

What is Christianity?

The Reality of

**“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”
(Col. 1:27)**

By David A. DePra

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Introduction

The Psalmist wrote, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:1) Today in the Body of Christ, the foundations are being destroyed. Indeed, the foundation of Christianity, "Christ in you," is virtually an unknown or distorted Truth. Millions of believers have been seduced away from the Person of Jesus Christ -- the Christ who dwells within them -- to other sources, methods, and belief systems. There is no solution to this problem other than to return to the One upon who all else is built -- The Rock, Jesus Christ.

This book is not intended to be a study in systematic theology. There are numerous doctrines important to the Christian faith, and many important doctrines, that are not addressed in this book. This is deliberate to keep on point. There are also many heresies in the church today that are not discussed -- the absence of any discussion on these matters does not imply agreement. By necessity, there are some topics discussed in multiple chapters. This book does not answer every possible question that can arise. The intended scope and focus of this book is to show the meaning and impact of Jesus Christ IN US.

Almost every Bible verse quoted is from the KJV. There are numerous references to the original Greek of the NT contained in this book -- I have chosen to not provide the source of these, but all of them are affirmed from one of three sources: Vine's NT Expository Dictionary, Vincent's Word Studies in the NT, and to a lesser degree, The Hebrew-Greek Study Bible. These are the most simple of Greek helps. Any reader can look up the words discussed and verify for themselves the meanings.

It is hoped that from reading this book that the reader will gain some new perspective of the Living Christ resulting in a greater desire for Him.

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Chapter 1

Christ In Us

I want to begin by asking a question. It is probably the most fundamental question that could be asked any Christian person. That question is this: What IS Christianity? I hope to answer that question.

Before we look into the Bible, I am going to answer that question outright. Certainly, we could come up with numerous answers to that question, "What is Christianity?" Many of them would be correct. But we are going to discover that at the core, Christianity really is:

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27)

In asking the question, "What is Christianity?" we are really asking, "What is a Christian?" The word, "Christian," is in the Bible three times. And if you look up the New Testament Greek behind that English word that is translated, "Christian," you will discover that it means, "a Christ-one." Or, to put it another way, it means, "one who is OF Christ." So right away we see that if you are a, "Christian," you are, "one who is OF Christ;" you are, "one who is, IN Christ." Or more along the title for our title, you are, "one in whom Christ dwells." Thus, Christianity is, "Christ in us" -- or as Paul often puts it, a Christian is one who is, "in Christ."

The Fulfillment of God's Purpose

I want to turn to Colossians 1 and begin by reading a very important passage:

For His body's sake, which is the church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God. (Col. 1:24-25)

Paul is here talking about his ministry. He says that his ministry was given to him by God for the Body of Christ. But then, in verse 25, he tells us the purpose for which God gave him this ministry: ***"I am made a minister, according to the dispensation which is given to me for you, TO FULFILL THE WORD OF GOD."***

That is an immense statement. Paul is saying that God has given to him a ministry -- for the Body of Christ -- that

FULFILLS THE WORD OF GOD. What could be a greater purpose for any ministry?

If a ministry is fulfilling the Word of God then it is a vehicle through which God will, “minister,” whatever fulfills the purpose of God; the word of God. Take note that it is not the preaching or teaching itself that fulfills the Word of God. No. Rather, it is what God is able to MINISTER to people through all of those things. The RESULTS of ministry constitute the fulfillment of God’s plan and purpose – the preaching and other gifts are simply a means unto that end.

Paul’s ministry ought to be the template for ALL ministry. All ministry – that of a church or an individual person – if it is given by God – will be used to likewise FULFILL the Word of God. Sure. It is what God will be doing through anyone He uses.

The Mystery

Paul is going to tell us what FULFILLS THE WORD OF GOD; what fulfills the purpose of God. But in doing so, he first refers to this great purpose of God as, “THE MYSTERY.”

Even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints. (Col. 1:26)

Paul introduces us to the purpose of God by using a strange term: THE MYSTERY. (Col. 1:26) It is this, “mystery,” that constitutes the fulfillment of the Word of God. It is this, “mystery,” that is the Truth that God has given to him for the Body of Christ.

Today, when we think of the word, “mystery,” we think that it refers to something HIDDEN that no one can figure out. But in those days, and in the original language, the word, “mystery,” actually meant, yes, something that WAS hidden – but that is NOW being revealed. And this is exactly what Paul says here in verse 26. He says that the Truth that God gave him to fulfill the Word of God is a MYSTERY – a mystery which HAD been hidden from ages and generations past, but NOW – in Paul’s time – is made manifest to the saints.

What is this MYSTERY – this great Truth that fulfills the Word of God – that is now revealed? Paul tells us in verse 27:

Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col. 1:27)

The reality of Jesus Christ IN US is this MYSTERY. It is the Truth that fulfills the Word of God.

Now note: It isn't the doctrine that fulfills the Word of God. It is CHRIST IN US Who is the fulfillment – the living Christ in His people fulfills the purpose of God. This purpose was not revealed, nor was it possible, in ages and generations prior to the Redemption of Jesus Christ.

Of course, Jesus Christ is revealed all through the Old Testament. But much of that OT revelation is given to us in type and shadow. All through the OT we find Christ – Christ is in the tabernacle; Christ is in the Levitical priesthood; Christ is in the offerings; Christ is in the Holy Days; Christ is in all of the rituals that God had the priests do in the Old Testament – EVERYTHING speaks of Jesus Christ, His Redemption, and the relationship that believers are to have with Him.

In fact, if you wanted to give a definition and contrast between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, one way to say it would be that the Old Covenant is a type and a shadow of Jesus Christ, but the New Covenant is the reality of Christ Himself – and even more than that – the New Covenant is CHRIST IN US, the hope of glory.

Paul is alluding to both the Old and New Covenants here. He says that this great MYSTERY had been hidden from ages and generations past – hidden in type and shadow in the OT -- BUT NOW this great mystery is being made manifest to the saints. It is made manifest, yes, in teaching. But the Person of Jesus Christ is now made manifest – Christ is now come to dwell in His people – HE is the living fulfillment of the Word of God and the foundation of God's purpose. As we saw, this great mystery is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The Core of Christianity

"Christ in you" – Jesus Christ dwelling in His people -- is the fulfillment of the Word of God. "Christ in you," is the

fulfillment of everything that God has been doing, and, "Christ in you," is the foundation upon which all that God intends to do will be built. The reality of Jesus Christ in us ought to be the focal point of all ministry. Jesus Christ, united in spirit with His people, is the core of Christianity.

There are obviously other related issues to the reality of Christ in His people. We will discuss how Christ comes to be in you – and we will discuss the impacts of Christ in us, that is, the Christian life and experience. But the foundation of all that God is doing in His people – the foundation upon which all else must be built -- is Jesus Christ in His people. Christianity is, "Christ in you."

An Eternal Purpose

Christ in us today is unto even greater purposes. God is presently revealing His Son IN His people so that throughout the eternal ages those people can be vessels in whom and through whom Jesus Christ can be Lord of all. In this age, it is, "Christ in you, the HOPE of glory," but in the next age it will be, "Christ in you, the full REALIZATION of His glory."

If Christ is NOT in me I am not a Christian – I am not a, "Christ-one;" I am not, "OF Christ." But if I do have Christ in me then I am a Christian. Church membership has nothing to do with it. My theological statement of faith isn't enough. Whether I am a Christian or not depends solely upon whether the Living Christ is in me.

Chapter 2

Joined to the Lord

The next question is: How does Christ dwell in us? What does that really mean?

Jesus Christ is united with us in SPIRIT. That is how Christ dwells in the believer.

I Corinthians 6:17 says, ***“He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”*** That word translated, “joined,” means, in the NT Greek, “glued,” or, “cemented.” So we are JOINED to the Lord -- made ONE with Him in SPIRIT. That is how Christ dwells in us -- and how we are, “in Christ.” It is a spiritual union. Somebody once called it, “resurrection union.”

One With Christ

When we come to Jesus Christ by faith He joins us to Himself in SPIRIT – through the means of the spirit of God -- and our human spirit comes alive with His life. But obviously, human beings are not entirely spirit. We not only have the human spirit, but we have our soul, which is our psychic makeup. And we also have our physical body. We are NOT made one with Christ in soul, or in body. Those dimensions of the human make-up remain natural in this age – although God does intend for them to be brought under the control of the Christ with whom we are joined in spirit.

II Cor. 5:17 reveals a key Truth on this matter. There Paul tells us that in Christ, ***“old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.”*** “Old things,” refer to that which is of the earthly; the Adam race -- in other words, our soul and our body. According to Paul, these are, “passed away.” But the NT Greek actually says, “passed by, or passed over.” In other words, we are joined to the Lord IN SPIRIT, but all that is other than our spirit -- our soul and body -- are passed by; passed over - - these are NOT united with Christ; not of the new creation in this age. In short, we are joined to the Lord in spirit, but our body and soul remain natural.

We need to see this Truth. The soul and the body are not incorporated into, made part of, or built into the new creation. No. In this age, our soul and body are not born anew. They are PASSED OVER with regards to the new

creation in Christ. Yes, they do constitute the earthen vessel in which the Treasure dwells – and they will be impacted and brought in line through obedience to the Truth. But they are NOT joined to the Lord. They remain natural.

This ought to tell us why it is futile to look to our soul or body for that which can be found only in Christ. I think most of us do exactly that – and it accounts for much confusion and false doctrine. But more on that later.

A Union With Christ Jesus

This spiritual union that we have in Christ is the Truth behind many statements in the NT. For example, there is **Galatians 2:20**, where Paul said, ***“I am crucified WITH Christ.”*** Paul was perfectly aware that Jesus Christ died FOR him. We know that Jesus Christ died on the Cross as our substitute – and without that we have nothing. That is a foundation of Christian Truth. But Paul did not say that here -- he says it other places. Here, in Galatians 2:20, Paul infers, “Yes, Jesus Christ was crucified FOR me. But because Jesus was crucified FOR me, I am now crucified WITH Christ.” That is a spiritual UNION. That is a JOINING. That is ONENESS with Jesus Christ.

These things are more than doctrine. Our doctrine MUST be Biblical or it is not the Truth. But if our doctrine is Biblical then it will point us to the Living Truth Himself regarding these matters. And the Truth is that Christianity – and all of the Truth associated – is a LIVING reality based in the Living Christ. “Christ in us,” can be stated doctrinally. But the real question is whether Christ is, in fact, IN ME.

In Romans 6, Paul is likewise reminding believers that we are united with the Lord in spirit – that Christ is in us – and he wants us to know what this MEANS. He writes in Romans 6:

Don't you know that so many of us that were baptized INTO Jesus Christ were baptized INTO His death? Therefore we are buried WITH Him by a baptism INTO His death, that like as Christ was raised up from the death by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:3-4)

Again, Paul is explaining that because Christ died FOR us and was raised FOR us, that when we are joined to the Lord, we die WITH Him, and are raised WITH Him. This is an impact of spiritual UNION with Christ. And it constitutes the power of the Christian life.

This spiritual union is again explained in Romans 6:5. He says:

If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection. (Rom. 6:5)

Again – the NT Greek: “Planted together,” means, “to cause to grow together,” or in other words, “to be engrafted into.” If you know anything about agriculture, you know that there are people who ENGRAFT branches into growing trees– branches that could not live and grow otherwise. And so Paul is saying that when we come to Jesus Christ we are spiritually engrafted INTO Him -- into His death and resurrection. This union with Christ is not only why we are SAVED, but it is why Christ is the source for ALL in the believer.

The Spirit of God

Jesus Christ dwells in the believer through the Holy Spirit. Paul said, ***“By ONE spirit we are baptized into ONE Body.” (1 Cor. 12:13)*** Of course, he is speaking of the Body of Christ – of which we are a member if we are IN CHRIST. The Body is HIS body – it is of HIM. You cannot be baptized into the Body unless you are baptized Christ Himself by His spirit. The point is, we are baptized into Jesus Christ by the means of the spirit of God.

Another point here is that there are not TWO indwellings. We are not indwelt by Jesus Christ, and then in addition, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Rather, “he that is joined to the Lord is ONE spirit with Him” -- and that ONE spirit by which Jesus dwells in the believer is the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of God.

The fact that Jesus Christ dwells in the believer by the means of the spirit of God is clearly indicated by Paul in Romans 8:

But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man

have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you. (Romans 8:9-11)

Notice the numerous interchangeable terms Paul uses in this passage to refer to, "Christ in us:"

**In the Spirit
Spirit of God dwells in you
Have the Spirit of Christ
Christ in you
Spirit of Him that raised Jesus
His Spirit that dwells in you**

Jesus Himself also stated that when the spirit of God would be given that this spirit would be the means by which HE would come and dwell within the believer (pronouns replaced by name for clarity):

And I will pray the Father, and the Father shall give you another Comforter (the Holy Spirit), that the Holy Spirit may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth; which the world cannot receive, because it sees not the Holy Spirit, neither knows the Holy Spirit: but you know the Holy Spirit; for the Holy Spirit dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I (Jesus Christ) will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but you see me: because I live, you shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. (John 14:16-20)

The spirit of God is called, "the Comforter." But in this passage, Jesus says that HE (Jesus) will comfort believers. How? By dwelling IN US. Jesus said, "I will not leave you comfortless – I will come to you." Clearly, the giving of the spirit of God IS the coming of Jesus to dwell in believers. He also adds that when He does come to dwell in believers through the giving of the spirit that believers will SEE HIM, and believers will see that He is in the Father, and that we are IN HIM, and that He is IN US.

There has been much confusion in the body of Christ because of teaching that breaks apart the ONE indwelling

of Christ by the spirit into TWO indwellings, or TWO experiences. No.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Eph. 4:4-6)

So HOW does Jesus Christ dwell in believers, that is, how are believers IN CHRIST? We are joined to the Lord and made one SPIRIT with Him – our human spirit is joined to Jesus through the Holy Spirit; the spirit of Christ.

The importance of seeing that we are united with Christ in spirit cannot be understated. It reveals to us that the Christian life does not merely consist of THINGS that God gives us. No. God gives us Christ Himself in Whom are ALL things. We are joined to the Lord and through Him joined to the Father.

Chapter 3

A New Birth

When we are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him, something happens: There is a NEW BIRTH. A new creature is born. The new man in Christ Jesus is born.

Paul says in II Cor. 5:17:

If any man is IN Christ, he is a NEW creature. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become NEW.

So there it is again: "In Christ; Christ in you." Note that Paul says that we are birthed new creations IN CHRIST. In other words, we are not turned into new creations in addition to, or along side of, Jesus Christ. Rather, we are new creations IN Christ Jesus, that is, the new creature that is born is due to being joined to HIM in spirit.

Paul says that those in Christ are a NEW creation – the term, "NEW," ought to be clear enough – but just to make sure we do not misunderstand, Paul adds, "Old things are passed away. ALL things have become NEW." This is not a repair of the OLD. It is the birth of something entirely NEW.

The Old is Passed Over

As I mentioned in the last chapter, those English words, "passed away," actually mean, "passed over," in the NT Greek. So the old nature does remain in us -- in this age it does not cease to exist. No. But it is, "passed over," as it pertains to the new creation. We carry this old nature until we die, but it remains OUTSIDE of the new creation that is the result of being joined to the Lord IN SPIRIT.

Notice also the simple phrase: New creature. How many see that a NEW creature is NEW living being? Thus, it cannot refer to a being that was already alive, but is now being fixed, or that is now being morphed into something new. No. It must mean something that is birthed completely anew. Sure. The new creature in Christ is NOT the old creature repaired. No. The old creature is passed over. In Christ Jesus we are called NEW creatures or CREATIONS.

If the OLD is passed over, and ALL things have become new -- because we are joined to the Lord in spirit -- then clearly, there is nothing natural carried over FROM the old INTO the new. Indeed, even though we continue to be the earthen vessel in which The Treasure dwells, in this age that earthen vessel never becomes the treasure. In this age, it is completely passed by -- remains OUTSIDE of that which is born from above.

If the old has truly been passed over -- and the new creation in Christ is exactly that: New and from above -- can we see the futility of looking at our earthly nature and expecting to find something of Christ? Can we see the folly to trying to repair the old nature that is outside of union with Christ? There is nothing of Christ in the old. But there is the fullness of Christ in the new. Nothing of God can come out of our old nature. But all that is of God in the believer is from out of Christ with whom we are joined in spirit as a new creation.

Paul is talking about a complete separation between the old and the new -- a separation that is the product of death and resurrection in Christ. He is talking about the separation of soul from spirit in each believer. He is saying that if anyone is joined to Christ in spirit, then they are in spirit a new creation. Old things -- our natural man -- are passed by -- are not in Christ. All things -- that which is joined to Christ -- have become new.

Error in the Church

Paul could not have been clearer about the nature of the new creature in Christ Jesus. But more and more today the Truth on this matter is being denied. It is not being denied directly -- but indirectly. Much teaching today infers that our natural man is equipped by God to be the SOURCE of the things of God. Many teach that God is at work acting upon our natural man to make IT, "look like Jesus" -- that is, many are teaching that God is fixing up and repairing our earthly nature. And often, Christ Himself is reduced to nothing more than a means unto that end.

This is actually a denial of the Cross -- which is also a denial of the Truth of the new creation. God has completely set aside -- passed over the old nature -- through the Cross of Jesus Christ. It is the source of

NOTHING. And rather than fix up that old nature, God has given us a NEW nature in Christ Jesus.

What about our earthly nature? As noted, the earthly nature is not fixed up. It is the SOURCE of nothing. Rather, in this age, as we grow to know Jesus Christ by faith, our earthly nature comes under the Cross. What emerges is not a, "fixed up," old nature -- but what emerges is an obedient and submissive earthen vessel through which Christ Himself is able to live.

We must be clear about this: In Christ, the new birth means that the old is passed over – under the Cross. All things have become new from out of Christ. The Christian life is a matter of discovering Christ -- and of discovering that He is the source of all for the believer.

Life From Above

When Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again," the NT Greek reveals that He was actually saying, "You must be born all over again from above." To be born FROM above means that I have to receive LIFE from a source that is NOT of this earthly realm. Indeed, it means that I have to receive this life from a source that is initially on the outside of myself – into myself FROM the outside. I must receive life from above through the Person of Jesus Christ.

Note that this new life is not, "latent," in myself. Jesus did not come to, "bring out," some spark of life in humanity. No. His life is life from ABOVE. There is no life and no Truth in the Adam race. Thus, to be, "born from above," means exactly that: I must receive life – and we know that this life is a Person – from above. And the result is a NEW birth.

Death and Resurrection

Jesus described to Nicodemus exactly HOW a person must be born from above:

Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:5-6)

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, and so he would have understood the symbolism of water baptism. It represented DEATH and burial. He would have likewise realized that when Jesus spoke of being born of SPIRIT that this represented RESURRECTION. Jesus was stating that to be, "born all over again from above," a person must first DIE. Only then could that person be raised to newness of life by the spirit: In other words, we must be born of WATER and of SPIRIT.

Jesus was drawing a clear line between the old and new creations. It is the same line as we saw drawn in II Cor. 5:17. The old creation is NOT fixed up. The new creation is not an improved version of the old creation. No. The old is set aside; passed over. The old and the new are utterly and completely separate as to nature. They are as different as Christ is different from us. They are different KINDS of life. Indeed, the distinction between the two is so utter and complete that Jesus states, ***"That which is born of the flesh IS flesh. And that which is born of the spirit IS spirit."*** (John 3:6)

Paul taught the same Truth in many places. He said, ***"In Adam all die. In Christ all are made alive."*** (I Cor. 15:22) There are two races – the old man in Adam, and the new man in Christ Jesus. We are all born into the Adam race through natural birth – we are born of the flesh and therefore are flesh. But believers are born from above – born of the spirit and are of the spirit.

