that Jesus Christ has provided, and the resulting new birth, it is now possible to have a conscience that has been completely cleansed from all sense of sin. This, in turn, sets us free from the dead and useless works that people try to use to make themselves feel right before God.

There are many people within the church today who still need to experience this great work of the Lord that truly cleanses the conscience and makes it possible to know a deep sense of peace with God. Others have experienced this work of justification and the new birth, but have fallen short of the saving life of our Lord. They do not realize that Christ’s work of justification is merely a door that leads to His real work of saving the soul from the sinful nature.

There is a natural tendency for Christians, who are still living in a justified state, to turn to the temporal world to find spiritual fulfillment. You will find them attempting to develop their spiritual life through their relationships, their possessions and by what they can make of themselves through their human efforts. Because they generally live by sight, they only look to God for spiritual help when their various worldly means have failed.

God never intended for His children to find their life from the temporal realm. It was His purpose from the beginning to manifest His own eternal life {“aionios zoe”} through the souls of everyone who lived by faith in Him. The eternal life is more than a life that goes on forever. It refers to a very special quality of life that will manifest the Son’s “light of life” from heaven through the human vessel. This divine {“zoe”} life has its source in the Father, but it must flow through the Son to individuals by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are expected to receive the firstfruits of this eternal life today if we desire to share with God in His divine life forever. It is in this sense that Paul would not only tell Timothy, but every Christian, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal {zoe”} life, to which you were also called...” (1 Tim. 6:12)

When Jesus died, He removed the veil that had separated man from the divine life of God. Here is the difference between the Old and New Testaments. We have a record of people being justified before God beginning soon after the Fall of Adam. When Adam received a covering from God through the shedding of the blood of an animal, he was brought back into a justified state. But Adam was still barred from the Garden of Eden. The word Eden means pleasure. It represents the pleasure that man can enjoy within his soul when he is sharing with God in His eternal life. Because of what Christ did on the Cross to rend the veil, man can now enter back into the firstfruits of the eternal life. It is a heavenly life imparted to the soul that no one from the Old Testament could experience. Christ had to actually die before He could begin sharing His eternal life {"aionios zoe"} with those who live entirely by faith in Him.

Jesus displayed the eternal life when He lived in a mortal body. He also spoke of the living water that He can give as welling up from within to a display of the eternal life. He said, "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 springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14) The word "everlasting life" refers to the special quality of "eternal life" that comes from God. This eternal life can now begin welling up from within our soul as an ever-flowing fountain and keep us from ever again thirsting for things of this world.

There was a rich young ruler in the Jewish religious system who had heard Jesus speak of the eternal life. He had also been able to see this heavenly quality of life being manifested through the mortal body of Christ. He therefore came to Jesus and asked how he too might receive this eternal life that Jesus spoke about. He ended up turning away from the promise of this eternal life because he was not prepared to follow Jesus in His way of life and begin wholly sustaining himself on the living water that comes from heaven. Once again we must say that *those who depend on "things" from this world to develop their own form of spiritual {"psuche"} life, cannot gain access to the living water that God will supply to those who depend on Him alone for their fulfillment.*

Everyone who has experienced a cleansed conscience and deep sense of peace with God, needs to begin asking themselves if they have been fighting the good fight of faith in order to take hold of the eternal life. Has the living water that continually wells up to perfect love, joy and peace begun to flow through your soul? Do you still find yourself thirsting for things of this world {including a reputation} and depending on temporal relationships, possessions, and the need to be recognized and honored in order to be lifted spiritually? If so, you need to press forward in your faith by turning away from your dependence on the temporal realm until Christ begins to manifest His eternal life through your soul. We can say with Paul, "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His {indwelling "zoe"} life." (Rom. 5:10)

There is a full salvation to be received in this world that will establish Christ's eternal Kingdom-life within the heart. The Kingdom-life is what enables us to fulfill all the righteous requirements made known in God's Word, including the high standards found in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. It was not God's intention for us to strive at obeying His laws through our own human efforts. His purpose was to enable us to be partakers with Him in His divine nature so we could do by nature what He requires of us. In the same sense that you do not need to command a bird to fly in order to make it respond in the way that God had purposed for it, you do not need to force a person who is sharing

with God in His eternal life to act as God has purposed. It naturally occurs when we are fully sharing with God in His nature of perfect love. This supernatural and naturally self-sacrificing love is what enables us to fulfill all the righteous requirements of the law. “For the kingdom of God {within the heart}...is righteousness {perfect love} and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 14:17)