Jesus was showing Nicodemus that in order to escape the old birth or creation, you must be baptized into His death. Only then can you receive new life; be born from above. There is no thought of fixing up the flesh; no thought of being born from BELOW all over again. No. Rather, there is a complete setting aside and discarding of that old Adam race by baptism into death, unto the resurrection of a new kind of human being – one who is joined to the Lord and one spirit with Him.

Coming to Jesus Christ

Christians often define salvation as, "giving their life to Jesus," and as, "receiving Christ," but if we realize that believers are actually joined to the Lord, our understanding of salvation ought to expand. Salvation is CHRIST IN US – it is the result of being joined to LIFE HIMSELF.

Jesus' teaching as to how to be born again is nothing less than teaching on how to be saved. We have to FIRST completely relinquish our old life down into death – which means to take our place in the cross and death of Jesus Christ. But then we must be born from above all over again by being joined to the Lord by the spirit. That is what it means to be born of water and of spirit.

And yet no one is going to want to relinquish their old life, or even know they need to be born again, unless God convicts them of their lost condition. Here we see the necessity of hearing the gospel if we are to be saved. The gospel Truth is LIGHT -- it exposes our lost condition without Christ, but shows Jesus Christ as God's gift of life. It is, ***"the power of God unto salvation for those who believe."*** (Rom. 1:16)

The first words of the gospel were, "Repent and believe." We are to REPENT – but repent of what? Yes, sins. But primarily, we are to repent of the sin of UNBELIEF. And if we repent of the sin of unbelief then we will – BELIEVE. So, we repent of unbelief BY believing, and we believe by repenting of unbelief. It is a turning from unbelief and a giving of ourselves to Jesus Christ.

Another way to say it is this: I must repent of the sin of refusing or neglecting to give myself to Christ. And if I repent of the sin of refusing or neglecting to come to Christ then I will indeed give myself to Christ. But the result is not a new religion, or merely a new attitude, or a commitment to do a better job of obeying God. No. The result is that I am delivered from the Adam race through the death of Christ, and born from above through His life.

As Paul said:

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (Romans 5:10)

Salvation is LIFE – it is CHRIST IN US. It is the result of being joined to the One who said, "I AM the life." It is the result of receiving Him from above and becoming a new creation in Him.

The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. It is the revelation of my lost condition, but it is the proclamation that in Christ there is new life.

Chapter 4

Body, Soul, and Spirit

If you went to the doctors and got an x-ray you would not see Jesus Christ on the image. Why? Because we are not joined to Christ physically, but joined to Him only in spirit. That is obviously a silly example, but it is vital that we see the distinction between our earthy nature – which includes our physical body and soul – as opposed to the union of the spirit of Christ with our human spirit.

God's Normal Human Being

A human being is spirit, soul, and body. God created humans with a human spirit for one reason: So that we could be joined to God and made one with Him – for God IS spirit. This spiritual union was God's original design for humanity.

When God created Adam, God was one with Adam in spirit. It was God's intent that this core relationship with Adam in spirit would govern Adam's soul and body. This original design of humanity was God's NORMAL

In addition, God gave Adam dominion over all of the rest of His creation. To the extent that Adam submitted to, and depended upon God, his own nature, as well as all of the creation God had given him, would be submitted to him.

If we were to draw an organizational chart of God's original design and intent, God would be on top. Under God would be Adam, one with God in spirit, but nevertheless completely dependent upon God. Then underneath Adam's oneness in spirit with God would be Adam's own soul and body. Finally, under Adam would be the rest of God's creation. At this point, Satan is not even on the organizational chart. Of course, these relationships are all LIVING. But an organizational chart helps to illustrate.

The Sin of Adam

Adam's sin was essentially a declaration of independence from God in favor of self-ownership. And he got exactly what he declared: Separation from God. Thus, Adam was no longer spiritually joined to God. The result was the Adam's human spirit died – for he had forsaken LIFE

HIMSELF. God had said, "In the day that you eat of the forbidden tree you will die," and Adam's spiritual death was immediate. Physical death would later follow.

The ramifications of Adam's sin were catastrophic. In his desire to decide for himself, and govern himself, he not only forfeited the earthly realm over which God had given him dominion, but he forfeited it into the hands of Satan. Indeed, because Adam's spirit was now dead, his own earthly nature – soul and body – were subject to the power of Satan. Satan was not god of all that is earthly.

So if we redo our organizational chart after the sin, God was no longer on top – for God allowed Adam free choice to rebel. Now, Satan was on top of the chart. Satan is now, ***"the god of this world."*** (II Cor. 4:4) He is, ***"the price of the power of the air."*** (Eph. 2:2) Underneath Satan was the entire earthly realm. This included Adam's body and soul. And beneath Adam was the rest of the natural or earthly world. He no longer had any real dominion over it.

So instead of a NORMAL human being – a human being whose body and soul were governed by God through the spirit, Adam's body and soul became subject to the earthly realm of Satan. Adam became a being that was fully of the flesh – and entirely void of God. Adam was now ABNORMAL.

If we look around us at people, and at this world, everything is ABNORMAL. None of it is as God intended. But because it is all we have ever known, and we are blind to the Truth, we think it is NORMAL. This is true blindness – to be blind but to not know you are blind. Indeed, to actually think that you SEE.

The Adam Race

Adam's sin had more than personal consequences. For Adam was the head of a race. Thus, all who were born from Adam – all who are, "in Adam" – are born with the same dead spirit. We all inherit death from Adam. (I Cor. 15:22)

"Spiritually dead"– this describes the KIND of human beings we are. The Adam race is ruined. It is spiritually dead and under the power of darkness. And there are no

resources within the Adam race to make a way back to God.

What theology calls, "the sin nature," the Bible calls, "spiritual death." For everything that a human being is – with all of the corruption, sin, and self-centeredness – all of it can be traced back to one cause: We are no longer one with God. Thus, we are no longer one with LIFE HIMSELF; we are spiritually dead. The nature of sin and corruption are the resultsof the Adam race -- that was made for God -- exists without God.

We can see this principle even in the natural world. The moment a living person or animal dies corruption begins. It is like that spiritually as well. If a branch does not abide in the Vine there will be no life. And where there is no life there is going to be death – and all that death brings.

In Adam All Are Dead

We are all naturally born into this world IN ADAM. We inherit all of the features of the Adam race – spiritual death and all of the corruption that comes with it. Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh IS flesh." And we are ALL born of the flesh. Thus, flesh is all we can be. "Flesh," "carnal," and "natural," -- these terms speak of the KIND of beings we are.

Jesus said, and the Bible teaches, that there is no way back to God through the Adam race.No. Rather, the entire Adam race must be set aside – crucified in Christ – passed over -- so that a new kind of human being, the new creation in Christ, can emerge. ***"That which is born of the flesh IS flesh, and that which is born of the spirit IS spirit."* (John 3:6)** We must be born from above a new creature in Christ Jesus.

We absolutely MUST get this settled: The Adam race is dead. It is NEVER going to be resurrected. God is never again going to work in the Adam race. There is one destiny for the Adam race, and it is the one that God pronounced upon Adam: Death.

But didn't Jesus die so that the Adam race could live? No. Rather, Jesus died so that the Adam race could die in Him – and consequently be raised in Him to newness of life as a NEW race, or creation in Christ Jesus. The new

creation in Christ Jesus is not a fixed up Adam race. No. For again: ***“If anyone is in Christ Jesus, he is a NEW creation. Old things are passed over. Behold, all things have become new.” (II Cor. 5:17)*** This is as final and as irreversible as death and resurrection.

Separation of Soul from Spirit

We have seen that when a believer comes to Jesus Christ, He joins us to Himself in SPIRIT. ***“He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” (I Cor. 6:17)*** This is the restoration of what God originally designed – man’s spirit at one with God. But the moment we are joined to the Lord in spirit, there is created in each of us a SEPARATION between our union with Christ in spirit -- a separation between that spiritual union and all that is outside of that union, that is, our soul and body.

Thus, in each believer there are TWO natures. There is the new creation in Christ. And there is all the earthly that is outside of that – physical body and soul. This is what the Bible refers to as the separation of soul from spirit in each believer.

I like to use the following example to illustrate the separation IN EACH BELIEVER between soul and spirit: If I could take an imaginary pencil and draw a circle around my spiritual union with Christ – of course, I cannot really do this; it is just an illustration – but if I could draw a circle around my spiritual union with Jesus Christ, everything INSIDE of that circle would be eternal. Everything INSIDE of that circle would be of the new creation in Jesus Christ; the new man. Everything INSIDE of that circle would be LIFE and TRUTH – the source being the Person of Christ with whom I am joined in spirit. But everything that is OUTSIDE of that circle; OUTSIDE of my spiritual union with Christ, would be those dimensions of my human makeup that remain NATURAL in this age – i.e., my body and soul.

The human body does not experience salvation in this age -- the body is sealed unto salvation, but does not yet experience it. It cannot because in order to be saved, the human body must be raised from the dead. That is yet to come, at the return of Christ. It is easy to prove that our body is not yet saved – simply go home and look in the mirror. Everyday that I look in the mirror I see that I am

getting older. You and I are capable of getting sick. And so we are not yet resurrected with glorified bodies.

Incidentally, this is why it is error to teach that physical healing in this age is guaranteed in the atonement. No. Not in this age. Our bodies have NOT yet fully experienced the redemption. That is why Paul talks about looking forward to the redemption of our bodies. God can heal anyone He wants, any time He wants. But in this age, it is NOT guaranteed by the atonement. In the next age, it is guaranteed through the bodily resurrection.

Neither is our soul saved, or resurrected, in this age. Do our emotions work perfectly? "Hardly. Our emotions are completely unreliable. Does our MIND work perfectly? No. Indeed, ***"the natural man cannot receive the things of God."*** (1 Cor. 2:14) This one verse alone proves that our natural man – body and soul -- are NOT united with Jesus Christ.

The fact that we are joined to the Lord in spirit, but not in the earthly, accounts for the great conflict that Paul mentions so often in his epistles. He teaches that the FLESH wars against the SPIRIT – and that the two are contrary one to the other. What is INSIDE of the circle of our union with Christ is contrary to the earthly that remains OUTSIDE of that union.

Hebrews also describes this separation between soul and spirit in each believer:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

Jesus Christ is the living Word of God. And when Christ comes to dwell in us, there is automatically created in us a separation between spirit and soul – a separation between all that is OF Christ (of the spirit), and all that is outside of our spiritual union with Christ. (of the earthly)

Many believers are blind to this reality. And so we have difficulty knowing the difference between what is of God and what is of ourselves. Indeed, Satan uses this confusion to his advantage. He will deceive people into thinking that what belongs to the soul realm is the spirit of

God. But there is only one way to know the distinction between soul and spirit: We have to know Jesus Christ. All discernment in the Christian life is the by-product of knowing Him.

The Soul and Body

The fact that the soul and body are PASSED OVER with regards to the new creation – the fact that they are not joined to the Lord – this does not mean that sin should continue to reign in these dimensions of our makeup. Paul directly states:

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (Rom. 6:12-13)

Here we see that if we are in Christ that the growing result will be that our body and soul will manifest the fact. The body and soul will come under the government of the spirit in Christ. This will certainly mean obedience.

But it is upon this point that so many of us err. Some of us think that the obedience of the body and soul is the MEANS by which we become righteous and are sanctified. We think that the obedience of the body and soul is what makes us a Christian. No. The opposite is the Truth: It is through faith in Christ and abandonment to Him that the body and soul learn obedience.

Others assume that if we are truly saved, or are truly walking by faith, or have truly lost our lives to Jesus Christ, that the old earthly nature is eradicated, or at least we should have immediate freedom from it. Many become discouraged because despite all of their concern and efforts sin continues to govern them.

We will never understand what is going on in these challenges unless we see the Truth of the separation between soul and spirit. When Christ joins us to Himself the new creation does not eradicate the old creation. No. The old nature of sin is still there -- and you are as capable of sinning as you were before. But now, alongside of the old nature, there is Christ in us. Therein is the big conflict: Flesh vs. Spirit. The Christian life is a

matter of abandoning that old nature to the Cross, and of leaving it alone -- because we are walking by faith in Jesus Christ.

Another way to say that is this: Instead of always trying to defeat or eradicate the old nature, we need to reckon ourselves DEAD to it. Why? Because in Christ we ARE dead to it. And the way in which we obey that Truth and put it into action is not by remaining preoccupied with our sin, and not by forever fussing over ourselves. No. Rather, we obey the Truth by leaving our old nature alone, reckoned as dead in Christ, and by walking with Christ in a positive faith, as one raised in Him.

None of this is possible by turning these Truths into a belief system, or a, "how to," and trying to make them work. No. A walk in the Truth is only possible as God brings us into an inward realization of His Son -- which is His desire.

Chapter 5

Jesus Christ is ALL

We are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him -- but what this really means is an awesome Truth. Jesus Christ is ALL. Not only has He done all for us, but HE IS all to us. IN CHRIST, God has wrapped up ALL that He has to give. Thus, if we are joined to Christ, we are in God, and we lack NOTHING.

Romans 8:32 says it outright:

He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all – how shall He not with Him freely give us ALL things?

We MUST see the Truth on this matter. God has NOT merely given us THINGS. No. Rather, He has given us His Son – in who are ALL things. Thus, we need not ask God for THINGS in addition to Christ. Instead, we need to abide in, and draw upon by faith, the Christ in whom God has given us ALL things.

I AM the Life

Without realizing it, many Christians unwittingly deny that Christ is ALL. First, some of us believe that after we receive Christ we still need to receive much of what God has for us through other experiences. Secondly, rather than realize that God has given us all in Christ, many of us think that Jesus came to merely bring out the assets we already possess in our natural man. Both errors deny the Truth that God has given us ALL in Christ.

The primary reason why believers unwittingly deny that all is given in Christ is that we are BLIND to Him. We have not come into an inward knowledge or realization of Christ. And so, being blind to Christ, we look elsewhere for what is already given to us in Him.

But there need not be any uncertainty about whether Christ is ALL for the believer. Throughout the gospel of John, Jesus continually said, "I AM...." Have you noticed that? I think there are NINE places in the gospel of John where Jesus said, "I AM...." He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" "I am the Resurrection and the Life;" "I am the Bread of Life;" "I am the Door;" "I am the Good Shepherd," and I could go on – "I AM....I AM...I AM...."

How many understand that these Truths speak of who Jesus is TO US and IN US? – right NOW? HE IS our Life, the Truth, our Way, and our Resurrection.

This is the Jesus to whom we are joined -- we are made one with Him in spirit. This is why Paul was able to say in Colossians 2:10: "You are complete in Him." He is ALL.

God has not only given us ALL things in His Son, but just as importantly, at salvation, we receive ALL of Christ. We do not receive, "pieces of Christ," at salvation. I would be wasting my time and energy asking God, "to give me MORE of Jesus." There is no more of Jesus TO give me if I have been saved – I have received ALL of Christ.

The Christian life is not a matter of acquiring MORE of Jesus. No. The Christian life is an ongoing DISCOVERY of the Jesus that God has already given me.

So this is the Truth we need to see: God has given us ALL in Christ. And we do receive ALL of Jesus Christ at salvation. But the Christian life is a matter of our coming into a knowledge of the Jesus who we have already received in fullness.

Jesus Christ is ALL

We can see just how COMPLETE we are in Christ – we can see that we have freely received all things in Jesus Christ – by turning to I Corinthians 1:30. This is another passage that is so easy to read right over without catching the immensity and importance of it. But it tells us WHO Christ is – IN US; what He is to us. It says:

But of God you are IN Christ Jesus, who of God is MADE UNTO US (to be) wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. (I Cor. 1:30)

So again we see that God has not given us THINGS, "in addition," to Christ. No. Rather, God gives us CHRIST – IN whom are all things. Indeed, these dimensions of the Christian experience are Christ in us – they are the manifestation of Him in and through a human being.

We could state this Truth about any aspect of the Christian experience. For example, when I was growing up, I sort of thought that, "eternal life," was a THING – maybe a legal classification, or perhaps a, "bucket," of

something that God handed me that saved me. But eternal life is NOT a thing. Eternal life is a PERSON. In fact, ***Jesus Christ is to BE our life. (Col. 3:4)***

We are joined to the Lord and one spirit with Him – and thus, if I am joined to the Person who said, “I AM the Life” – I am alive. I am alive with HIS LIFE – and the fact that I am joined to the Lord is the ONLY reason I am alive. Consequently, Jesus Christ has not merely given me life. No. Rather, ***HE IS MY LIFE. (Col. 3:4)***

Christ Is Our Righteousness

This same principle is being stated here in I Corinthians 1:30 regarding RIGHTEOUSNESS. I was always taught that God gave me the legal classification of righteousness because I put my faith in Christ. And we do have our doctrine of, “justification by faith.” It is a good doctrine; it is a fundamental Christian doctrine. It states that if I put my faith in Jesus Christ that God will legally IMPUTE to Jesus my sin, and will legally IMPUTE to me the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That is a great LEGAL explanation of how God declares the sinner to be righteous because of faith in Jesus Christ.

But we must take this a step further as shown in this passage of I Corinthians 1:30. This passage does NOT say that God merely gives us a righteousness of our own; nor gives us a LEGAL classification of righteousness. No. Paul says that Jesus Christ in us IS our righteousness.

This means that God does more than legally IMPUTE to me the righteousness of Jesus Christ. No. That is certainly included. But what God does is IMPART to me the Person of Christ Himself. This means that Jesus Christ IS my righteousness.

If you think about this it is an incredible thing: Jesus Christ Himself is my righteousness – as He dwells in me. This means my righteousness is NOT based on me, or upon anything about me. Thus, nothing can subtract from Him – nothing can subtract from Christ as my righteousness. That settles the matter forever.

Jesus Christ is the only righteousness that I have and the only righteousness that I need. Nothing can change this because the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is finished – He is the Alpha and the Omega.

And so when we read I Corinthians 1:30 we are not reading about THINGS that God gives us, or about legal classifications that God imputes to us. Rather, they are descriptions of WHO Christ is IN US.

Do you want wisdom? Then grow to know Jesus. Do you want righteousness? Then put your faith in Christ -- because HE IS your righteousness. Do you want to be sanctified? Well, sanctification is Christ manifested in and through the believer. And redemption? That covers all.

Thus, Jesus Christ really IS the Alpha and the Omega. He is that to US – He is our ALL. That is why our faith needs to be in HIM, rather than in ourselves. That is why we are to rest IN HIM.

The Vine and the Branches

Jesus said, ***“I AM the Vine and you are the branches. Abide in Me.” (see John 15:5)*** This is a great example of how Jesus Christ is ALL for the believer. For what does it mean for a branch to abide in a vine?” It means for the branch to live in and out from the Vine – it means that the life of the Vine must become the life of the branch.

What is included in LIFE? Everything. Thus, if Jesus IS our life, then in Him, is ALL.

Jesus also said, “Without Me you can do nothing. The only way in which you can bear fruit is if you abide in Me.”

Even spiritual fruit is of Christ. It is the result of HIS LIFE flowing through the branches. Thus, Christian FRUIT is NOT the result of me developing my earthly nature. Rather, Christian fruit is a matter of me LOSING MY LIFE into the hands of Jesus Christ, so that, over the course of time, Jesus Christ, who IS my life, can bear His fruit and manifest Himself through me.

All Hidden in Christ

Along this same line of Jesus Christ being ALL in the believer – and of God having given us everything He has to give in His Son – we find that in Col. 2:3 Paul states:

In whom (Christ) are hid ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col. 2:3)

In whom are ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? In CHRIST – in the Person of Jesus Christ – are hidden ALL of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This could not be clearer.

Paul does not say that SOME of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ, and that you need to go someplace else to get the rest of it. No. ALL is in Christ.

So what this is saying to us is that if you want to discover the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, you must discover Christ Himself. You must come into the knowledge of Jesus Christ in an INWARD way. For if all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ, then it is ONLY as Christ Himself is unfolded that these will come into our experience. Again – all true discernment in the Christian life is a by-product of knowing Jesus Christ.

Another passage to which I alluded earlier was ***Col. 2:9-10***. Paul writes there, ***“In Christ dwells all the fullness of DEITY bodily.”*** The English word, “Godhead,” in the KJV is not the proper translation. The Greek word means, “Deity.” So it reads, “In Christ dwells all the fullness of Deity bodily.”

This means that everything that there is of God is in Christ – but because Christ is in US – this likewise means that if Christ is in you, “You are complete IN HIM.”

The Christian life, once we are saved, is a matter of coming into an inward knowledge and realization of the Person of Jesus Christ. And as we discover and experience Christ, then all that is IN HIM will come into our experience. This is not an intellectual, academic, emotional, or theological knowledge. It is a spiritual knowing that can only come by revelation. Everything depends upon this, for it is solely out from Christ that God will work His purposes.

Chapter 6

An Inward Realization of Christ

Christianity is, “Christ in us.” Up to this point we have discussed many of the Truths associated with the reality of being joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him. But in one sense of the word that is only the beginning. Once Christ is in us, God wants to bring us into an experiential knowledge of His Son.

Experiencing Christ obviously doesn’t happen in five minutes – it happens over the course of a lifetime of a believer -- if they go on with Christ. But Paul continually exhorted believers to experience Jesus Christ – to come to know Him in an inward way.

The Galatian Error and Paul’s Answer

Paul constantly faced those who wanted to turn Christianity into a belief system – into a religious system of laws, rules, and self-improvement. The Galatian church was one such group of people who were guilty of this error. The Galatians were trying to keep themselves righteous through law-keeping.

If you read the first chapter of Paul’s epistle to the Galatians you will see the seriousness of substituting ANY form of religion – even ones with the name of Christ pasted on them – for the living Christ in His people. Paul said the Galatians were deceived – he said they were under, “another gospel.” And he pronounced a stern judgment upon those who taught such error.

In ***Galatians 4:19***, we find Paul’s answer for the Galatian deception, and really, it is God’s answer for any deception. It was Paul’s heart cry for the Galatians. Paul says, ***“My little children, over whom I travail in birth again, until CHRIST BE FORMED IN YOU.”*** This is Paul’s answer – it is his solution to not only legalism, but to all that might corrupt our spiritual lives.

What does Paul mean by the phrase, “Christ be formed in you?”

Well, he is certainly not talking about receiving Christ for salvation – for the Galatian church was comprised of people already saved. Paul affirms that in the epistle. For example, he asks them in ***Galatians 3:3***, ***“Having***

begun in the spirit, are you not made mature by the flesh?" Paul does not question their salvation. Rather, he is talking about the means by which they walk with God – they are trying to use that which belongs to their natural man in Adam – they are using THEMSELVES and their own efforts – to try to grow and mature in Christ. He goes as far as to ask, in **Galatians 3:1**, ***"Who has mesmerized you?"***

So Paul is talking to saved people. Indeed, Christ could be FORMED in them only if Christ were ALREADY in them. So the question remains: What does Paul mean, "that Christ be formed in you?"

The Greek helps here. The word, "formed," is translated from a Greek word that means, "to inwardly realize and express." So when Paul says, ***"I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,"*** he is saying, "I am in travail as a woman about to give birth until you come into an INWARD REALIZATION and knowing of Jesus Christ."

So again, we see that the core of Christianity is, "Christ in you," but that God's purpose once we are joined to the Lord in spirit is to bring us into an inward realization and knowing of Jesus Christ.

This was Paul's travail, and since God saw to it that this travail became part of His inspired Word, we can be sure that this is the travail of God Himself – here expressed through Paul. The question is therefore, "Is this OUR travail?"

I would submit that it is generally NOT the travail of God's church. Why? Well, in most cases I don't think people are deliberately rejecting the Truth. Rather, I think people are blinded to the reality of Jesus Christ within. They don't know – and they don't know that they don't know. This great Truth isn't even on their radar screen.

God's Great Purpose

If you do a study through the New Testament and gather up all the passages wherein Paul expresses great desire for God's people – Gal. 4:19 being one of those places – there is a central core: That believers might come into an inward realization and knowledge of Jesus Christ. For example, in Ephesians 1 Paul tells us his prayer for believers:

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. (Eph. 1:15-20)

Paul's prayer was that God might give us, "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." In other words, he prayed that we might KNOW Jesus Christ in an inward way – that we might come into an inward realization of Jesus." This was his prayer for people already saved. Yes, we do have Christ within, but Paul prayed that we come to know Him and be governed by Him.

To come into an inward realization of Christ is actually what it means to be guided by the spirit of God into the Truth. Jesus said, ***"I AM the Truth."*** (John 14:6) Thus, Truth is not primarily doctrines or theology – although Truth must be expressed and explained that way in complete agreement with the written Word. But in the end, Truth is a Person that I must experience.

People sometimes get nervous when you tell them that the Truth is a Person we must experience. They think you are saying the Bible is not our guide. But the inspired, written Word itself TELLS us that God wants us to experience the Person – we are reading an epistle of Paul that tells us that to experience Jesus Christ is God's great desire for His people.

Nothing that we discover in Christ, and nothing that we experience that is of God, will ever depart from, or contradict scripture. But that being said, can we see that if we deny that God wants us to come into an inward realization of Christ that we are, in fact, departing from scripture?

And so Paul cries, “My little children, over whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you – until you come into an inward realization of this Christ whom you have received.” Paul was speaking for God. This is God's own heart cry.

Formed Together With Christ

Paul stated outright the purpose of God in his epistle to the Romans:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Rom. 8:28-29)

What does Paul say is the PURPOSE of God to which believers are called – what is the GOOD towards which God will work all things? That believers, “be conformed to the image of His Son.”

The Greek word here for, “conformed,” means, “to be formed together with.” In other words, God is not going to make us into little Xerox copies of Jesus; into clones of Jesus. No. Rather, as Jesus Christ is formed in the believer – as we come into an inward realization of Christ – this realization of Him will change us and form us together WITH HIM.

This is what God is doing in this age. God has joined us to Himself in spirit – and now wants to bring us into an inward realization of His Son. But as He does, we will be conformed to Him, that is, made able to manifest Him. In short, we will no longer have anything in us that is contrary to Him. We will be in complete harmony with Him so that He can flow through us.

This is how a believer becomes living evidence of Christ. It is how we grow in our obedience to the faith. Indeed, despite the fact that our obedience to God in body and soul will always be flawed in this age, our faith in Christ will nevertheless define our relationship with Him – for it will be based on an eternal inward realization of Him.

Believers are to become evidence of the Living Christ. But all of this is ultimately for the ages yet to come –

where Christ will be both manifested through His people,
and where Christ will eternally work through His people.

Chapter 7 Upon This Rock

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I the Son of man am?" And they said, "Some say that You are John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said unto them, "But who do YOU say that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto you, that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matt. 16:13-18)

We live in a day where spiritual deception of every kind is running rampant through the Body of Christ. The Word of God and the Person of Jesus Christ have been forsaken in favor of signs and wonders. Faith has been replaced with gimmicks, rituals, and formulas as to how to get God moving. And the knowledge of Jesus Christ has been pushed aside to make room for the knowledge and exaltation of self. Thus, it should be no surprise that the power of God through Jesus Christ should be virtually absent from the church – although this too has been replaced – replaced with the power of soul and the psychic realm. None of these things are a surprise to God. He prophesied that these things would come to pass two thousand years ago.

This passage above shows that the key to everything in the Christian life, once a person is saved, is an inward revelation or realization of Jesus Christ. The gates of hell – which includes all of the old man in Adam and Satan's power in it -- cannot prevail against THE ROCK – against the revelation of Jesus Christ IN God's people.

A Turning Point

If you read the above passage from Matthew 16, you are reading an account that shows that the Father had revealed to the disciples the identity of Jesus Christ – and now they were confessing Him. This was a HUGE turning point in both the ministry of Jesus, and in the lives of His disciples. But this passage carries great meaning for ALL

believers. Within it Jesus tells us that the inward revelation of Jesus Christ to the believer is the foundation of all that God will build in the believer from that point. Indeed, the revelation of Jesus in the believer is the means by which the gates of hell shall be demolished.

A Personal Revelation

You will note that Jesus pro-actively approached His disciples and asked them the question, “Who do men say that I am?” The disciples gave a number of answers, all of which, of course, were incorrect. But then Jesus asked them, “Who do YOU say that I am?”

There is a revelation even in that question: It does not matter what other people say about Jesus Christ. For you and I, it matters only what WE believe. I cannot have faith in the faith of others. I have to have personal faith in Christ. In other words, what is vital is a personal and individual revelation of Jesus Christ – a personal INWARD revelation of Him.

Paul, the apostle, could not have been clearer about this. He wrote to the Galatians, “***I travail until Christ be formed in you.***” (*Gal. 4:19*) That is a little awkward in English. In NT Greek, it reads, “I travail until you be brought into an inward realization of Christ.” An INWARD realization of Christ, or an inward expression of Christ to us in an inward way – well, that is personal and individual. It cannot happen by proxy.

We have also seen that Paul said, “***Christ in YOU, the hope of glory.***” (*Col. 1:27*) He did not say, “Christ is only realized through a group.” No. We must EACH receive a personal and individual revelation of Jesus Christ -- because we must each receive Jesus Christ Himself by being ***made one with Him in spirit.*** (*1 Cor. 6:17*)

So once again we see the great significance of Jesus’ question: Who do YOU say that I am? Not, who do OTHERS say that I am – that is not the question upon which everything hinges – but who do YOU say that I am?

A Revelation from God

Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon

Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father in heaven (has revealed this to you)."

Can we grasp what Jesus is saying? He is saying that this revelation of Jesus as the Christ did not come from any, "flesh and blood," source. It did not come to the disciples from other people. Neither did it come from the disciple's own, "flesh and blood," that is, it was not something that they mustered up out of themselves. No. This revelation came from the OUTSIDE of the disciples INTO them FROM the outside – from the Father.

God uses ministry, and fellowship, in the Body of Christ. But in the final analysis, regardless of the vehicle God may use, it must result in this individual and personal revelation of Jesus Christ. Otherwise it is not real.

Christ is The Rock

Now, all of this is actually background. It brings us to the focal point of this passage: The revelation of Jesus Christ IN US; that PERSONAL and INDIVIDUAL revelation that only God can give. HE is the revelation – He is THE ROCK upon which the individuals who comprise the church are built. Indeed, He is The Rock upon which ALL that God will ever do in our lives is built.

Before we continue, also note that when Jesus said, "Upon this Rock I will build my church," that he was NOT talking about buildings or institutions. The word for, "church," is, "ekkleisia," and means, "called out ONES." In other words, Jesus is saying that it is upon Himself that He will build individual PEOPLE. Again, this is about, "Christ in you" – about Christ in individuals -- and about a person's inward realization of Him.

Jesus was clear about the source of this incredible revelation of Himself. He said, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed Me to you – but My Father in heaven has revealed Me to you. And it is upon THIS ROCK – the revelation of Myself IN YOU -- that I will build my people."

You cannot escape the conclusion here: Christ Himself IN US is our Rock. Christ, and the progressive revelation of Christ in us – this is the ROCK upon which God builds His people. He is the Rock because He is our life. He is the Rock because He is our Truth. In short, Christ is ALL.

Now can we see why unless we are at least beginning to know Jesus – and are beginning to come into an inward realization of Him – can we see why we are not going to get far? Without this ROCK there is no foundation upon which God can build.

All through the epistles this necessity, yes, of having Christ in us, is emphasized, but then, out from that, the necessity of knowing Jesus Christ in an inward way is stressed. Indeed, we have seen that Paul prayed, ***“I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened...” (Eph. 1:16-18)*** How else could we walk in the Truth? How else could we live in Christ? God must unfold Christ in us. That revelation is the foundation because He is the Rock.

The Gates of Hell

There were many things that Jesus could have told His disciples would be the outcome of this revelation of Himself from the Father. But they were not ready for most of that – as was proved in immediate exchange between Peter and Jesus about the Cross. But Jesus did mention a few other things that would result from this revelation of Himself. He said, “And I say also to you that thou art Peter, and upon this rock – upon the revelation of Myself in you -- I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it -- and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

There are some interesting words used in this passage – the most interesting being in that phrase, “gates of hell.” Most people would misunderstand this to be talking about THE HELL – as in, “eternal hell fire.” But it is not – for every time in the gospels that Jesus talked about hell fire He used the word, “ghenna.” Here, the word translated, “hell,” is HADES. The word, “hades,” in NT Greek actually means, “the unseen.” But it was used to refer to the unseen realm of the dead. Thus, when Jesus used the phrase, “the gates of hell,” He was actually talking about, “the power and authority of death.”

So Jesus was actually promising that, "The power of death will not prevail against the revelation of Myself in people." That is wonderful and utter in its scope. Satan is behind the realm of death – it is his domain. In fact, "the realm of death," is really the entire old creation. Everything that came under the dominion of Satan through the fall of Adam is actually, "the gates of hades." Jesus is saying NONE of that will prevail against His people if we know and believe Him.

Our old man in Adam is a primary, "gate or power of death." Our old man in Adam is everything IN US that is outside of our spiritual union with Christ. Thus, Jesus is promising that all that is of the realm of death cannot stand against the revelation of Himself in us; against His very presence in us. He is The Rock. Of course, this must be experienced in actual victory. But nevertheless His promise is there.

Knowing Christ

Today there is a general blindness to Jesus Christ. We know facts about Him and what He has done for us. But we are blind to HIM. Talk to most people about, "Christ in us," and they won't understand. People don't know and they don't know that they don't know. This is no small matter. It is a blindness that is the work of Satan.

Jesus said, "It is upon THIS ROCK – upon this inward revelation of the Christ that I will build My people – and the powers of death cannot prevail against it." If that is true, then if we do NOT have an inward realization of Jesus Christ, then can we see that we cannot get far; that not much can be built in God's people? In fact, there will be nothing to prevail against the gates of hell. Without Christ being formed in us we will be in darkness – even if that darkness is a religious darkness.

It is not possible for us to desire to receive a revelation of Jesus Christ more than God wants to give it to us. Thus, we need only to ask God to do whatever it takes to bring us into this revelation -- and we need to settle for nothing less. God is faithful and such is His will – ***"For God desires for all men to be saved AND to come into the knowledge of the Truth."*** (1 Tim. 2:4)

Chapter 8

The Work of the Cross

Human effort – flesh and blood – cannot bring us into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. We cannot come to know Jesus Christ, let alone manifest Him, by taking classes. A degree in theology cannot bring us into an inward knowledge of Jesus. The apostles had none of these tools and yet God used them to form the foundation of the church.

Jesus Christ already dwells in the believer. But we must grow to discover Him. We can discover the Jesus Christ who dwells in us only through the work of the Cross. It is through the work of the Cross that we can experience a greater release of His life and come into an inward realization of Him.

Treasures in Earthen Vessels

In II Corinthians 4, Paul writes in detail about how a believer can come to know Christ, and manifest Him. He begins by using an illustration that would be familiar to his contemporary readers:

But we have this Treasure – Jesus Christ – in an EARTHEN vessel. (II Cor. 4:7)

Clearly, Paul is describing, “Christ in us.” WE are the earthen vessel. But Jesus Christ is The Treasure. The Treasure is IN the earthen vessel.

We have already seen HOW The Treasure dwells in the earthen vessel – ***we are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him. (I Cor. 6:17)*** So despite the fact that our earthly nature – our earthen vessel – is not joined to the Lord, nevertheless we are joined to Him in spirit. Thus, Paul is able to say that The Treasure is IN the earthen vessel.

Note again: The Treasure is not the earthen vessel, and the earthen vessel is not the Treasure. In other words, “Christ IN US,” really does speak of the joining in spirit of TWO persons – the believer and Christ. The believer actually receives – from the outside of them into them from the outside – the Person of Jesus Christ through the means of the Holy Spirit. But Jesus Christ remains distinct from us even while He is in us – despite the fact

that we are joined to Him in spirit. Both Jesus Christ and the person in whom He dwells maintain individual identities.

It is absolutely vital to see that Christ remains distinct from us – He remains OTHER THAN US – all the while we are joined to Him in spirit. It is vital to see this because so many of us continue to think that God acts upon US, and does things to US, and gives things to US – to make us to LOOK like Jesus. Some of us have an unspoken assumption that God wants to make US to be a little, “treasure,” along side of Christ. No. There was never anything in our earthly nature that is of God, and there never will be in this age. Christ – even as He dwells in us -- is ALWAYS the source of all things. He is ALWAYS The Treasure, and we are ALWAYS the earthen vessel.

The Christian life is a matter of living in, and out from, Jesus Christ – the Christ with whom we are joined in spirit. The believer is to draw from the Christ who is The Treasure within. There is no teaching in the NT to the effect that God gives us THINGS merely, “because of Christ,” so that we are equipped to live the Christian life. Rather, God gives us Christ Himself, and we are to live out of Him -- as a branch continually lives from out of the Vine.

The Person of Jesus Christ – Who remains distinct from even us as He dwells in us -- carries ALL the value, the life, and the Truth. ALL that is of God comes solely from HIM – and this remains the Truth even as He dwells within us.

How often God proclaims this Truth! Jesus Christ is ALL. Jesus IS our life – and within HIS LIFE is all – Jesus Christ IS everything to the earthen vessel. The earthen vessel has NOTHING otherwise. ALL is in the Treasure. Paul continually states this foundational Truth:

He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS?(Rom. 8:32)

To the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; IN WHOM ARE HID ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col. 2:2-3)

Here, in II Corinthians, Paul repeats this exact Truth. He makes sure we understand that all the while Christ dwells in us that HE remains the source of all that is of value; of all that is of God. He not only says, "We have this Treasure in an earthen vessel" – but he also states:

But we have this Treasure in an earthen vessel, that the excellency of the power may be OF GOD and not of US. (II Cor. 4:7)

God has not given us a THING called, "power," because Jesus Christ dwells in us. No. Rather, God has given us CHRIST HIMSELF – who IS the power of God. This is not simply a conclusion drawn from the words of Paul. It is precisely his point – the excellency of the power remains OF GOD and is never OF US.

Jesus remains the power of God, and the SOLE source of all that is of God -- all the while we are joined to Him in spirit. He is the source, and remains the source, for the believer – just as the Vine is always the source of life for the branches.

A Need for Understanding

There is a great need for understanding on this matter – on the meaning of Christ in us. Many believers think that because we have this Treasure in our earthen vessel that somehow our earthen vessel is transformed into a treasure – into, "a mini-version," of the Treasure -- now given the same power that is found in Him. Many think that we are supposed to grow, "to look like Jesus" -- to become Xerox copies of Him.

But this is exactly what Paul says does NOT happen. Read again II Cor. 4:7 – Paul states the impact of The Treasure being in an earthen vessel:

That the excellency of the power may be OF GOD and NOT of US.

And again, from I Corinthians 1:29-31:

That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.

So we see that God is not working to make our earthen vessel into a little treasure; not working to make US look like Jesus. No, God has given us Jesus Christ, and is working to reveal Christ in us, and to manifest Jesus Himself THROUGH the believer. Again – even while dwelling within us, Jesus Christ remains The Treasure and the only source of all. Of course, He is THE LIFE.

Bearing His Death in Our Body

In this passage, Paul has told us that we have the Treasure in our earthen vessel. He has likewise told us that all of the life, value, and power remains in the Treasure and is never IN US. But now he is going to describe HOW it is possible for a believer to come to know the Treasure, Jesus Christ, through an inward realization, as well as how it is possible for a believer to manifest Jesus Christ.

After Paul speaks of The Treasure in our earthen vessel, he goes on in **II Cor. 4:8-9** to speak of many trials. Paul says in verse 9, ***“We are persecuted, but not forsaken. We are cast down, but not destroyed.”*** But then Paul gives the outcome of these trials – IF – and it is a big IF – IF we are turning to God in these matters. Some won't turn to God. But IF we are turning to God in these matters, then what Paul writes starting in verse 10 will be our growing experience:

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus... (II Cor. 4:10)

This is God's intended result through any trial of faith: To, ***“bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus.”*** This is clearly equal to, indeed, the outcome of, being, ***“crucified with Christ.” (Gal. 2:20)*** It is also – and we will see this in a moment – equal to, ***“losing our life, for the sake of Christ.” (Matt. 16:24)***

Paul is writing about the work of the Cross – the work of the PERSONAL CROSS. So again we see that yes, Christ did die FOR us. But we must also die in Him – we must be crucified WITH Him. This must be experienced – it must be made real. The personal Cross is the means by which God does this work IN US.