Most Christians are still attempting to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law through their own human efforts. They are living by law. And some, because they are highly disciplined, do quite well. Like the Pharisees, they show forth an outward display of holiness that impresses many people. But inside their hearts are far from being perfect in love. They have never truly died to the self-life that would permit the Lord to manifest His heavenly life within their soul. It is why there is a hardness that is displayed through their lives and actions, in spite of all their profession of holiness. They end up putting out the fire of many new-born Christians who have come to Christ with a flickering flame. Since they live by law, they use the law in a way that kills. They have not understood the following passage that Paul wrote to the Galatians:

Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life {the divine eternal life of perfect love}, truly righteousness would have been by the law... But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (Gal. 3:21-24)

God gave laws in order to control sin. He needed a means to keep some order in this world until Christ came and began to establish His Kingdom-life of righteousness and peace and joy within the heart. The law, when used properly, will expose the corrupt nature and convict of sin. It will turn people to Christ and the justification that supernaturally cleanses the conscience. But again, this is only the beginning of salvation. These new Christians are then expected to press forward in their faith by turning from the temporal realm as the source of their spiritual life, and waiting on Christ to manifest His eternal life through their soul. While the law cannot impart the heavenly Kingdom-life to the soul (Gal. 3:21), Christ can!

The divine life of Christ within our soul is what enables us to do by nature what God requires of us. The law exposes the fallen nature within us so we will be prepared to die to the temporal world and enter into the eternal life that enables us to fulfill all the righteous requirements of the law. “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled {fully met} in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:3-4) The indwelling life of Christ alone can make the heart perfect in love and enable us to fulfill all the righteous requirements of the law.

The Hebrew writer therefore explains how Christ, the Great High Priest, came “according to the power of an endless life.” (Heb. 7:16) He came to overcome the old Adam-life that everyone has inherited through the fall, and has begun a new line of people who live through the eternal life as He did. While the laws of God reveal how we are expected to live, we are not expected to fulfill these requirements through our own efforts. We are expected to press forward in our faith until Christ comes to us in “the power of an endless life”, so we may manifest His life of perfect love in everything we

do. Only then will all our actions be right before God. “For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect...” (Heb. 7:18-19) But praise our God, Christ can. “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him...” (Heb. 7:25)

We can see that faith has a much greater work to do than to enter into a justified state through our dependence on Christ’s shed blood. You are to “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called...” (1 Tim. 6:12) It will require a much greater faith to enter into this much fuller salvation. You must choose to die to the ways this world uses {feeding from the temporal realm} to develop spiritual life. You must learn to sustain your spiritual life on Jesus alone. You can also expect to be tested. The Lord will often leave us without anything to hold us up spiritually, other than the promises found in His Word, while our faith is being tested. If you will hold on by continuing to wait on the Lord to do what He has promised, without turning back to temporal means to develop your spiritual life, He will lift you up spiritually in due time, by manifesting His eternal life within your soul.

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. (John 14:21)

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your cares upon Him, for he cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. 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 out to the self-sustaining ways of the world}, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” (1 Pet. 5:6-10)

Christ will surely fulfill His promise by manifesting His eternal life within your soul if you will hold on through the time of testing. But you must avoid turning back to the world and its things. There will also come a point when you must stop depending on other human beings for your spiritual support. God expects to be your all in all. When you reach that point where you are truly dead to the temporal ways of the world, He will lift you spiritually into His eternal Kingdom-life where you can always enjoy “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

To help distinguish between the way of law and the way of grace through faith, the following testimony of Hannah Whitall Smith has been provided. As she has noted, it sometimes takes years for Christians to make this great transition. But this process does not need to take so long. This death to self and the ways of the world can take place in a short period of time. If you have an understanding of the truth and are willing to press forward in your faith according to your understanding, this death can be a short process. But you must know that a real death to the old Adam-life must take place before it is possible to enter into an enjoyment of Christ’s eternal life.