But note: Being crucified with Christ – bearing His death in our own experience – is not an end unto itself. It is all unto a greater release of His life both IN US, and then THROUGH us. Paul goes on in both II Cor. 4 and Galatians 2:20 to promise that HIS LIFE in and through us will be the outcome of being crucified with Him:

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. (II Cor. 4:10-11)

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

Why must we, “bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus?” Why must we lose our lives under the work of the personal Cross? Because what we are in Adam – our earthly nature -- is absolutely contrary to Christ. The spirit of self-ownership is contrary to Jesus as Lord in us. Jesus Christ died so that this, “body of sin,” might be destroyed, that is, we might die TO IT, and walk in newness of life. The work of the Cross is the dynamic that emerges from being united with Christ in His death. And this, in turn, will result in a release of the life of Christ to be experienced and manifested.

This is not a matter of the earthen vessel being made into a clone of Jesus Christ. Neither is it a matter of Christ bringing out some supposed latent greatness that was always in the earthen vessel. No. Rather, the outcome of being crucified with Christ is what Paul proclaims in ***Galatians 2:20: “Yet not I, but Christ.”*** There is it – exactly the same Truth. The earthen vessel is crucified so that the Treasure might be manifest TO it, and then THROUGH it. In effect, instead of making us LOOK like Jesus, the work of the personal Cross is to break the earthen vessel so that Jesus Christ Himself might be manifested TO us and through us.

Losing Our Lives

We see this same Truth stated in Matthew 16:

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever would seek to save his life will lose it. And whosoever would lose his life for My sake will find it. (Matt. 16:24-25)

Jesus is saying that if we relinquish to Him our life – deny or relinquish to Him our self-ownership under the work of the personal Cross – that an ongoing death will take place. It will be the death of that very natural self-life– it will be the breaking of the earthen vessel. This equals being crucified WITH Christ. On the Cross Jesus not only bore our sin, but He bore our self. Thus, if we pick up our cross, the result will be that we will experience a greater freedom from that old nature – but we will also, “find Jesus as our life.”

It is a fact that Jesus Christ died FOR us – and that His death was once for all and final for all of us. Picking up our personal Cross does nothing to add to the finished work of Jesus Christ. But the personal Cross does bring us into an experiential fellowship with Christ in His death – our personal Cross works out in our experience what Christ has finished.

Leaving Ourselves Alone

A primary characteristic of, “losing our life to Jesus,” is that we will eventually learn to LEAVE OURSELVES ALONE. When God convicts by His Spirit we will be shown our hopeless condition, but by faith, we will leave ourselves alone because we will know that we can do nothing about ourselves. We will know that Christ has already done everything. Leaving yourself alone is always the outcome by embracing the Truth by faith.

We don't abandon ourselves to Jesus Christ and walk off into a vacuum. No. We leave ourselves alone because we are caught up with HIM. The Christian life is a resurrection out of the old life -- and our preoccupation with it -- into an experience with Jesus Christ. And despite the fact that this will be challenged by our flesh, the world, and the enemy, all of our lives, it is THE LIFE unto which we are born. Thus, rather than preoccupation with ourselves, we are focused upon HIM. Of course, none of this is possible by merely knowing the teaching. It is only possible if Christ is revealed in us.

Freedom from SIN is the outcome of the work of the Cross, but the key to freedom from SIN is freedom from SELF. We must lose the life in which all sin is rooted -- we must lose the spirit of self-ownership that governs all sin. Such freedom is not possible without the work of the Cross. And as noted, freedom from SELF is really a freedom UNTO Christ. Paul said, "**Yet NOT I, but Christ.**" This is freedom.

Chapter 9

Whatever It Takes

Matthew 16, which we mentioned earlier, contains the pivotal passage on this matter of losing our lives into the hands of Jesus Christ:

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 16:24-25)

Many believers have difficulty understanding what it really means, "to lose your life." Often we think of THINGS we must lose. Indeed, many believers grow fearful at the thought of giving themselves wholly to Jesus Christ. Surely, we imagine, losing ourselves to Jesus is going to result in disaster and suffering.

But Jesus Christ is not primarily asking us to lose THINGS. He is asking us to lose OURSELVES. In effect, he wants us to lose our spirit of self-ownership. THINGS may or may not be involved as tools. But in the end, Jesus wants us to relinquish our self-ownership. If He has that, then He has US.

The old life is corrupt. There is no salvaging it. We must lose it under the Cross. But notice a distinction: It is one thing to lose that old life, and another to lose our right to own it; our right to ourselves. Most of us want to be free of the old life. But most of us don't realize that it is our ownership OVER IT that is the real problem. Our ownership over it is the sin of unbelief.

So when Jesus spoke of, "denying yourself," He was talking about denying your right to own yourself. This would obviously result in losing to Christ what you previously owned: Your entire self; your entire life.

Self-ownership takes many forms. The most common one is preoccupation with SELF. But each of us has a unique version of the flesh – a unique manifestation of self-ownership. Self-ownership is sin. It is the root of all other sin, and is destructive in every way. Thus, Jesus is not seeking to deprive us. He wants to set us free.

How to Lose Your Life

You will note that Jesus did not simply command us to LOSE our lives – as a thing unto itself -- as a religious duty under threat of punishment. No. Losing your life is unto finding Christ as our life.

Jesus promised that if we do LOSE our lives – and ONLY if we would lose them – that we would find our life. And since Jesus Christ is THE life – the only life of a Christian – then we can be sure that He was saying that if we LOSE ourselves to Him that we would find Him AS our life – and discover all that is IN HIM.

If you look through scripture, God continually requires of us that ONE choice. Surrender of self-rule is the one thing we CAN do, and it is the one thing we MUST do: We must give ourselves to Him. We CAN do this because, by nature, we are in possession of ourselves.

The issue of self-ownership, or self-rule, actually takes us back to the two trees in the Garden of Eden: I can either choose self before God, or God before self. God tells us to do the latter.

This brings us to the place where we can start – there is a place to start in losing ourselves to God: We can ask HIM – ask GOD HIMSELF – “to do whatever it takes,” to bring us into the fullness of His Son. If necessary, we can even ask God, “to do whatever it takes,” to bring us to where we will WANT to lose our lives to Him.

If we fear that we are not willing to surrender to Christ, then we can, “be willing to be made willing.” We can ask God to make us willing. God knows that we often have no clue as to how to lose ourselves to Him – and we certainly have no idea of the revelation that God wants to give us of His Son. But we can make the simple commitment, by faith, to allow God, “to do whatever it takes.”

How many see that this is a matter of taking all faith from off of myself, and putting my faith in Christ? I don't need to trust that I can figure this out. I can put all of that – all of myself – into HIS hands.

To ask God Himself, “to do whatever it takes,” is, in itself, a relinquishment of ownership into the hands of God. It is at least an overall commitment to lose our lives to Christ. And frankly, this is ALL any of us can do. We cannot crucify ourselves. We cannot make ourselves righteous. But we can turn and unconditionally give ourselves over to God, asking HIM, “to do whatever it takes.”

A Beginning

Of course, this surrender to God for, “whatever it takes,” forms only a foundation. From that point, God will begin to do whatever it takes, and when He does, we have to pick up whatever form of the cross that He brings. If we do so, this will progressively crucify the earthly nature, and result in an inward realization of Jesus. Over the course of time, it is this inward realization of Christ, rather than a focus on ourselves, or our sin, that will begin to govern us.

To truly lose your life to Jesus Christ, in an unconditional, “whatever it takes,” commitment – we do need to understand that this must be a voluntary, heart desire. It must not be a plea I make to God because I want something from Him. It must not be made because I’m afraid of what will happen if I don’t ask God to do whatever it takes. It must not be a choice born out of religious duty, or a choice I make simply because I believe the doctrine. No. Rather, I have to see the Truth about myself, and the Truth about Jesus – and respond to it voluntarily by FAITH.

A Living Sacrifice

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Rom. 12:1)

There are other places in the NT that teach this exact same principle of losing ourselves to Jesus Christ. In Romans 12, Paul uses the picture of an Old Covenant sacrifice to illustrate the losing of a believer’s self to God.

In Romans 12, Paul is appealing to believers to voluntarily get on an altar and offer themselves to God. The altar, of course, is always a type of the Cross – in this case, a type of the personal Cross. Paul is beseeching believers to

ask God to do, “whatever it takes,” to bring us into the fullness of Jesus Christ.

Think about it. For you and I to get on an altar and offer ourselves to God – we are surrendering ourselves to a death. We are not at that point DOING any works – neither are we surrendering any THING. No. We are offering OURSELVES unconditionally to God unto the death of our SELF, that He might do, “whatever it takes,” to achieve His will and glory in our lives.

The first thing that jumps off the page from out of Romans 12:1 is the phrase, “by the mercies of God.” In other words, Paul is not issuing a command to believers, “under threat of punishment.” He is not saying, “You had better lose your life to Jesus Christ or God will curse you!” Of course, if we do not surrender to God there are going to be consequences – if we seek to save our lives for ourselves we will lose them. But Paul’s plea in this verse is not based upon anything negative. Rather, he says, “I beseech you by the MERCIES of God.” In short, this surrender to God on this altar is our surrender to God’s MERCY. It is our surrender to the Christ who wants to set us free.

How is this surrender to God’s mercy? I will never understand that unless God brings me to see the Truth about myself. If I see the Truth about my earthly nature, and embrace that Truth, I will absolutely WANT to get on this altar. I will see that the Cross it represents is the means of my deliverance -- the Cross is the MERCY of God.

Paul is saying that if we present ourselves to God, a living, voluntary sacrifice, that this is an act of faith – and it is this act of faith that is, “holy and acceptable to God.” It is actually an act of faith that we choose in response to seeing the Truth.

God wants to show me the Truth about myself. And of course, He must also show me the Truth about Christ. This is necessary or I cannot believe. But if I do believe there is only one possible outcome: Unconditional surrender to Jesus Christ. I will WANT to lose myself to Him.

God has never said we are supposed to purge ourselves of all doubt and fear before we can surrender. In fact, He

hasn't even said that all of our doubts and fear will disappear after we surrender. Surrender to God is not going to eradicate the old nature, with all of its reactions and malfunction. But despite the continual presence of the old nature, we can nevertheless in the midst of our turmoil turn and say to God, "Whatever it takes, Lord. I give myself to you."

Seeing Jesus

The great necessity for believers is that we see Jesus. We must find Him as our life. But if we read on in Romans 12, and also Matthew 16, we will see that seeing Jesus is going to be the outcome if we lose our lives; if we allow God to, "do whatever it takes."

Paul said, we will, "be transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we might prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:2) Jesus also said, "Whosoever would lose his life will find his life" – and the only life there is to find is the life of Jesus. Find Jesus as your life and you will SEE HIM; know Him.

To, "see Jesus," is not a vision or a dream. It is simply another way of describing an inward realization of Him. It is spiritual – it is only possible if we are born from above.

If we ask God, "to do whatever it takes," by getting on the altar, He will do a work of the Cross that will eventually bring us into this inward realization of Christ; God will form Christ in us. And this inward realization of Jesus Christ will include a progressive unfolding of the Truth. It will set us free from all that is IN US that exalts itself against the true knowledge of God. Fundamental to this will be freedom from preoccupation with ourselves; the spirit of self-ownership.

The Christian life, while it will always involve carrying our Cross, is nevertheless NOT a continual focus upon the life we are losing. Rather, as we begin to see and know Jesus – come into an inward realization of Him – we will more and more become governed by our knowing of HIM.

Do we want to know the will of God? The place to start is the altar – we must pick up our Cross. The result will not only be that we will find Jesus Christ as our life, but we will IN HIM discover all the treasures of wisdom and

knowledge. This is the freedom that comes from asking God, “to do whatever it takes.”

Chapter 10

The Renewing of the Mind

We saw in the last chapter that if we, “present our bodies a living sacrifice” – in other words, ask God to do, “whatever it takes,” for Him to get His will – that this act of faith is, “holy and acceptable to God.” But we also saw that it was the key to receiving LIGHT from God – it would result in a gradual renewing of our mind.

Surrender to God on the altar results in a realization of Christ, and thus, a renewing of our minds, because if we lose our lives to Him, we will find Christ as our life. And if we find Christ as our life, He will likewise be revealed in us. You cannot separate LIFE from LIGHT. Christ is a Person. So as He becomes our life, He likewise becomes our light.

Thus, as we lose ourselves to Christ, and bear about His death in our earthly nature, His life finds a greater release in us and to us. We will grow to realize Him and this will renew our minds according to the Truth.

The Greek word for, “mind,” in the NT includes more than the usual English meaning. The word in the Greek NT includes INTENT – along with thoughts and understanding. Thus, as we come to realize Jesus Christ, we will grow in our understanding, not only of HIM, but also of all else.

Without the renewing of our minds by the knowledge of Jesus Christ we would be left to ourselves – left with the futility of our OWN minds. But we cannot muster up the knowledge of Jesus Christ from out of our own mind. Neither can we gather into our minds information about Christ and morph it into a realization of Jesus. No. It is only through an inward revelation of Jesus Christ that our minds can be renewed according to the Truth.

The SELF Principle

As noted, without a revelation of Christ by the spirit of God, human beings have only an EARTHLY mind. But that earthly mind is set upon, and LIVES IN, that which is earthly and carnal. It is all that an earthly mind can perceive. A person who is not born from above does not need to make any effort to function in this way. It is the

ONLY way in which they can function – it is the product of what we are in Adam.

The earthly mind is inherently governed by what we could call, “the SELF principle.” By this I don’t mean that we are merely selfish. That is included. But what I do mean is that we LIVE according to SELF. We are utterly preoccupied with ourselves. We perceive, discern, react, and think from only one point of reference: SELF. This is then translated into actions. But for the natural mind, SELF defines all things – it defines all things by how they affect US; by how they look from OUR perspective. Some folks can distance themselves from this to a degree, but in the end, even that is going to be a product of SELF.

This principle of SELF is really what the Bible means by the term, “flesh.” “To walk according to the flesh,” is to walk according to ME. In other words, how I see things, will be, to me, the Truth. How I feel will, to me, reflect the Truth. Many people, including some professing Christians, are so utterly preoccupied with, and governed by SELF, that they have no consciousness of what they are doing, or how deceived they are.

As noted, it begins with the mind – it begins in the inward man. And then it impacts our outward actions. This walk according to the flesh may involve some terribly immoral sins. Or it may not. A life that is governed by the flesh may simply be one that is controlled by feelings, fears, and pride – in a way that we would think is normal. But it may also be quite religious. It may be a shock for some people to realize that self-righteousness is nothing more than a walk according to the flesh – howbeit religious. It is a religious walk that is according to ME.

We are born as members of the Adam race. And because, “that which is born of the flesh IS flesh,” we are going to be governed by, and preoccupied with, SELF – we are doomed to it. And each of us has our unique version of the flesh. As we grow up our flesh is formed according to our choices, as well as by the environment in which we made our choices and had our reactions. But as noted, most of us don’t realize what is happening to us as our flesh is being formed. We think it is normal. It is all that we know.

This is like a prison; it is like a box in which we are trapped. Without Christ, we are boxed into the reality

created by our own mind. This is what it means to walk according to the flesh; to walk according to ME. And it is all we can do -- unless we know Jesus Christ.

Futility

Paul the apostle had much to say on this matter of the earthly mind, verses the renewing of the mind in Christ:

Among whom (unbelievers) also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (Eph. 2:3)

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ. (Eph. 4:17-20)

Note especially the phrase, "the vanity of their mind." The word, "vanity," actually means FUTILITY. In other words, unless we have Christ revealed in us, resulting in the renewing of our minds, we will continue to live in utter futility – we will continue to live in a reality created by our minds, imagination, desires, and emotions. We will continue to walk according to the flesh -- because flesh will be all that we know.

This is the only possible condition for an unbeliever. But without a renewal of their mind through a revelation of Jesus Christ even the mind of a believer will revert to the earthly. This possibility is the reason for Paul's admonition to believers to NOT walk as the Gentiles, "in the futility of their mind," and to NOT, "fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Christian people CAN err on this matter – indeed we WILL err on it unless we are coming into an inward realization of Jesus Christ – who is the ONLY means by which our minds can be renewed according to the Truth.

Jesus Christ is the Truth

The renewal of the mind according to Christ is NOT self-discovery. It is not a change from having bad thoughts about ourselves over to having good thought about ourselves. Rather, it is deliverance from preoccupation with ourselves altogether – into a growing realization of Jesus Christ.

Many believers sincerely want to see CHANGE in themselves. Of course, the root of the problem here is that we are looking at ourselves to begin with. But that aside, real change is only possible through the renewing of the mind according to a knowing of Jesus Christ. Come into a realization of Jesus and your mind will be renewed, and therefore, your thinking and your conduct will be changed accordingly.

That ye put off concerning the former conduct the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. 4:22-24)

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ... (II Peter 2:20)

In this verse from II Peter, we see the outcome of being brought into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. Our minds are renewed according to Christ – and because they are renewed we escape the pollutions of the world. These, “pollutions,” surely include things like immoral thoughts, anger, greed, jealousy, etc. But the, “pollutions of the world,” include any aspect of the flesh, earthly, or world that would pollute our life in Christ. Central to these, “pollutions,” would be preoccupation with SELF, self-righteousness, and religion that is earthly in nature.

It is a fact that we have little clue as to the extent we have been polluted by the thinking and attitude of the world until we begin to see Jesus. Until we see Him, we will tend to do what comes natural – rather than walk with Christ.

One of the greatest deceptions in the Christian church today is to get, “the cart before the horse,” on this matter.

Because many of us are blind to Christ – have not come to realize Him in an inward way – we bypass Christ and try to work directly on our mind. We try to fix up our natural mind – our natural man -- in an attempt to make it, "work right." We try to purge ourselves from what we think are the, "pollutions of the world." But in effect, we are trying to renew our own mind using the very mind we want to renew. This is futile.

Many today are using psychology, methods of inner healing, classes, programs, methods of prayer, the casting out of supposed generational cures, and many other religious techniques. These are all attempts to renew the mind. There are teachings like, "power thoughts," "speaking the Truth into your spirit," memorizing scripture, and even the Word of Faith heresy wherein you continually confess something until it becomes part of you; renews your thinking. There are also programs everywhere in the Christian church promising to set people free from depression, addiction, and even evil spirits. And of course, it is ALWAYS claimed that God is using these tools to set people free.

All of these efforts are nothing more than the product of the same earthly thinking that they claim to cure. None of them can solve the real problem. Sure, even the methods of the secular world can bring some relief by reprogramming the human mind. But the reprogramming will be from one shade of darkness to another. None of these things can bring a renewal of the mind according to the Truth.

We cannot renew our own mind through the use of the mind we want to renew. The only solution is to introduce into our mind -- from the outside in -- the realization of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ IS the Truth – and it is only by knowing Him through an inward realization wrought by the spirit of God that the mind can be renewed according to the Truth – and thus our thinking and our conduct can be changed in accordance with Him. He is the source of all Truth. You cannot bypass Him and work directly on various aspects of the human makeup, thinking that you can fix them. You cannot fix them. You will, at best, provide an earthly, cosmetic solution – which is destined to eventually collapse in on itself. That which is born of the flesh IS flesh.

God has given us all things in His Son and has joined us to Christ and made us one spirit with Him. We are not joined to the Lord physically or psychically. But because we are joined to Him in spirit, there will be great IMPACTS in our minds and hearts of we grow to know Him. As God brings us into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, this will result in a renewal of our minds according to the Truth. Our perception of reality will grow to be HIS perception. We will no longer live according to the SELF-principle, but will live from out of knowing Him. We will believe and obey God.

Jesus Christ is not only The Truth, but He is The Life. And if His life becomes our life – if Christ becomes OUR life -- then we will grow to manifest Him. But all of our faith and obedience will be OUT FROM HIM as the source. This will not be the product of the earthly. It cannot be accounted for in flesh and blood terms. No. It is because our minds are renewed according to HIM this will be possible.

Contrary to Human Thinking

In ***Romans 12:1-2***, we saw that Paul said, “***Present your bodies, a living sacrifice.***” This is simply another way of describing the essential of losing ourselves completely to Jesus Christ under the work of the Cross. We also saw that one of the results of doing so is that we will, “be transformed by the renewing of our mind.” In other words, if we lose our lives to Christ, and find Him as our life, He will not only be our life, but will be our LIGHT. It is the inward realization of Jesus Christ that renews the mind – once we see HIM our minds are renewed. This, in turn, transforms not only our perspective, but also our intent and motives.

All of this boils down to the fact that if we joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him that even though our mind is not joined to Him it will nevertheless be impacted by the new life that is in us. As we come into a realization of Him, our mind will be renewed. KNOWING Jesus Christ happens first in our spirit – but it filters down into our minds so that we can LIVE and OBEY and BELIEVE.

One of the biggest evidences of a renewed mind is a growing freedom from preoccupation with SELF, over to a preoccupation with Christ. Sure. This is fundamental to walking in the spirit instead of walking according to ME.

Instead of fussing over ourselves and continuing to try to make our dead self into a Christian, we will LEAVE OURSELVES ALONE. We will leave ourselves alone because we have seen that there is nothing we can do with ourselves, and nothing we must do. We will, in faith, give ourselves fully to Jesus Christ. Leaving ourselves alone is a fundamental part of LOSING ourselves to Jesus. It is the outcome of faith.

It has been said that those who manifest Christ the most are the least aware of it. That would never be possible unless the mind was renewed. Indeed, it is only possible if the mind is renewed. For a human being to come to the place where their life testifies, "Yet not I, but Christ," it requires an inward miracle. That miracle is CHRIST IN US resulting in a renewed mind.

Chapter 11

To Be Found in Christ

Paul the apostle, in Philippians 3, shared how he lost himself to Jesus Christ. His experience not only reveals to us practical details about losing ourselves to Jesus Christ under the personal Cross, but in sharing his experience, Paul focuses on one of the primary aspects of losing ourselves: We must lose all self-righteousness. This is key to being able, as Paul stated, “to be found in Christ.”

God’s Original Design

Human beings were MADE FOR GOD. Our entire constitution as living beings is structured to be one with God Almighty. Without God, we human beings can only perish in our own corruption. We are utterly contrary to God’s original design and purpose. Without God, the SELF is corrupt, fearful, tormented, blind to the Truth, and spiritually dead.

The evidence of our corruption is that we are utterly preoccupied with ourselves. We OWN ourselves. We try to make ourselves RIGHT. Of course, we do not think of these as evidences of corruption. We think of them as normal. But they are not normal. They are abnormal – the result of a race that was MADE FOR GOD living independent of Him.

We find God’s original design for humanity described in Genesis. Man was created to be, **“naked but unashamed.” (Gen. 2:25)** This is a wonderful picture. Note that God CREATED Adam to be naked – void of all assets within himself. This was GOOD. Why? Because despite the fact that Adam was created naked, God intended to be ALL to Adam. Adam was created to find ALL of his life in God.

But Adam sinned; Adam rejected God. If you read the description of Adam AFTER his sin, you will see that even after his sin Adam remained naked – but he was now without God. He was therefore, “naked and ashamed.”

Adam had been made for God – created naked -- but was NOT ashamed. But then he walked away from God. Regardless, he remained naked; remained a human being that was created for God – but was no longer one with

God. This left him to himself. The result was spiritual death, corruption and fear.

Adam was never intended to live to himself – never designed to be able to live independent from God. But there he was, separated from God. Thus, the incredible damage had been done. The first thing Adam did was try to fix the damage his sin had done. We read that He tried to fix his nakedness by covering himself with, “fig leaves.”

In Adam, we see the fruit of separation from God: Self-ownership, self-occupation, and an attempt at making oneself RIGHT. These all evidence the SAME problem: Spiritual death. They are what characterize the Adam race – a race that was made for God but is living apart from Him, and at enmity with Him.

“Fig leaves,” represent ANYTHING that we use to replace God as our life. They represent our attempts to fix our earthly nature – rather than turn to Jesus Christ. Every member of the Adam race starts sewing fig leaves from birth. We don’t know what we are doing. We don’t know what is wrong with us. But we are tormented – indeed, preoccupied -- by our separation from God and the resulting corruption.

Our, “fig leaves,” may take many forms. But it is here that we will turn to the example that Paul gave of himself. Paul had been a Pharisee. His pre-occupation with himself – his self-rule -- had a religious manifestation. Paul’s, “fig leaf,” had been SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Self-righteousness, or self-right-ness, is nothing more than a religious fig leaf. It is what we use to cover our nakedness and substitute for Christ. It is likewise a form of self-ownership. We try to do for ourselves what only Christ could do, and has done. Self-righteousness is unbelief. It is SIN.

Self-righteousness was Paul’s primary manifestation of self-ownership. It DEFINED him. Therefore, Paul had to lose his self-righteousness in order to lose himself. He had to have all of his fig leaves peeled off. For him, this was fundamental to God’s dealing with him.

Spiritual Circumcision

Paul's story of how he lost himself to Christ begins in Philippians 3. He says:

For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. (Phil. 3:3)

"No confidence in the flesh," is the result of having seen the Truth about ourselves -- that there is NOTHING about ourselves in which we can take confidence before Christ, or use to walk with God. Indeed, if we see the Truth in Christ, the only possible outcome is that we will see and renounce our own righteousness.

This is what Paul was getting at when he wrote, "We are the circumcision." In the OT, circumcision was a type and shadow of the Cross. Physical circumcision involved the, "cutting off," of the foreskin of the male organ that produced members of the Adam race. So when Paul said, "We are the circumcision," he is saying that we are those who have had our Adam nature cut off through death under the Cross. We rejoice in this because we have seen that our Adam nature is corrupt. Instead, we rejoice in Christ Jesus, in whom we are a new creation.

Paul is going to share how, through the work of the Cross, his old man in Adam was crucified with Christ. But central to Paul being crucified with Christ was that he had CUT OFF all of his self-righteousness. He LOST that – gladly and willingly – because he saw it was a lie.

Religious Assets

Paul had been a Pharisee. And as a Pharisee he claimed many supposed religious assets – all of which affirmed to him that he was right WITH God and right FOR God. Paul goes on to list all of these supposed religious assets in Phil. 3:4-6:

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinks that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church;

***touching the righteousness which is in the law,
blameless.***

Here we see listed all of the supposed religious assets that belonged to Paul before his conversion. Note that there is not one sin mentioned. No. There is also no mention of faith in Christ – because at that point Paul was blind to Christ. What is listed is only a catalog of those religious things about himself over which Paul could take confidence before the Lord.

It is at this point that we need to see a principle – a principle with two sides – one negative and one positive. First the negative: To the extent that we are blind to the Person of Jesus Christ we will revert to confidence in ourselves; we will maintain our own righteousness. But in the positive: To the extent that we have an inward realization of Jesus Christ we will be free of self-righteousness. It is simply impossible to know the Truth of Jesus Christ – who is our righteousness – and continue living in the delusion of self-righteousness.

In this passage, Paul will later say that he suffered the loss of all things about himself, “that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, but only the righteousness of Christ by faith.” When Paul saw Jesus Christ – when Christ was revealed IN HIM – he not only lost his self-righteousness, but he rejoiced to lose it. He found Christ.

The Self-Righteous

There are generally two types of professing Christians who have their faith in themselves, and thus, in their own righteousness. First, there are those who, like Paul, are deceived into thinking that they ARE righteous. They do have confidence in their flesh. But then there is a second group who are forever TRYING to have confidence in themselves – but failing. The first group has a false self-righteousness. The second has a frustrated self-righteousness. Yet both ARE equally self-righteous. Both are walking in unbelief. Neither has faith in Christ.

Paul was of the former group – he actually thought that because of his natural birth, and his upbringing, and his associations, and his good works, that he was right with God. But he was totally deceived. Only when he encountered Christ were his eyes opened.

The Outcome of Embracing the Truth

Paul's encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus was the end of Paul's old life and the beginning of a new eternal experiencing of Christ. It was at this point that God began to reveal Jesus Christ IN Paul – God began to bring Paul into an inward realization of His Son.

That is the only REAL change. Replacing false doctrine with true ones is good – but we absolutely MUST receive an inward revelation of Jesus Christ. Indeed, this is exactly what Paul said did happen to him:

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son IN ME, that I might preach him among the heathen. (Gal. 1:15-16)

This is the same Truth we have seen elsewhere in scripture. A Christian is someone who is joined to the Lord and one spirit with Him – someone in whom Christ dwells. But there is to be a life that emerges from such a spiritual union. God wants to reveal in us His Son. He wants to bring us into an inward revelation of Christ. He wants to form us together in His Son.

In Philippians 3, Paul tells us the ongoing outcome of what happened to him because he met Jesus Christ and received an inward revelation of Him. In fact, what happened to Paul because he embraced Christ is exactly what will happen to each believer – it is the ONLY possible outcome if we see and embrace the Truth in Christ. Paul said:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ... (Phil. 3:7-8)

If I see Jesus Christ – and embrace Him by faith – I will lose my life to Him. I will suffer the loss of all things for the sake of knowing Him. And as we have seen, chief among that which Paul lost, and which we must lose, is going to be our OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

You cannot cling to your own righteousness once you have Christ revealed in you – not unless you want to step back into darkness. If you see Christ you will see that you have NO righteousness. But you will see that Jesus Christ IS the righteousness of God – and that Christ in you is to be your only righteousness.

Paul not only voluntarily lost his own righteousness – he renounced it as a lie – but doing so opened the door to what God really wanted. Note what Paul said happened when he lost his own righteousness:

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.
(Phil. 3:8-11)

Can we possibly catch the magnitude of what Paul is saying? It applies to ALL of us. He is saying that it is by losing our self-righteousness that we come to WIN Christ and BE FOUND IN HIM. It is by losing our self-righteousness -- which is based in self-ownership -- that we can then, “be found in Christ.” We can then be found in Christ -- but no longer with our own righteousness – but with Christ as our righteousness. According to the apostle Paul this is a huge key to freedom. It opens the door to so much else that God wants to do.

Yet Not I, But Christ

Paul said that he suffered the loss of all things about himself in order to WIN Christ and be found IN HIM. Obviously, Paul’s entire focus had been altered because he had seen Jesus Christ. Instead of fussing with himself and continually monitoring his own righteousness, Paul was now obsessed with Christ.

There are other places in Paul’s epistles where he evidences this great freedom from himself – but unto Christ. In fact, if we could point to one phrase that

expresses the outcome of not only, “Christ in us,” but of a believer coming into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, Paul’s statement in **Galatians 2:20** contains that phrase. Paul proclaims there, **“Yet not I, but Christ!”**

This ought to be the witness of each believer – we are, after all, HIS witnesses. Our life should never proclaim, “Yet not Christ, but I!” No. Rather, if we have come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, our lives will cry out, **“Yet not I, but Christ.” (Gal. 2:20)**

Chapter 12

Discernment and Divine Guidance

All discernment for a believer must be the by-product of knowing Jesus Christ. Indeed, since divine guidance is based on what I discern to be the Truth on any matter, the validity of divine guidance is likewise based on an inward realization of Jesus Christ.

It would seem, however, that many believers are blind to this principle. Many of us never connect the necessity of knowing Jesus Christ with Divine guidance. Many of us think that discernment and divine guidance are the result of God speaking to us – giving us information, insights, and, “leadings.” It is not that God cannot or would not do that. But according to scripture, this is NOT the primary way in which God is today speaking to His people. Today, God primarily speaks to us IN HIS SON.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. (Heb. 1:1-2)

This verse tells us that today God is speaking to us by His Son. Now, what does this mean? The Greek actually reads, “IN His Son.” Indeed, there is no, “His,” in the original. Thus, the entire phrase reads, “God has in these last days spoken unto us in Son.” Indeed, it could read, ***“God is speaking unto us SON-WISE.”***

God is speaking to us IN HIS SON. How? God speaks to us in His Son by a growing revelation of Jesus Christ – both to us and in us.

Jesus Himself is the LANGUAGE by which God speaks. The revelation of Christ to us in an inward way is the means by which God conveys to us all Life and all Truth about Himself. Sure. Jesus said, ***“I AM the Truth.”***

Someone is liable to answer that God’s revelation is limited to the written Word. Well, that IS true – because nothing God ever says or ever does will fall outside of His revelation in scripture. But the scripture itself tells us that God wants to continually reveal His Son, yes, TO us, but also IN US. The Bible itself says that today God is speaking to His people through an on-going INWARD revelation of Jesus Christ.

There is only ONE Truth. The Bible is the written Truth and Jesus is the Living Truth. The two will agree. And our discernment of the Truth will bring the two together in our understanding.

The Bible declares:

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: (Gal. 1:15-16)

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.(Gal. 4:19)

(Paul) I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. (Eph. 1:16-18)

Can we see that these passages are talking about an INWARD revelation – something that is beyond merely an intellectual or emotional grasp of Christ? The Bible itself states this necessity, and it is the written Word of God.

God's Direction

God can lead, and does lead – but it is a fact that God's leadings need to be understood in the light of Christ. If I am growing to know Jesus Christ in an inward way according to the Truth, then how many see that I am going to know God's direction and leadings more often than not? I won't necessarily need some special word from God, or for God to say something to me in some miraculous way. No. I will KNOW Him. And if I know Him, I will be governed by knowing Him. That will cover most of what I need.

What a sorry Christian experience it would be if God simply talked to me and gave me marching orders as to what to do next – but I never knew Jesus. Indeed, so many people today who say they hear from God don't

seem to know Him. No. God is speaking to us today in His Son. If we know Christ we will most often know His will and His mind. We won't need a sign or wonder.

If you read the NT, you will not find hardly any direct teaching at all about, "how to be led by God." You will find a few instances in the lives of the disciples after Jesus ascended where they were told this or that through the Spirit. But by and large, what we see in the Bible is a Christianity that is based upon CHRIST IN US – and a growing revelation IN US of that Christ. Jesus Christ is the Living Word of God. HE is God's Word for us today.

Open to the Truth

As stated at the outset of this chapter: All true discernment for a Christian must be a by-product of knowing Jesus Christ. And as already mentioned, this will always agree completely with scripture. But there is another important key: In order to know the Truth I must be open to the Truth – regardless of cost. I must have a heart that is pure and single to God.

Jesus spoke directly to this point in Matthew 6:

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (Mat 6:22-24)

This passage of scripture is a key explanation as to how we might come to know the Truth – on any matter. According to Jesus, we must have a SINGLE EYE TO GOD. But when everything is said and done, to have a SINGLE EYE unto the Lord is exactly the same as asking Him, "to do whatever it takes," to bring us into His full purpose. A single eye is one that will not settle for less – it is a heart that has one single and pure purpose: God's will.

If, "the Truth," were merely DOCTRINAL, perhaps being open to it would be easier for most of us. But, "the Truth," is a Person and all that HE IS. Thus, to be open to HIM

means that we must have a single eye to the light He brings about our faith, our attitudes, and our relationship with Him. We must be willing to completely relinquish ourselves to Him. In short, if we want to know the Truth we must allow Jesus Christ to MAKE US TRUE unto Him. That is a single eye to God. It goes far beyond the issue of, "Divine guidance."

Light in His Life

Knowing the Truth IS a knowing of Jesus Christ. Of course, we do need the mind of Christ regarding matters that are related to life in Christ. But even those matters must be viewed in the light of Christ Himself.

So how do we come to know the Truth – to know Christ? We have already seen the essential of losing our lives into His hands. We have seen that if we ask God to bring us to where we lose our lives that we will find Him as our life. John states this another way in his gospel: ***"In Him was life, and that life was the light of men."*** (John 1:4) If I pick up my personal Cross and MY life is crucified WITH Christ, then not only will HIS life find a greater release in me – but this is also the essential to having greater LIGHT – because His LIFE is the LIGHT of men.

You cannot divorce His LIFE from the fact that He is The LIGHT. You must lose your life to find Him as your life. But if you do, the Light of Christ is carried along in His life – because Christ is a Living Person. It is ALL in Him.

None of this is possible unless we have an eye that is SINGLE to God. We must ask God to do whatever it takes, and be unwilling to settle for less than God's will. That is a SINGLE eye.

The Condition of the, "Eye"

Jesus gives a contrast. He says that if my, "eye is single," my entire body – or, if you will, my entire life – will be full of light. He is simply saying that if I am unconditionally surrendered and open to God then God can fill me with LIGHT – fill me with the knowledge of Jesus Christ – along with which will come discernment regarding all else. Thus, a single eye unto the Lord is the vehicle by which we come to know HIM -- this is necessary for the reception of LIGHT.

The opposite is likewise true. If my, "eye is evil," then my entire life, including my understanding of God, will be filled with darkness. An, "evil eye," is obviously the opposite of a, "single eye." It is a condition of heart that is not one with the purposes of God.

Why is this so? Why does my heart condition unto the Lord determine how I see? Because Jesus Christ doesn't merely give us a THING called, "light." "Light," is not merely INFORMATION. No. Jesus said, "***I am the Light.***" In short, in order to see the light about any THING, we have to be rightly related to the LIGHT HIMSELF. We have to be ONE with THE LIGHT – or, as the Bible says, we have to, "***walk in the Light as He is in the Light,***" in order to see Truth. (*I John 1:7*) Then, "***in HIS light we see light.***" (*Psalm 36:9*)

Seeing the Truth is not possible unless we know Jesus – who IS the Truth; who IS the Light. But we cannot know Jesus, let alone have His mind on any matter, unless our life is given over to Him. We have to lose ourselves to Him. Then we find true life in Him.

The Essential of Sound Doctrine

Biblical doctrine tells Christians the Truth. It tells us what we ought to believe and how to live by faith. There are practical instructions for obedience. If you gather up what the Bible teaches you can form a list of principles. That list could be called your doctrinal statement of faith. But let's ask the question: What makes doctrine TRUE?

Is doctrine true because it is found in the Bible? Well, yes – because the Bible is the written Truth. But there is yet a deeper question: Why is the Bible the written Truth?

There is only ONE Truth. The Bible is the ONE written Truth because it tells the Truth about the ONE Living Truth: GOD HIMSELF. But both the Bible and God are the ONE TRUTH. Therefore, what makes any doctrine to be the Truth is that, yes, it is found in scripture, but what really makes it true is that it tells the Truth about God Himself.

If what makes a doctrine true is that it tells the Truth about God Himself, then makes a doctrine to be false is that it lies about God. Scripture is the written verification

– but ultimately we must take every doctrine back to the God the Bible reveals. What does it say about Him? About His Son? About His plan and purpose?

Let's use a minor example. The Roman Catholics used to teach that it was a sin to eat meat on any Friday. They also taught that it was a, "mortal sin," to miss church on Sunday. That meant that if you died after missing church, but before you went to confession, you would go straight to hell. Obviously, we cannot find even one verse in scripture that teaches any of this nonsense. That ought to be enough to dismiss such teaching. But let's take it our extra step: What does such teaching say about God Himself?

A God that would condemn people to hell for missing church or for eating meat on Friday is not the God of all grace. In fact, if you examine such teaching, they directly deny that Christ is our righteousness, and that we are not saved, or condemned, based on works. Thus, even though the issue of eating meat on Friday, or of missing church, is not addressed in scripture, if we know Jesus Christ we are going to recognize that these teaching lie about Him. They are NOT the Truth.