I was born in Philadelphia, Pa., February 7, 1832, and was converted in my twenty-sixth year. My conversion was very clear and unmistakable. After long years of legal striving, in which I resorted in vain to every expedient [supposed advantage] my soul could devise for gaining the

favor of God and the forgiveness of all my sins, I was taught to see my own utter helplessness in the matter, and to trust entirely to Christ to save me. I knew that I was born again; and never from that time have I doubted this...

As time passed on, the Lord graciously led me into the knowledge of much truth. My guarded education in the Society of Friends, of which I was at the time a member, had already separated me very much from the vain fashions and amusements of the world, and my chief interests were all centered around the religion of Jesus Christ.

But my heart was ill at ease. That I grew in knowledge I could not deny; but neither could I deny that I did not grow in grace; and, at the end of eight years of my Christian life, I was forced to make the sorrowful admission that I had not even as much power over sin as when I was first converted. In the presence of temptation, I found myself weakness itself. It was not my outward walk that caused me sorrow, but it was the sins of my heart that troubled me—coldness, deadness, want of Christian love, intellectual apprehension of truth without any corresponding moral effects, roots of bitterness, want of a meek and quiet spirit—all these inward sins over which the children of God are so often forced to mourn.

At times, some new discovery of the truth of God in the Bible would seem for awhile to carry me above temptation and make me more than conqueror. And my heart rejoiced at the thought that now at last I had found the secret of living and that henceforth my continued defeats would be turned into continued victories. But after a while, as the aspect of truth in which I had been rejoicing became familiar to me, I found to my further sorrow that it seemed to lose its power and I was left as helpless as ever, only under deeper condemnation because of the increased responsibilities of increased knowledge. [She rejoiced in the law as every born again child of God will do. But she did not have the power and the fullness of heavenly life that would enable her to do by nature what the law requires.]

In this time of sore need (1863) God threw into my company some whose experience seemed to be very different than mine. They declared that they had discovered a “way of holiness” wherein the redeemed soul might live and walk in abiding peace, and might be made “more than conqueror” through the Lord Jesus Christ. I asked them their secret and they replied, “It is simply ceasing from our own efforts and trusting in the Lord to make us holy.”

Never shall I forget the answer. “What! – do you really mean that you have ceased from your own efforts altogether, and that you do nothing but trust the Lord? And does He actually and truly make you conquerors?” “Yes,” was the reply, “the Lord does it all. We abandon ourselves to Him. We do not even try to live our own lives; but we abide in Him, and He lives in us. He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure, and we hold our peace.”

Breaking away from Smith’s testimony, we need to consider what is being said from a biblical perspective. *Jesus said we are to follow Him and live in the same way He lived.*

A careful study of the Gospel of John will reveal how Jesus did not do anything out from Himself. He said such things as, "I can of Myself do nothing." (John 5:30) "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh {human effort} profits nothing." (John 6:63) "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself." (John 8:28) *In other words, when we enter into the kind of walk by faith that Jesus Himself had taken, we too will learn that all true life – divine life – flows through the soul by the power of the Holy Spirit. Everything has its source in God. Human efforts do not profit anything. We receive the eternal life by grace, through faith alone.*

Once we begin to realize that Jesus did not do anything out from Himself, but was required to depend on the Father for everything if He was to walk fully as man, we can begin to see why He asked us to learn of Him and His ways. If we will truly die to the self-originated way of life that everyone inherits from the first Adam, we will be in a position to enter into the eternal Kingdom-life where God becomes the source of everything. When Jesus came as the Second Adam to begin a new lineage of people who live this way, nothing He did was self-originated. *He died to Himself before He was ever nailed to the cross, for the purpose of permitting the Father to live through Him.* He could therefore say that everyone who had seen His life had actually seen the life and the works of the Father. Similarly, God has made it possible for others to see the life of Christ through our mortal bodies when we have truly died to the old self-originated Adam-life. It is in this sense that we are to make every effort to cease from our own works and live through the life of our Lord. (Heb. 4:9-10) Of course, not everyone can take this truth in right away, as Smith testifies to.