Biblical doctrine tells us about God Himself. They tell us what He is like and what He reveals. They are written revelations of His plan and purpose through Jesus Christ. As such, biblical doctrine tells us WHAT and WHO to believe. They explain God's will. And while the doctrines of the Bible cannot save us, they do tell us how to be saved through Jesus Christ. This is why our doctrine MUST be biblical, and MUST tell the Truth about Christ.

Obeying the Bible

Reading the Bible and learning its doctrine is good and essential. But that alone is NOT Christianity. Christianity is an experiencing of the Person of Jesus Christ – which is exactly what the written Word teaches. So we must experience Christ – but that experience will always be the one described in scripture.

The Pharisees of Jesus' time practically worshipped the Old Testament. But note Jesus' stern words to them:

You do not have His word abiding IN YOU: for whom He has sent, Him you believe not. You search

the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. And they are they which testify of Me. But you will not come to Me, that you might have life. (John 5:38-40)

According to Jesus, it is possible for me to be a walking encyclopedia of the Bible, and yet not be saved. How so? Because I do not obey what the Bible says: Come to Christ; put my faith in Christ.

Christian people are NOT right with God simply because they believe all the right doctrines – although we do need to believe the right doctrines. But we are right with God only if we obey what the doctrines state: Put your faith in Jesus Christ. Intellectual, theological, academic knowledge of the Bible – this impresses people. But not God. The question He asks is the same one Jesus addressed: Do you have place for the living Word of God IN YOU?

Prayer

All of these matters having to do with discerning Jesus Christ must go hand in hand with much prayer. If we are to have an eye that is single and a heart that is open, we must spend time in the light of prayer with God. It is through prayer that we can ask God to do whatever it takes to open our hearts and give us an eye that is single. We cannot possibly want to know Jesus Christ and the will of God more than God wants us to know Him. Therefore, if through prayer and faith we unconditionally open ourselves to the Truth, it is certain that God will guide us into a growing knowledge of His Son.

However, even deceived Christians pray – and many of them continue to be deceived. Many pray that God would lead them in His will, and nevertheless, they end up OUT of God's will. The problem is not prayer. Prayer is essential. And we can be sure that even if we are deceived, or out of God's will, that regardless of any misguided prayer, God will always be faithful to draw us according to the Truth. God will always be faithful to speak to us IN CHRIST. The question, however, is whether we are listening. Is our eye single? Are we willing for God to do whatever it takes to make it single?

If we pray to God with a single eye and an open heart, He will answer us by opening our single eye all the more to

His Son. This is not to the disregard of any Divine guidance that we may immediately need, but it is the overall purpose into which He wants to bring us. All of the paths of the Lord – in His will on any matter – are in Christ. Thus, we should ask God to do whatever it takes to open our eyes to Jesus and to speak to us in His Son.

This is equal to praying, “The kingdom come and Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.” Jesus is the kingdom of God in us, and the primary will of God is that Jesus Christ be formed in us.

Chapter 13

The Purpose of the Holy Spirit

In the gospel of John, chapters 14 through 16, Jesus repeatedly promised that after He ascended, the spirit of God would be given. Indeed, He emphasized that the spirit had not yet been given, and could not be given, UNLESS He completed His redemptive work and went to the Father. There were several reasons for this necessity. Redemption had to be completed before believers could be sealed with the spirit of promise. But just as importantly, since the spirit of God is the means by which Christ dwells in the believer, Jesus obviously had to ascend before He could come back to dwell in them through the giving of the Holy Spirit.

We have already seen that Paul makes the indwelling of the spirit of God synonymous with the indwelling of Christ in the believer. But Jesus did exactly the same thing. The following is from the KJV. For clarity – because some folks get confused by the pronouns used in the KJV -- I have replaced the pronouns used with the proper name to which those pronouns actually refer:

And I will pray the Father, and the Father shall give you another Advocate, that this Advocate may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth; the spirit which the world cannot receive, because it sees the spirit not, neither knows the spirit: but you know the spirit for the spirit dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but you will see me: because I live, you shall live also. At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.(John 14:16-20)

Jesus Himself is saying that the spirit had been WITH THEM – but would be IN THEM. That means there would soon be a CHANGE in God's relationship with His people. The spirit would be given to dwell IN THEM for the first time in Acts 2. Indeed, He makes it clear that this would be HIMSELF coming to dwell in them. In short, Jesus Christ dwells in the believer by the means of the spirit of God.

Sure. He says, "I will come to you." He adds, "You will see ME," and, "At that day you shall know that you are in Me and I in you." He is talking the soon coming reality of,

“Christ in you,” that would be inaugurated in Acts 2 when they received the Holy Spirit in an INWARD way.

Acts 2 began the church, and the church consists of people in whom Christ dwells. Acts 2 also began the New Covenant, which is embodied in the reality of, “Christ in us.” Therefore, in Acts 2, when the spirit of God was given for the first time to dwell in God’s people, this was not an additional indwelling or experience. No. It was the baptism with the spirit of God INTO JESUS CHRIST -- whereby God’s people are united in spirit with Jesus Christ and through which Christ came for the first time to dwell in them. The great mystery that had been hidden from generations past was NOW revealed: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Witnesses of Christ

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:6-8)

In this passage from Acts 1, Jesus was about to ascend. He once again promised that the spirit of God would be given to them to dwell IN THEM. Acts 2 was not a second experience for the apostles in ADDITION to already having received Jesus Christ within. Jesus had not yet ascended to heaven – and as we have seen – He stated clearly that the spirit could not be given unless He ascended. He stated that the spirit of God had been WITH them, but would be IN them only after He ascended. So even though the spirit had indeed been WITH them, it was only Acts 2 that the spirit was IN THEM. It was only in Acts 2 that they were baptized with the Holy Spirit INTO Christ.

Jesus affirmed this promise of the spirit in the above passage just before His ascension. He said, “You shall receive power because the Holy Spirit will come upon you. And you shall be My witnesses.” This would happen ten days later.

What POWER was Jesus promising they would receive? Well, first of all, it is a mistake to limit this power to, “power for service.” That was included. But there is no need to guess. Jesus directly stated what this POWER

would be: It was power to become His WITNESSES. Get that: This is not power to merely, “witness.” No. It is power to become His witnesses. This goes far beyond service. To be a WITNESS unto Christ is to be living evidence of Him. It means that I manifest HIM – and point others to Him.

But right here is perhaps THE crucial Truth to grasp: They were to receive power to become His witness because they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit INTO CHRIST. But to be baptized INTO Jesus Christ is a baptism into both His death and resurrection. This is what Paul describes in Romans 6: We are baptized into Christ; into both His death and resurrection. Thus, this baptism that the disciples received in Acts 2 was this very baptism into Christ. This would join them to the Lord and make them one spirit with Him. This would unite them in spirit with Jesus Christ. And the fact of the matter is, it was only if they were united with Christ through this baptism – made one with Him in His death and resurrection – it is only if that happened that they could become His witnesses.

To become a witness unto Jesus Christ I must first be baptized into Christ – which means I must be united with Him in His death and resurrection. But that is only the beginning. I must then begin experiencing Christ – I must fellowship with Him in His death; I must pick up my cross and follow Him. As I bear about in my earthly nature the dying of the Lord Jesus, His life will be made manifest. That is what makes me His witness. It is HIS LIFE manifesting through me.

All of this goes back to the necessity of being baptized with the Holy Spirit into Jesus Christ – being united with Him in spirit; in His death and resurrection. It goes back to CHRIST IN US and the Christian life that emerges. We are baptized INTO Christ and if we go on into the purpose of God, the Christ who is in us will manifest Himself in and through us. That alone makes me His witness.

As we saw earlier, a witness unto Christ will be a life that proclaims – not just to others – but to ourselves, “Yet not I, but Christ.” This is the life that will emerge from the reality of being joined to the Lord in spirit – it will be the life that is the outcome of, “Christ in us” -- if we go on with God in the Truth.

The purpose for which the Spirit of God has been given is not unclear: It is to reveal Christ to us, in us, and through us. Certainly, this is the great purpose for this age. But it is an eternal purpose that reaches into the ages yet to come.

The Revelation of Christ

Jesus Christ dwells in the believer by the means of the spirit of God. It is therefore not surprising that the purpose for which spirit of God is given is to reveal Jesus Christ TO us, IN us, and then THROUGH us. As noted, this is exactly how we become His witnesses. If you read Jesus words in John chapter 14 through 16, regarding the purpose for which God was going to give the spirit, His words affirm this completely.

Jesus said that ***the spirit of God:***

Shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)

Shall testify of ME, and you also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. (John 15:26)

Will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on ME; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see ME no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. (John 16:8-11)

Will guide you into all Truth. (John 16:13)

Will show you things to come. (John 16:13)

“Things to come,” are not merely FUTURE events. Rather, the meaning here is that the spirit of God will reveal to us ETERNAL realities in Christ.

Shall glorify me... (John 16:14)

Shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you. (John 16:14)

The purpose of the spirit of God is to reveal Jesus Christ TO us, IN us, and THROUGH us. In other words, the purpose of the baptism with the Holy Spirit into Christ – which is the one and only baptism – is to make us His witnesses.

Paul also tells us that **God has freely given us ALL THINGS in Christ. (Rom. 8:32)** He also says of Christ, **“In Whom are hid ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col. 2:3)** So when Jesus says that the work of the spirit will be to, “shall receive of mine and shall show it to you,” He is saying that the spirit of God will not only reveal Christ in us, but will unfold to us all that is IN CHRIST.

Paul experienced the purpose of the spirit of God. He said, **“God revealed His Son IN ME.”** God wants to do the same in each member of the Body. That accounts for Paul’s travail, **“I travail until Christ be formed in you!” (Gal. 4:19)** Paul wanted everyone to experience what he experienced: An inward realization of Jesus Christ by the spirit of God.

The Ministry and Gifts

Whatever the spirit is doing – and we are seeing that the spirit reveals and glorifies Christ – this ought to be what those who minister in the spirit ought to be doing. Otherwise, what they are doing is NOT of the spirit of God. This need not be complicated. It is cut and dry.

Paul states plainly what this work of the spirit will be through those who minister. Not surprisingly, this work is exactly what the spirit of God does: Reveal Christ in people; glorify Christ; make Jesus to be Lord of each person in whom He dwells.

And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastor-teachers– for the equipping of the saints unto the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Until we all arrive unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:11-13)

Here we see that the goal of all ministry ought to be exactly the goal of God – to reveal Christ in His people.

This is really what it means to be EDIFIED, or, "built up," in Christ. The goal is the unity of the faith – that ALL may have the ONE faith in the ONE Person, Christ Jesus -- and that all may be brought into an inward realization and knowledge of the Son of God. The ultimate result is a people who are mature in Christ – a people in whom God has formed Christ and who are manifesting Christ. That is a people who ARE His witnesses.

Chapter 14

The Saints and Sanctification

God inspired His written Word, and in that written Word, there is one term that God uses to refer to those in Christ more than any other. We might think that this term is, "Christian." But it is not. The term, "Christian," which I've noted, means, "a Christ one," or, "one who is of Christ" – is a great term. But it is found in scripture only three times. The term that God uses the most to refer to those in Christ is the term, "saint."

This word SAINT carries with it profound meaning. It comes from the same Greek word that is sometimes translated HOLY. Thus, a SAINT is, "a holy one."

Yet we must probe even further. What does it mean to be, "a holy one?" Well, again, the Greek word for HOLY actually means, "to be set apart for God's use." Thus, if I am in Christ, I am one who has been set apart for Christ's use. Or, to put it another way, a SAINT is one who BELONGS TO GOD.

We need to grasp the significance of what God is conveying to us through the name SAINT. The very term by which God refers to those in Christ means, "one who belongs to God; belongs to Christ." Thus, those in Christ ought to be defined by the fact that we belong to Him. Or to put it another way, a true saint is one who has lost themselves TO Christ and found Him as their life.

Now, of course, the Bible tells us outright that if we are in Christ that we belong to Him:

What? know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (I Cor. 6:20)

You are bought with a price. (I Cor. 7:23)

Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. (I Cor. 3:16-17)

A SAINT is, "one who belongs to Jesus Christ." And we have already seen that the basis of this fact is that we are, "joined to the Lord and one spirit with Him." (I Cor. 6:17) It is from this foundation that God is doing a work whereby He intends for Christ to be manifested both IN us and THROUGH us.

Now, if a saint is one who belongs to God -- and if sanctification is a manifestation of that fact -- can we see that if we are continually fussing with ourselves -- trying to make OURSELVES holy -- that this is against the Truth? Sure. We have to leave ourselves in the hands of the One to Whom we belong.

Sanctification

Saints are those who belong to God. But God has purchased His people for a purpose: That we might become His witnesses in this age – by manifesting Jesus Christ.

Sanctification is Jesus Christ being made manifest IN us and THROUGH us. It is not something that God does TO us. Sanctification is not the result of God acting upon us and making us to, "look like Jesus." Sanctification is not a matter of US building Christian character into ourselves. Sanctification is not limited to outward good works. No. Sanctification is Christ IN US being manifested through us.

We MUST grasp this Truth: The source of sanctification is NOT US – it is not us on our best day. It is not our earthly nature being shaped, and purged, and formed so that it looks and acts like Jesus. Indeed, sanctification is the result of the earthly nature being crucified so that Christ might be seen. In short, sanctification is, "Yet NOT I, but Christ!"

Now from a practical sense what this means is that outward sanctification is Christ being manifested through our earthly nature. It is not our earthly nature being made to look like Christ. The SOURCE is Christ. The LIFE is Christ.

This brings us full circle back to the meaning of a SAINT – of one who belongs to God. A saint belongs to God because a saint is joined to Jesus Christ and is one spirit with Him. The result is not that we come to look like

Jesus. The result – if a person is yielding to God – is that the Jesus Christ to whom we belong manifests Himself in and through us.

The Outcome of the Cross

There is a HUGE difference between a supposed Christianity wherein I come to look like Jesus, and the true Christianity where Jesus Himself is manifested through me. In the former, my natural man is changed to look like Jesus. In the latter, my natural man is crucified so that Christ might shine through.

The notion that sanctification is a matter of coming to look like Jesus is actually a denial of the personal cross. I realize most people don't realize this, but it is a fact. Through the Cross of Jesus Christ, and its application through the personal cross, our old man in Adam – our natural man – is completely set aside in His death. Thus, the suggestion that my natural man is to become Christ-like is a denial of this Truth.

Everywhere in the church today, folks are trying to fix up the old, earthly creation in Adam – to make it look like Jesus; to develop in it what is called, “Christian character.” To many folks, this is the purpose of the Christian life. Unwittingly, however, this is nothing but a disguised way of trying to save and salvage the very life that Jesus tells us we must LOSE. No. God doesn't intend to make us look like Jesus. Rather, He intends for Jesus to look like Jesus through us.

In an earlier chapter, I used the picture of a circle to illustrate the separation in each believer of soul from spirit, that is, the separation of the two natures in us – the old earthly nature vs. the new creation in Christ. I said that if we could draw a circle around our spiritual union with Christ, that inside of that circle would be new life, light, and Truth. Therein would be the NEW MAN. It is with this new man in Christ that God is working. But all that remains outside of that circle would be earthly – our body and soul. God has judged this under the Cross as dead in Christ.

This illustration will help us understand sanctification. Sanctification is NOT God acting upon what is OUTSIDE of that circle to make it Christ-like. No. Rather, God brings the work of the personal cross upon what is outside

of that circle to break it's power in a practical sense; to crucify it out of the way. The result is not a changed natural man so that it is spiritual. No. Rather, it is a crucified natural man so that the life of Christ that is INSIDE of that circle may be released THROUGH us.

Again – sanctification is Jesus Christ – the Christ who is in us manifesting through us. This Truth is found all through the New Testament. One place is in I Corinthians:

That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord. (I Cor. 1:29-31)

Here Paul clearly states that Jesus Christ IN US is, “made to be unto us,” sanctification. And just so we don't misunderstand, he also states that, “no flesh” – that which is outside of that circle – “should glory in His presence.” He likewise tells us the result of Jesus Christ being our sanctification: So that he that glories will glory in the Lord – rather than themselves. Can we see that our earthy nature – our natural man – is not changed, in this age, to look like Jesus? No. Our natural man is set aside in death so that Christ may shine through us.

Next, let's return to a passage we quoted earlier:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. (II Cor. 4:7-11)

Paul's picture of the Treasure in an earthen vessel speaks of the same Truth as does the illustration of the imaginary circle. WE are the earthen vessel. HE is the Treasure. The two are distinct and always remain so. Paul teaches that through the work of the personal cross we will, “bear about in our body” – our earthy nature – “the dying of the Lord Jesus.” But it is all unto the end that, “the life also

of Jesus might be made manifest through our mortal bodies.” In other words, the earthen vessel never comes to look like the Treasure. No. Rather, the earthen vessel is broken so that the Treasure might be seen. This is sanctification – Christ in us being seen.

Spiritual Fruit

When we speak of Jesus Christ being made manifest through a believer, we are really talking about spiritual fruit or Christian character. Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches. But note: To which does the spiritual fruit belong? Not to the branches. No. The fruit of any tree or vine belongs to that Vine – because it is the Vine that carries the LIFE. The branch can do nothing without the Vine.

Spiritual fruit or character is not OF us. God does not act upon us and cause spiritual fruit to grow from out of our earthly nature. No. For again – our earthly nature is OUTSIDE of the new creation in Christ. Our earthen vessel is not the Treasure and will never be turned into a mini-version of the Treasure. No. Spiritual fruit, indeed, even the spiritual gifts, are nothing more than the LIFE of Jesus Christ made manifest. In short, spiritual fruit is sanctification, and of Christ.

Now, if a believer is abiding in Christ, and if through the work of the personal cross the life of Christ is made manifest, that believer is going to do good works. But those good works will not be to accomplish, create, or duplicate Christ, or the work of sanctification. No. Those good works will be the outcome of abiding in Christ – they will simply be an extension of the new life of Christ that is within.

Manifesting Christ

A saint is one who belongs to God. A saint is a person who has asked God to do, “whatever it takes.” Isn’t that what belonging to God would mean? And sanctification is the result of God doing whatever it takes – the work of the cross.

All of that being said, however, it is still possible for a believer to miss the mark. So many Christian people, while aware of what God wants to do in Christ, continue to be focused on themselves. We monitor our spiritual

growth and either take pride in it, or lament over it. But a focus on self is NOT the result of sanctification – rather, it is evidence that we have a long way to go. For fundamental to sanctification is that we have seen the Truth and learn to leave ourselves alone. We are learned to leave ourselves alone because we know that we cannot do a thing about ourselves – and we have seen that Jesus Christ is all, including sanctification.

Someone once said that those who manifest Christ the most are the least aware of it. This is a fact. It is a fact because their focus is off of themselves and onto Christ. If I have come into an inward realization of Christ, then Christ is free to be manifested without the earthly getting in the way. Sanctification means that one who belongs to God is free to leave themselves alone and allow God to manifest Christ through them.

Obedience

Sanctification is Christ being manifested in and through a human being. But this is obviously not merely a passive condition. It will result in active obedience.

Most believers obey God in order to keep themselves righteous, maintain His grace, and to keep in His will. But it is entirely possible to, “obey,” God – as most of us would define it – but to do it in UNBELIEF. This is the problem that confronted Paul all through His ministry. It takes a true work of the Cross and a revelation of Christ to bring a person to where they live from out of Christ by faith. To be able to LEAVE OURSELVES ALONE – by faith in Christ – and yet obey God – this is a reality that is impossible to grasp unless we are coming into an inward realization of Christ.

If the outcome of the work of the Cross is supposed to be that Jesus Christ is made manifest through us, then yes, the believer will obey God. But note: This obedience is NOT the result of a person finding a list of laws or principles and fashioning their conduct accordingly. This is not the result of us trying, “to look like Jesus.” Obedience is never the MEANS by which we joined to the Lord. No. “Obedience to the faith,” is supposed to be the result of being joined to Him, and the result of abiding in Christ by faith. We know Him and love Him, and thus, obey Him.

Sanctification is the Person who is, "other than," ourselves – but with Whom we are joined in spirit. Thus, it is NOT accomplished by a preoccupation with ourselves, or by turning in upon ourselves and trying to produce holy character. No. Rather, it is by leaving ourselves alone and abiding in Him -- and living from out of Him – by faith -- that He will be manifested through our obedience to God.

God does want us to manifest Christ in our outward man. But the means is not to work upon that outward man with laws or programs. Rather, the means is to edify the inward man, which is the new creation in Christ. Sanctification is possible only if we leave ourselves alone by faith under the work of the Cross, and put our faith in Jesus Christ. ***Only then will we bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, but manifest the life of Jesus Christ through the same mortal body. (see II Cor. 4:10)***

Chapter 15

Obeying the Truth

By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name.
(Rom. 1:5)

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? (Gal. 3:1)

Obedience to God is supposed to be a way of life for those who are in Christ. But what does that mean? For some, it means obedience to the law, or to a list of principles derived from scripture. But if you search the New Testament, you will find that obedience to God is no longer limited to obedience to His law. Rather, obedience is to THE FAITH or to THE TRUTH. Of course, such obedience would include moral obedience. But obedience to the Truth goes far beyond moral obedience. Obedience to the Truth means that I walk in, and live in, and experience, the fullness of Jesus Christ. I allow Jesus Christ to have His way with me.

There are many Christian people who are preoccupied with themselves and with their sin. The same folks are naturally preoccupied with obedience – because to them it is the solution to the sin with which they are preoccupied. But what is wrong with the human race is not found in what we do or don't do. What is wrong is found in what we ARE – towards God. We are spiritually dead.

The human race, by nature, is lawless. This means that our very makeup and nature is contrary to God's design. God made us to live in Him. Our lawless nature makes that impossible. You cannot fix that with law. You cannot take a spiritually dead, lawless human being and fix them with laws and principles. The only solution for humanity is DEATH – and then a new birth. This is what Christ made possible in Himself, and obedience to the Truth is necessary if we are to enter in and experience Him.

Unbelief

It is actually possible to try to obey the law of God and yet NOT obey the Truth. Or to put it another way, rather than obey God by faith, it is possible to try to obey Him in

unbelief. Does that seem shocking? Well, read the above passage from Galatians 3:1. The Galatians were trying to maintain their righteousness before God through the keeping of His law. So when Paul says that they failed to obey the Truth, he was not saying that they failed to obey the law. No. Rather, they failed to obey the TRUTH. They were obeying the law in order to keep themselves righteous – that was a supposed obedience that was in error and unbelief. Paul said they were deceived; under, “another gospel.”

Paul gives the solution to the Galatian deception later in the chapter:

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. (Gal. 4:19)

This is obedience to the TRUTH: To surrender to God that He might bring me into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. It is to surrender to the Truth Himself. Of course this does not negate moral obedience. Indeed, it is the only path to true obedience. Unless Christ is being formed in us and He is more and more becoming our life, nothing else will be built on the right foundation.

His Workmanship

In the final analysis, good works, as defined by God, are to be the product of His work in us. In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul makes the following statement:

For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:8-10)

You will note that Paul says that we are saved, “by grace through faith.” None of this is OF WORKS – that is, no work of man contributes to us receiving, “by grace through faith.” But then Paul says that we are HIS workmanship – created in Christ UNTO good works. In short, our works contribute NOTHING to God’s work. But God’s work creates us in Christ Jesus unto good works.

So herein we have one of the most misunderstood Truths of Christianity. No good works can come out of US. But

God is creating us in Christ Jesus unto HIS good works. The problem is that many believers bypass Christ and try to do good works, and then turn around and say that these good works are Christ living through them.

We need not take an inventory and try to classify whether this work or that work is of Christ or of ourselves. That would be futile. Neither can we discover some formula by which we can make sure our works are of Christ and not of ourselves. None of this is accomplished by religion. What needs to happen is that we need to be brought to the end of ourselves. Not in theory, but REALLY. Only then will we be able to put our faith in Christ and live from out of Him by faith. Only then will God be able to fully accomplish His workmanship of creating us IN Christ Jesus.

Note that God does not create us to be LIKE Christ Jesus. No. He creates us IN Christ Jesus. God creates us IN Christ Jesus by revealing Christ in us. Everything God creates in the believer is from out of the Christ who dwells in them. The rest follows, including good works.

But that is something that you and I can read, and even agree with, a thousand times, but we will have little grasp of it until it actually happens in us. To put it another way, we can read about Jesus Christ in the Bible, and listen to all of the teaching in the world – we can get all of our doctrines categorized and memorized – but until God actually brings us into an inward realization of the Living Christ it will all be theory to us.

The place to start is exactly where we saw earlier: We have to lose our lives to Christ by asking God, “to do whatever it takes,” to reveal Christ in us. We are HIS workmanship. He must create us IN Christ Jesus. We cannot do anything except abandon ourselves to Him. But if we do, we are, in fact, obeying the Truth.

Yet Not I, But Christ

If we go back to the Truth about separation between soul and spirit, these things become all the clearer. Believers are united with Christ in spirit. Our natural man remains outside of that spiritual union. Therefore, to be, “created in Christ Jesus,” is a matter of God revealing in us the Christ who already dwells in us – so that He might govern us. Contrast this over and against the false notion that

God is acting upon our natural man to make it, “look like Jesus.” No. We are, “created in Christ Jesus,” from out of our union with Him. We are not repaired or recreated in our natural man.

But what of our natural man? Well, according to Paul’s teaching of II Corinthians 4, our natural man is set aside under the work of the Cross. We must, **“bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” (II Cor. 4:10)** This does not eradicate the natural man. But rather than be governed by our earthly nature, the work of the Cross makes it possible for the earthly nature to be governed by Christ in us.

In the beginning of the Christian experience, our earthly nature – soul and body – still govern us as much as before. But as God brings the work of the Cross, and Christ is revealed in us, He emerges as our life. The earthly nature is exposed and the power of it is broken by the Truth. We begin to learn how to walk being governed by Jesus Christ.

The outcome of the work of the Cross upon the earthly nature, Paul says, is that **“the life of the Lord Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body.”(II Cor. 4:11)** Rather than be eradicated, or bypassed, the earthly nature continues to be the earthen vessel which not only contains the Treasure, but through which the Treasure is seen and manifested.

Obedience to the Truth means submission to Jesus Christ and the work of the Cross. This is the means by which God will form Christ in us. And what will emerge is not only a person who is a witness unto Christ, but one who does good works.

Christ, the Power of God

Many Christians continue to be under the false impression that God gives us the power to obey Him. But we are seeing that He does not. Rather, God gives us **Christ, who IS the power of God. (I Cor. 1:24)** Thus, it is only as we STOP abiding in our natural man, and BEGIN abiding in Christ, that the power of God is there in us. From a practical standpoint, what this means is that if I abide in Christ by faith, Christ is the power of God for me. If I do not abide in Christ by faith, there is no power.

We could just as well say it this way: It is never God's will to make us strong. Rather, God wants to make us weak – really, God wants to expose the fact that we have always been weak – so that our full dependence might be upon Christ. It is a principle: To extent that I depend upon Jesus Christ, He will be my strength. This is something I must do daily by faith.

Thanks Be to God

Obedience to God is the outcome of being in Christ. It is not the means thereunto. Thus, obedience to God never proves, or disproves, that I am in Christ. The way in which I abide in Christ is faith. This is what Paul taught – and he taught it from out of his own experience. Paul had the same issues with his own nature as the rest of us. But he proclaimed:

For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 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. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.
(Rom. 7:15-25)

In this passage, Paul is describing – using his own experience -- the Truth of the separation of soul vs. spirit; the separation between his spiritual union with Christ and his old, natural man. He is NOT describing himself before His conversion. No. The experience he is sharing is not even possible until AFTER a person is joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him. Only then does this separation occur. Thus, Paul is describing what applies to all who are in Christ.

The theme of this passage is that despite the finished work of Jesus Christ that Paul describes in Romans 6, the natural man cannot obey God. We cannot do what we want, and we do what we hate. Paul sums this failure up in one sentence: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? – this was the Truth about himself that God showed him.

But then immediately Paul says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ." In effect, he is saying, "All of those failures are the failures of the old nature. And there is absolutely nothing else I should expect but failure. I am not going to despair over the old nature. Neither am I going to be deluded into thinking that I can fix it up. No. I will therefore leave that old nature alone in the cross of Christ. I will put my faith in the Christ with Whom I am one in spirit."

This ought to be encouraging. Most of us are under the assumption that if we are truly in Christ, or really have faith, that our earthly nature ought to behave – or that it is eradicated. Or perhaps we assume that if we are in Christ that we have some sort of power to obey God. But of course, everyday all of this proves false. Paul is telling us why: Evil is still present in us. In the OLD nature. And to the extent that we are preoccupied with it, rather than Christ, we are going to be entangled in it.

When we are joined to Christ the old nature remains. It is not dead. Rather, we are dead to it – but only in Christ. What this means is that as we abide in Christ by faith, the old nature cannot govern us. But if we continue to try to fix the old nature, and remain preoccupied with it, we are essentially giving it life, so to speak – we are then living on the ground of the old. There can be no victory.

The fact that the Bible says there is a great conflict between flesh and spirit ought to prove to us that BOTH are in us. But the purpose of God is that we learn Jesus Christ and learn how to abide in Him by faith, leaving the old nature alone. We must come to be governed by His spirit, rather than by our earthly nature.

Yet Not I, But Christ

Paul gave the Galatians a wonderful Truth, and description of life in Christ:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

In this one verse we see the Christian life. It begins with, "I am crucified with Christ." This is fundamental to being united with Christ in His death. Without that nothing else is possible. Our earthly nature must be crucified with Him. But if it is, then Christ will live IN US – that is – He will be both revealed in us and manifested through us. And we will live with Him – as Paul says, "Nevertheless I live." But all of this is from out of faith; from out of obedience to the Truth of Christ in us. "The life that we live will be by the faith of the Son of God." It will be a life that progressively gives witness and glory to Christ: "Yet Not I, but Christ."

Chapter 16

Grace and Truth

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)

When Jesus Christ walked this earth, He preached the grace of God, and did so according to the Truth. Indeed, His very presence here on earth was a manifestation of the grace and Truth of God. But today, in His people, the presence of Christ in us is God's gift of grace and Truth.

Among other things, what this means is that to the extent that we come into an inward knowledge of Jesus Christ, we will know, see, and experience the grace and Truth of God. Sure. Jesus said, **"I AM the Truth."** And God is the God of all grace.

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue. (II Peter 1:1-3)

If you and I want grace and peace, Peter states that the way these are multiplied to us is through knowing Jesus Christ. In the NT, this word, "knowledge," comes from a Greek term that means more than just head knowledge, or theology. It speaks of an experiential knowing – of an inward realization. Peter is telling us that to the degree that we have realized Jesus Christ, grace and peace will be multiplied to us.

This is quite amazing. It tells us that God is of such a nature and character that if we come into a knowledge of Him that the impact in us will be grace and peace. Contrast that over and against fear and confusion. Indeed, the salutation of almost every epistle in the NT is that of wishing upon the readers the grace and peace of God, and His Son, Jesus Christ. So once again we see that grace and Truth are not THINGS. They are of a Person. They come into our experience as the result of knowing HIM.

The Truth of God

Of course, since both grace and Truth are found in Jesus Christ, the two can hardly be separated. Indeed, since

Peter tells us that grace and peace are multiplied to us through an inward knowledge of Jesus Christ, we can conclude that grace, peace, and Truth, and much more, are all among the, “treasures,” that are hid in Christ.

Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col. 2:3)

The conclusion here is awesome: To the extent that Christ is revealed in us – to the extent that we have come into an inward realization of Him – the treasures in Him will likewise be unfolded. In fact, that is the ONLY way in which we can experience those spiritual treasures – we must experience Christ. Otherwise, what we are experiencing will be, at best, earthly counterparts to the spiritual realities.

The Nature and Character of God

The nature and character of God is that of grace and Truth – and therefore all that He does is likewise filled with grace and Truth. Certainly, we see this in His redemptive work. God’s redemption in His Son is that of GRACE – that is basic gospel. And it is not only an expression of Truth, but it made it possible for us to come to know He that IS the Truth.

Do we realize that every part of the gospel of Jesus Christ – every aspect of the Truth that we call, “Christianity,” is grace and Truth? Grace and Truth saturate all that God has done, but likewise, grace and Truth fill all that Jesus Christ is IN US as believers. Sure. Jesus Christ is the grace of God personified and He is the Truth.

The more I come to know Jesus Christ in an inward way, the more I am going to be multiplied in grace and Truth. I cannot truly know God in His Son except that the outcome be that of grace and Truth multiplied in me, and then, out from me to others. Those who are in Christ should manifest the One in whom is all grace and Truth.

Practicalities

Despite the fact that the gospel is one of grace and Truth in Christ, so many of us have difficulty walking in that reality. This is why Paul took pains to approach the issue from so many angles. For example, Paul asks the rhetorical question, ***“Are we to continue in sin because***

we know that grace abounds?"(Rom. 6:1)The answer is, of course, NO. But that answer aside, look at the question. The question itself is a revelation of the Truth. Paul is clearly stating – in question form -- that grace of God absolutely DOES abound even when we sin.

Do you see that? He could not be asking the question otherwise. He is asking, "Are we to continue in sin because grace abounds?" – he is asking that because he knows that when we sin grace DOES always abound. Note that there are really only two options as to the Truth that is behind Paul's question.

First, the grace of God DOES abound – **EVEN** when we sin.

OR

Second, the grace of God abounds -- **EXCEPT** when we sin.

The Truth is the first option ---that the grace of God abounds EVEN when we sin. For if the grace of God does not abound EVEN when we sin, then the grace of God does NOT abound at all.

We need God's grace to abound at ALL TIMES. Certainly we need the grace of God to abound EVEN when we sin. And thanks be to God that when we sin, the grace of God DOES always abound – for Christ has already died for all sin.

Here is another similar application of grace and Truth: Paul said, "***There is therefore NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***" (Romans 8:1) Now again we have only two options:

First, there is no condemnation for those in Christ **EVEN** when we sin.

OR

Second, there is no condemnation **EXCEPT** when we sin.

You cannot have it both ways. Again, it is the one or the other. The Truth is the first option – there is no

condemnation for those in Christ Jesus EVEN when we sin.

Sure. For if there is no condemnation EXCEPT when we sin, then there IS condemnation every time we sin, and then the death of Jesus for sin means nothing.

These Truths cannot be escaped or denied. They emerge from the fact that by the grace of God Christ's work is finished— and that if we can come to know Him -- grace and Truth will govern our walk in Him.

The Impact of Grace

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 this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:11-13)

Paul asked that question, ***“Are we to continue in sin because grace abounds.” (Rom. 6:1)*** He answered, “God forbid.” But here we see what will be the impact of the grace of God received and experienced in Jesus Christ: We will learn how to obey and revere God.

If we have received Christ and He lives in us, then we are spiritually one with the Person in whom is all grace and Truth. Thus, if we grow to know Him, the impact in us is not going to be a growing desire to sin. The impact is going to be that we will LEARN CHRIST -- and we will more and more desire to walk in grace and Truth.

Freely Received and Freely Given

These twelve Jesus sent forth...”As you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.” (Matt. 10:5-10)

This was the first recorded instance where Jesus sent forth His disciples to preach in His name. Therefore, His instructions are foundational. And if you read them, one phrase stands out above all the rest: Freely you have received, therefore freely give. In a nutshell, this is the Truth of grace. It is the character of God. But if we know Christ, it will likewise characterize our life and ministry to others.

Jesus said, "Freely you have received...." What does the word FREELY mean? Certainly it means that **God has given ALL in His Son** – with no strings attached. (see **Romans 8:32**) That is basic gospel Truth: **"By grace, through faith."**

Many professing Christians have difficulty grasping the fact that God has given us all things FREELY. To many, that means that people can abuse what God has given – for example, turn the grace of God into license. Well, sure they can. But the moment that I turn the grace of God into license I am no longer walking in the Truth. I have corrupted what God has given freely. Consequently, it is no longer what God has given. It is no longer GRACE and TRUTH. It is destructive error.

The point is this: What God freely gives is always given BY GRACE IN TRUTH – it is always given IN CHRIST – and therefore if we receive it on any other basis, we are actually NOT receiving what He has given. The Truth is unchangeable. Grace is unchangeable. God intends grace and Truth to change US. Thus, if we try to change what God has given, we are deceived.

Jesus also said that because we have freely received, we must freely give. Primarily, He is speaking about spiritual treasures – that which is found in the Person of Christ. He is telling us that to charge a price – material or otherwise – in exchange for what we have freely received from God – is a corruption.

God freely gives because what He gives is so priceless that it can only be given freely. If I see that I have NOTHING to offer, and value what God freely gives, then I will freely receive – by faith. But if I have gotten that far then I will have been changed – I will be a recipient of grace. And I will gladly WANT to freely give to others. It is the nature of God.

In the above passage, these were the instructions of Jesus the FIRST time He sent His disciples out into MINISTRY. We cannot ignore these instructions – they are statements of HIS WILL. What this means is that the MOTIVE for ministry should never be money. I should not sell to others what I have been freely given by God.

Paul preached the Truth free of charge, but accepted offerings. The offerings were not in exchange for the Truth. They were separate and did not affect what Paul preached. He would have preached it regardless.

Paul also said, “***The workman deserves his wages.***” This was an exhortation to GIVE to a person freely preaching the Truth, but was not a requirement to pay for the Truth. Paul’s practice was an expression of God’s will for ministry, and is in keeping to what Jesus said to His disciples when He sent them out.

What we see here is that the ministry of the Truth ought to be freely given – completely unaffected by money. The people benefiting from that ministry are likewise free to give or not give. The Truth in Christ must never be sold or bought.

There are sometimes costs involved in various aspects of ministry. It might be necessary to charge to cover those costs. But this is not the same as charging a price for the TRUTH. Again – we should not withhold Truth for a price. God does not withhold it from us. These things are a matter of motive and of the spirit of grace.

God has freely given to us ALL in His Son. “**Freely you have received, freely give,**” is therefore the only possible way in which a person who HAS received and valued the grace of God will operate. It is an expression of the Truth of Jesus Christ.

God’s grace ALWAYS abounds to His people. This is not merely a doctrine. It is Truth that ought to be both received and passed on in the same freedom in which it is received.

All is of Grace

It is amazing how some of the same Christian people who rightly teach that we are saved solely by grace then turn right around and teach a Christian life that is based on

works. Many teach salvation by grace, but that we must earn our reward. None of this is the Truth. ALL is by grace because ALL is freely given in Christ.

Much of the problem is that we try to receive or live in a THING called, "grace," all the while standing aloof from the One in whom all grace is given. Or we teach, "cheap grace," which is simply a term that means, "Grace without Truth."

God has given ALL things freely in His Son. But those things that God has freely given in Christ cannot be received except we receive them from out of Christ. This brings us right back to the necessity of abiding in Christ as our life. For grace and Truth – all grace and Truth – are found in Him.

Chapter 17

Prayer and Intercession

In one sense of the word, those in Christ are, “praying always.” Prayer is to govern ALL of our Christian life. Through prayer we seek God and come to know Him. But specifically, focused prayer is when we shut ourselves off from all else, and enter into communion with God with regards to specific matters and issues.

In Jesus’ Name

Believers are joined to the Lord and one spirit with Him. This is the basis of fellowship – Christ in the believer. And this fellowship is the basis of all prayer and intercession. This ought to clear up several matters. First of all, it tells us why Jesus said we could, “pray in His name.” We can pray in His name because we are ONE with Him; He is in us; we bear His name; we belong to Him. To, “pray in the name of Jesus,” is a privilege that goes back to the meaning of Christianity: Christ in us.