Like a revelation, the glorious possibilities of such a life flashed upon me; but the idea was too new and wonderful for me to grasp. I had never thought of Christ as being such a Saviour. I had known, indeed, that He gave me life as a free gift, without I myself being able to do a single thing toward obtaining it, except to believe and to receive. But that He should now live my life for me in the same way, without my doing anything except believe and receive, surpassed my utmost conceptions. I had learned how to trust Him for the forgiveness of sins; but I had always trusted myself to conquer them. I had seen the sad error of legality as regarding my redemption; but I was altogether legal in my thoughts as regarding my daily holy living. I had never dreamed of trusting the Lord for that, and I did not know how.

So I went to work harder than ever. Over and over again I tried to dedicate myself to God. I sought to bind my will with chains of adamant [unbreakable chains], and to present it a holy offering before the Lord. I lay awake whole nights to wrestle in prayer that God would grant me the blessing He had granted these other Christians. I did everything, in short, but the one thing needful. I could not believe; I did not trust; and all else was worse than useless. But perhaps not altogether useless; for it taught me my own utter and absolute helplessness.

Here again we need to take a closer look at God's plan of salvation. Fallen man is naturally self-sufficient. Ever since the Fall, he has been living through his own efforts. He has made himself into an independent god and has tried to get by without the eternal life that only the one true God can provide. God is required to break this self-sufficient

spirit in fallen man before it is possible to truly walk as Jesus did in the eternal life. That is why Peter speaks of Christians all over the world going through a time of testing and suffering before God establishes His Kingdom-life of perfect love within their heart. (1 Pet. 5:9-10) He also said, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” (1 Pet. 4:12-13)

Yes, there will be a day when the Lord comes back to reveal His glory to the whole world. But Peter was also referring to a glory that was manifest to first century Christians after they went through a period of suffering. He is speaking of a time of testing that completely destroys the self-sufficient spirit that resides in fallen man. *Once this old spirit has died, the Lord of Glory is able to manifest Himself to individual souls in this age of fulfillment.* As promised, Christ has been coming back to individuals ever since the first Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to reveal God’s life of perfect love within the souls of the first disciples. (John 14:19-21)

Christ promised to give the same glory that He had received from the Father to His disciples. The glory of God is His spiritual image. *For those who are willing to pass through the time of testing, which is a place where suffering occurs as the self-sufficient spirit and the self-originated way of life dies, there is the promise of receiving the glory of God within the soul.* You are therefore to rejoice in the sufferings that are designed to destroy your self-sufficient spirit, so that “when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” Yes, Jesus has given us access to the glory – the life of perfect love – that He received from the Father, which is a truth that has been clearly revealed in His high priestly prayer:

And the glory which You gave Me I have given them {access to}, that they may be one {in nature} just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one...that the love with which You love Me {perfect love} may be in them, and I in them. (John 17:22-26)

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. 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 4:16-17)

The salvation that Hannah Whitall Smith will be describing enters into the soul when there has been a real death to living by law through human efforts. If there was a way to bring people to the end of themselves without suffering, God would do it. *But God must bring us to the point where we agree to die to self and our own self-sufficiency before He can fill the soul with eternal life. Thus, the law must have its opportunity to bring about this willingness to die to our own developed righteousness before He can do the work.*

At last, however, I saw clearly that I was indeed truly nothing; that I needed the Lord just as absolutely for my daily living as I had needed Him in the first place to give me life. I discovered that I was just as unable to govern my temper or my tongue as I had been long ago to convert my soul... I saw that all my efforts, instead of helping, had only hindered the work.

Then I began anew to search the Scriptures. I found that the salvation he had died to procure was declared to be a perfect salvation, and that He

was able to save to the very uttermost. I found that He offered Himself to me as my life, and that He wanted to come into my heart and take full possession there and subdue all things to Himself. I felt that a salvation such as this would satisfy my longings, and unspeakably I desired to appropriate it as mine.

But here I was met by another enemy. It seemed as if I could not trust the Lord; as if I was actually afraid to do so. Legality had been met and conquered, but unbelief still remained, and threatened to shut me out altogether from the promised land of rest. Although God had declared the Lord Jesus to be a perfect Saviour, sufficient for my daily and hourly needs, I could not believe he would really prove to be so. It seemed too great to trust to repose in the divine Saviour. But in His infinite love, He broke down this last remaining barrier.

He sent to our house a young man whose soul was in great darkness because of doubts concerning his salvation. It was my privilege to point him to a Saviour just suited to meet his needs, and to tell him of the completeness and present reality of the salvation purchased by Him. And as I talked to him and set forth the boundless love and the divine power of Christ to save all who come to God by Him, my heart was rebuked for my own unbelief. Was I to urge another to believe that his prayers for forgiveness were answered when I did not believe that my prayers for conformity to the image of Christ were, or ever would be!

My heart shrank back at the thought of such inconsistency, and the last barrier of unbelief was broken down. The Lord revealed Himself to me as so worthy of my utmost confidence that I could not help trusting in Him. He showed Himself to me as a perfect, and complete, and present Saviour, and I abandoned my whole self to His care – telling Him that I was utterly helpless, that I could not feel, nor think, nor act, for one moment as I ought to do, and that He must do it all for me – all. I confessed my own absolute inability to dedicate myself to His service, my powerlessness to submit my will to His and I cast myself, as it were, head-long into the ocean of His love, to have all these things accomplished in me by His almighty working. I trusted Him utterly and entirely. I believed the truth that He was my practical sanctification, as well as my justification, and that He not only could save me, and would save me, but that He did. The Lord Jesus Christ became my present Saviour, and my soul found rest at last – rest from all its legal strivings, rest from all its weary conflicts, rest from all its bitter failures. Christ was made unto me wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification.

At first my faith was but a weak and wavering one. Almost tremblingly I hung on to Christ moment by moment, saying continually in my heart, “Lord, I trust Thee, I trust Thee. Look Lord, I am trusting Thee.” But I found to my astonishment that it was a practical reality that He did deliver me. When temptation came, I did not try to conquer it myself, but at once handed it over to Him, saying, “Lord Jesus, save me from this sin. I cannot save myself, but Thou canst and wilt, and I trust Thee.” Then I left it with

Him, and he fought for me, while I stood by and held my peace. And He always came off the conqueror.

Thus that flesh, which I had discovered to be so utterly corrupt, I now found could be reckoned to be dead and consequently abandoned... And now, if I am asked what is my life – with a deep sense of my own nothingness I can only answer that, insofar as I am faithful, Christ is now my life. Once I had truth about Him, but now I have Himself! Once I tried to live in my new nature, independent of Him; now I am joined to Him in a oneness that is indescribable, knowing that I have in truth no other life but His, and seeking more and more to live only there. Christ is always the same, and the way of access by faith is always open; He is faithful to keep that which I have committed to Him, and He confirms my soul steadfast and immovable in Him

We can now begin to see what it means to walk by faith. It is much more than simply believing that Jesus has saved us from our past sins and will one day take us to heaven. There is an eternal Kingdom-life that needs to be fully established within our hearts, through faith, if we are to ever have the full victory over the old nature and walk in perfect love. The Hebrew writer therefore says, “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...” (Heb. 12:1-2)

There is something for us to do. We are to be “diligent to enter that rest...” (Heb. 4:11) As Jesus was scourged and suffered greatly on the way to the cross, we too can expect to go through some suffering. “For whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” (Heb. 12:6) He is referring to born again children who He eventually receives into His Kingdom-life of perfect love. It is a place where His children are enabled to share with Him in His own life of righteousness and holiness. In effect, He brings about the end of our self-life through suffering, “for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Heb. 12:10-11)

How then do we enter into the life and nature of our God? We do it through the faith that persistently looks to the Lord to do what He has promised. Regardless of the painful period of testing He will permit us to go through, we need to realize it is all for our own good. You will be able to see how much of the self-life truly remains, which will be evidenced by your complaining spirit and by your resistance to the self-sacrificing ways of God. Rejoice in the suffering, knowing that your Lord will soon reveal His life through you, if you learn to patiently let Him do with you as He knows best.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing...(James 1:2-4)

...Nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. (1 Cor. 10:10)

Blessed is the man who endures temptation {in the time of testing}; for when he has been approved {after the time of testing}, he will receive the

crown of life {the Kingdom-life of perfect love} which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (Jam. 1:12)

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. (John 14:21)

If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4:21-24)