But note what else it means, “to pray in the name of Jesus.” It means that I will ask, and desire in my heart, only what Jesus would ask and desire. This is, of course, equal, “to praying according to His will.” Jesus Christ would pray ONLY for the will of God. Thus, if I am praying in HIS name, I will ask only according to His will. Indeed, in the Lord’s Prayer, the template for prayer, Jesus said to pray, ***“THY will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”***

To pray, “in the name of Jesus,” means to pray just as Jesus would pray. Thus, if I pray other than what Jesus would pray, I am NOT praying in His name – whether I invoke His name or not. And in those cases, God is not going to answer my request.

We ought to rejoice that God will not answer such prayer. Would we want Him to do that which is NOT His will?

God knows better than us. There are going to be many times in the life of the believer where we are mistaken about God’s will. We may pray according to our mistake. God will not answer our request – in fact, we ought to pray for God’s mind on any matter. Then we can rightly pray according to His will, and, “in the name of Jesus.”

There will be other times when we simply do not know how to pray or what to pray. In those cases, by faith, we can know that Jesus does know what to pray, and, "ever lives to make intercession for us according to the will of God." Again – God does not depend upon our understanding, nor upon our WORDS in prayer. He wants us to fellowship with Christ in the Truth, and to pray from out of that fellowship. God will be faithful to continually keep our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ.

From this we can see that to the extent that we are coming into an inward realization of Jesus Christ we will be more able, "to pray in His name." Prayer is an extension of fellowship with Christ, and even though we can pray anytime, regardless of our spiritual growth – on the basis of Christ – to know Him will enable us to pray according to the Truth.

Intercession

In a general sense, we initiate prayer. It's not that God doesn't draw us or put something on our heart, or show us our need. But we choose to pray. On the other hand, God initiates intercession. That is an over simplification but is generally true.

Intercession is a matter of being apprehended by God to stand with HIM for HIS will and HIS purpose -- regarding the one for whom you intercede, or regarding the situation in question.

In the NT Greek, the word for, "intercession," carries the meaning, "to fall in with; to meet with" -- usually on the behalf of another. So despite the fact that Jesus, "ever lives to make intercession for the saints according to the will of God" – and obviously doesn't need our help -- part of fellowship with Christ is that we will, "fall in with Him; become one with Him," in interceding for others. We will have His mind and heart on these matters.

Because God apprehends us to stand with Him in intercession, this also means that we usually do not know, at least to start with, why we are interceding. That is why much intercession is beyond words – we don't HOW to pray or even why we are praying. We are simply caught up with Christ in intercession for those who cannot, don't

know to, or even will not, presently pray for themselves. We are, “standing in the gap,” with Christ for them.

So what we see is that intercession is not so much an ASKING of God to do something – although this might be included. Rather, it is a standing WITH Christ for what HE already wants to do – He has apprehended us for this intercession -- even though we might not know exactly what is at stake.

As stated earlier, Christ does not need our help. But we will forever be one with Him and in fellowship with Him. And He lives to intercede. Thus, intercession – standing with Christ at all cost – comes with the territory of being ONE with Jesus Christ.

Why Prayer and Intercession?

God has a WILL. That should hardly be questioned. But if God does have a will then, by definition, He wants to bring to pass His will – He wants to bring to pass His will because IT IS His will. God is not confused about what He wants. He is not making it up as He goes along. God’s will is a perfect will and never changes.

That being said, then why do we need to pray to ask God to do His will? Isn’t it already His will, and doesn’t He already WANT to do it? So why do we need to ask in prayer that God would do what He already wants to do?

Because of God’s eternal purpose for humanity – that we be extensions of, and manifestations of, His Son Jesus Christ, God has ordained that He is not going to force His will upon people. Doing so would abort everything that God desires to do through His Son. Consequently, God wants to bring His people to the place where we desire what He desires – and then ASK HIM to bring His will to pass.

Herein we see the real meaning of, “asking in prayer.” If God simply went ahead and did His will to the disregard of His people, we would most likely misinterpret His will. But worse, we would not be spiritually adjusted to His will. Thus, God brings His people to the place in the Truth where we ASK in according with what He already wants to do. Isn’t that what it means, “to ask according to His will?”

To ASK infers that in our hearts, even though we may not fully understand, we truly WANT what we are asking. Otherwise we really aren't, "asking" – we are merely mouthing words in a religious fashion. No. God wants us to ASK because we truly desire from Him. He wants us to ASK in the spirit of Truth. Then He can grant that request and we can receive it in the way that God intends.

The Promises of God are in Christ

The notion that God is obligated to give us what we pray is nonsense. No. Neither can we bring to pass a request to God by confessing it into our lives, speaking it over ourselves, or through any other gimmick. No. We need to come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. We need to pray according to HIS WILL. We need to truly want His will. And we need to say, "Lord, nevertheless not my will, but Your will."

There are many believers who read the promises of the Bible, and the promises of God to answer prayer – and we read about all of the miracles worked by the early disciples, the casting out of demons, the healing of the sick, and many of the other things that God did through His people – and we wonder WHY these things do not happen today. Some of us even wonder why some of our smallest prayers seem to go unheeded by God. What is wrong? Are these things true or are they not?

The answer is that, ***"For all the promises of God in him are yes, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."*** (II Cor. 1:20) You cannot separate the promises of God from the Person in whom, and through whom, they reside, and must be brought to pass. You cannot bypass Him – either through ignorance, blindness, or self-will – and expect that God is going to do much. No. Every promise of God is true – but they are generally unfolded ONLY as Jesus Christ is unfolded.

Prayer and intercession are supposed to be the RESULTS of Christ IN US. As Christ more and more becomes our life in practice and purpose, the promises that are found only in Him will become unfolded. And we will then ask according to the will of God, and in the name of Jesus – exactly what Jesus would ask. That is the prayer God will always answer.

When we enter into, “our closet” – as Jesus describes it – we are shutting out all else and seeking God through prayer. But this is not a religious exercise. Prayer is an entering into the full light of God. Thus, it must be done with full openness and honesty. We must truly want to experience Jesus Christ, and be unconditionally surrendered to His will. Indeed, part of prayer is to ask God to do whatever it takes to make us open; to create in us a pure heart. God wants Truth in the inward man and it is through prayer and we keep open to Him.

Chapter 18

How Faith Comes

Christian people make many requests of God. But perhaps the request we make most often is, "Lord, give me more faith!" This is understandable. Everyday we encounter the need for faith. Christianity is a walk by faith.

One of the most important things to understand about faith is that it speaks of a RELATIONSHIP with God. Faith is NOT a, "force." It is not a THING, or a MOOD. Faith is trust, dependence, and really, a voluntary surrender. In fact, my faith can be in God only if, to some degree, I know that He is trustworthy. Only then will my relationship with Him be based upon the knowing the Truth – my faith will be in the Faithful One.

So how do we get more faith? How does faith come to be in me?

Actually, Paul the apostle answers this question directly. He says:

So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. (Rom. 10:17)

This is a verse that is quoted very often by Christians. But if you are like me, you might discover that you have not really understood what Paul is actually saying.

First of all, Paul says, "faith COMES." That is revealing. Why? Well, for two reasons. First, this phrase, "faith comes," tells us that faith is not in you and I to begin with. Have we recognized this? Faith must, "COME."

So this is the first thing we need see. When Paul says, "So then faith COMES" – this is proof that it must COME. It is not in us to begin with.

Secondly, Paul is talking about the need for faith to come IN YOU AND I. Sure. That is the only place where faith could come to be. Faith is not out there -- floating around in the air. Faith is IN people. So when he talks about, "faith coming to be," he is talking about faith coming to be IN US.

This ought to get our attention. Paul is telling us how FAITH – faith that is not in us to begin with – can come to be in us. Thus, he is addressing a fundamental need that all of us have: We all need faith. This is a fundamental Truth.

No Faith in Us

Now, there are ramifications to the Truth Paul teaches. For if faith needs to come to BE in you and I—because it isn't there to begin with – then it ought to be obvious that true faith does not originate from you and I as the source. We are therefore wasting our time trying to, “muster up,” faith out from ourselves. There is no faith in us to, “muster up.”

Neither is faith a FORCE – it is not even a FORCE given to us by God – that we generate from out of ourselves up to God to get Him moving. Such teachings betray an appalling ignorance to the Truth.

There is, in fact, no faith born into the Adamic race. When you and I were born into this world, we did not have any life in us, nor Truth, and therefore, we did not have any faith in us. It is absolutely impossible for a human being -- left to themselves in Adam -- to produce any faith at all unto God.

Now, you CAN have human faith – you CAN have religious faith. You can create out of your human imagination a faith – based on emotions, feelings, opinion, and intellect. And you can even, “have faith in your faith.” People do this kind of thing all the time. But it is not real. It is of human origin -- but true faith is NEVER of human origin.

Again -- true faith has to COME TO BE in you and I, which means that the origin or the source of true faith has to be from One OTHER THAN OURSELVES -- namely, Jesus Christ. Faith has to come to be -- from the outside of us - - into the inside of us from the outside.

Of course it does – for this is how Jesus comes to dwell in us – from the outside of us into us. God has repeatedly made clear in His Word that no one has anything of value except that it has been received from ABOVE – in Christ.

Faith Comes By Hearing

Faith has to come to be in you and in me. It isn't in us through natural birth, and so we cannot muster it up from within ourselves. But how then does faith come to be in you and me? Well, Paul tells us in Romans 10:17: Faith comes to be in us by hearing -- and more specifically -- by hearing the Word of God.

Again, there are ramifications to this Truth. It means that faith CANNOT come to be in me unless God speaks, and unless I hear. That is what **Romans 10:17** is saying: ***"Faith comes by hearing the Word of God."***

This actually makes perfect sense. Unless God takes the initiative to speak to us we have nothing TO hear, and thus, nothing TO believe. Faith doesn't exist in a vacuum. We cannot, "just believe," without an object of our faith.

Paul is teaching that God must initiate the possibilities of faith by first speaking His Word. We must hear. And if we do hear, then faith will come to be in us.

Truth Makes Hearing Possible

Now, somebody is likely to ask the question, "If faith comes by hearing the Word of God, then how do you get enough faith to hear the Word of God?" Which comes first, faith, or the hearing? Well, neither -- the Word God speaks comes first. But as it pertains to our response, Paul clearly states that HEARING comes first -- hearing results in FAITH -- and not the other way around. But the question remains: If hearing precedes faith, then how do we get enough faith to hear?

The answer is that you do not initially need faith in order to hear. There are times when the faith that has already come to be in you will be needed to continue to hear God. But there are going to be times when you have no faith but can nevertheless hear God. How? Because God can speak to us in a way that will cut through all deafness in spirit. The fact is, the Word that God speaks carries with it a supernatural awakening.

How many understand that when God reveals, and when He speaks, that He awakens in us -- if I can put it that way -- the ability to hear. God doesn't talk just to hear the sound of His own voice. He does not talk, and then

under His breath say, "Well I sure hope somebody can hear Me." No, when God speaks to you and to me, it can penetrate any blindness, any deafness, or any darkness.

Think of a natural light. If you are in a totally dark room and the lights come on, you are able to see at that point, aren't you? It doesn't matter whether you want to see or not -- you WILL see -- and now you have to choose. You can either walk in that light -- or you can shut your eyes -- and in doing so make it dark for yourself again. But God did not ask your permission to bring light. No. God speaks, or brings light, and because He is God that alone empowers us to see and hear.

Now, don't misunderstand. When Paul says, "Faith comes by hearing," he is not talking about a person merely recognizing and understanding what God has spoken. That is, of course, included. The Word God speaks carries with it a conviction that will enable a person to both recognize and understand that it is of God. But true, "hearing," according to the meaning of the term, goes further. To truly HEAR means to submit to what is spoken, that is, to embrace it. God is not going to violate free will.

Paul simply says that God brings light -- and that light will make it possible for us to see and to hear. When God speaks we become accountable. But it is only if we HEAR that faith comes to be in us.

This is actually how God calls the unsaved. God convicts an unsaved person while they are still unsaved by bringing them light. This light awakens something in even an unsaved person -- so that they can see the light of Christ and come to Him. But this is not yet salvation. They MUST embrace the light given and come to Christ. God does not MAKE them come to Christ — they can refuse -- but faith is possible because God has brought light. They must respond by hearing.

And so faith comes by our embracing the Truth that God reveals. It cannot come unless God takes the initiative to reveal some Truth about Himself. Only then could we possibly trust Him.

God is Speaking in His Son

Now, faith comes by hearing — hearing the Word of God. Then here is the question: What is the Word of God that God speaks? Well, Jesus Christ is the Word of God, isn't He? Jesus Christ is the Living Word.

Hebrews, chapter 1 says that God is speaking IN HIS SON:

God, who at different times and in different manners spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, BUT in these last days, God has spoken to us in a Son. (Heb. 1:1-2)

This could very easily be translated, "Son-wise." This is basically telling us that the, "language" in which God is speaking to His people is through an ongoing, inward revelation of the Person of Jesus Christ Who is in us. God is speaking to us in His Son.

Now, this leads us to a conclusion: Instead of asking God for more faith, we need to ask God to reveal to us more Truth. We need to ask Him to reveal to us more of His Son. If God reveals to us more of Jesus -- and we see Him and hear Him and open ourselves to Him -- then faith will come to be in us.

It is impossible to see and embrace the Truth about God and His Son, Jesus Christ, without it resulting in FAITH. Why? Because if we see the Truth we will see that God is FAITHFUL. Faith will result — for faith is always dependence upon the Faithful One.

Substance and Evidence

We have seen that it is God's desire to bring us into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. But now how many see that as we grow to know Jesus Christ that more and more faith will come to be? Sure. God is speaking to us in His Son, that is, God is revealing Jesus Christ IN US. And as we, "hear Him," Christ will be formed in us — but likewise faith that is based in knowing Christ will be formed in us.

This faith that comes to be in us because of the ongoing revelation of Jesus Christ in us is what Hebrews 11:1 calls "substance and evidence":

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1)

True faith in the believer IS the substance and evidence of the Person of Jesus Christ in us. It is His faith; it's the product of having heard God's revelation of Christ to us and in us.

All of this ought to be encouraging. It ought to free us from always, "trying to have faith," by mustering it up out of ourselves. God simply tells us, "Faith comes by hearing the Truth."

Chapter 19

The Trial of Faith

Now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:6-7)

For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

Faith in God MUST be tried. But what is a, “trial of faith?” Well, a trial of faith is anything that challenges or contradicts our faith in God. This challenge may involve outward circumstances, but the real challenge to faith comes from my own inward nature. We are faced with these challenges to our faith in God and must resolve them if our faith is to stand.

But if we go back to the previous discussion as to how faith comes to be, it provides some light on this matter of a trial of faith. Faith comes to be in me if I see and embrace the Truth about God. In other words, if I see that God is faithful, I will trust Him. But a trial of faith will contradict the Truth that I see about God and will thus challenge the faith that I have in Him.

Now note: The trial of our faith does indeed challenge our faith in God. But that is because the trial of faith challenges the Truth about God upon which our faith is based. The two are as one: There is the Truth we have seen, and there is our faith that is based upon it. Any trial of faith will challenge both.

The Priceless Trial of Faith

God does not, “try faith,” to see whether we have faith. No. Rather, God tries faith to build, strengthen, and to prove that our faith is based upon the Truth.

In 1 Peter 1:6-7 passage above, Peter uses the process of purifying gold by fire to illustrate what God is doing in any trial of faith. Gold must be subjected to fire – a trial by fire– so that it might be purified. But notice: Gold is not subjected to fire to discover whether it IS gold. No. It is

put in the fire to burn out the impurities – so that it might be brought out AS gold.

This is God's purpose in the trial of faith. God wants to prove the Truth we believe about God IS the Truth – and in doing so our faith in God will be likewise proven true and valid.

But notice what Peter is really saying in his illustration of gold tried by fire. He says, "the trial of your faith, being much more precious than that of gold that perishes.." Note that closely. He is not saying that the FAITH that is tried is more precious than gold. No. Rather, he is saying that the TRIAL itself is more precious than a trial of gold. Why? Because of what each trial produces. Pure gold will perish. But a trial of faith produces that which is eternal.

This is an expansion of what Peter is saying:

The TRIAL of your faith is more precious than that of a TRIAL of gold that perishes, because your faith will not perish. It is eternal.

The Revelation of Christ

Through his illustration of gold tried by fire, Peter tells us what happens in the fire: The gold is separated from the impurities. The impurities are then discarded and the gold – now purified -- shines forth. So what is the gold – what is it that is purified in the fire? Is it US? Is it our old earthly nature? Is that old, earthly nature refined in the fire? Fixed up? Made to look like Jesus? No.

Notice what actually happens to the gold that is in the fire. All of the uncleanness, impurity, and corruption, is brought out and comes to the surface. This is discarded, and what is left is left pure gold. So if we say that this gold is US then we must say that there is a latent potential of good in us. It simply needs to be brought out. And that would make God's goal in Christ nothing more than to fix up the old creation so that the greatness that was always in it would be brought out. We would have to say that the trial of faith is to burn out of our fallen nature all that is bad so that it's goodness can shine forth as refined gold. This could never be – it is contrary to the Truth.

The trial of our faith is not for the removal of the bad out of US so as to bring out the good that is in us – and thus, make us more Christ-like. Neither is the trial of faith to improve upon the Christ who dwells in us. Rather, the trial of faith is to separate between what is in us of the earthly, fallen nature, and what is Christ -- and to get rid of the earthly so that we may know Jesus Christ and be governed by His life.

God has no interest in separating between the good and bad in the old, earthly creation, because whether it seems good OR bad, if it is of the earthly nature, it is of the flesh. It is set aside completely under the Cross of Jesus Christ. Again, God is not going to fix up our natural man. He will settle for nothing less than NONE of us and ALL of Christ.

But to see this Truth we have to go back to what we saw about the separation in each believer of soul and spirit – the separation in each believer of that which is of Christ, and that which is of US; our earthly nature. The trial by fire does not result in an earthly nature that has had its impurities burnt off and can now be likened to gold. No. The earthly nature does not merely HAVE impurities -- rather, the earthly nature IS the impurity that must be discarded. In short, a trial by fire in the Christian life divides between what is of us and what is of Christ and discards what is of us so that what is of Christ might remain. HE is the gold. We are the impurity.

We also saw this in the discussion of the work of the personal cross. We must bear about in our body – in our earthly nature – the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that the life of the Lord Jesus might be made manifest. The result is not an earthen vessel that has become a Xerox copy of the Treasure. Rather, the earthen vessel is broken. We are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God. What remains is that which is purely of Christ in our union with Him.

The trial of our faith – IF we endure and allow God to get His will through it – will result in a greater revelation of Jesus Christ IN US. This, in turn, will prove our faith – build it and establish it – because it is upon Christ that our faith is based.

The Issue in a Trial of Faith

Many of us have the mistaken notion that through a trial of faith God wants to make us strong. But in reality, God wants to make us WEAK – in ourselves. Of course, this is unto the end that in our weakness that is exposed through the trial we might put our faith solely in Jesus Christ.

This is essentially what Peter is illustrating. He is showing that in a trial by fire all that is of the flesh will be exposed for exactly what it is – weak and corrupt. This exposure may involve words, but usually we are shown we are weak through experience. This is how God separates what is of the flesh out from that which is of Christ, in the sense of clearly revealing each. The believer will renounce that which is of himself – lose his life. What will remain is NOT, “a better US.” No. What will remain is a greater revelation of the Treasure – the real GOLD – Jesus Christ.

It is important to understand what God is after, and how He gets it in His people. Otherwise, as God allows trials that will bring out the bad in us, we will try to fix it, or come under condemnation because of it. No. We need to confess it, renounce it, and leave it alone. God is seeking to set us free from our continual obsession with ourselves so that we might rest and abide in Christ by faith.

What God is seeking to do in any trial by fire is bring us to where we will lose ourselves to Him, and thereby come into a greater revelation of His Son. In other words, God wants to, “speak to us in His Son,” through an on-going revelation of Him. And if that is happening, then our faith will be proven. We will be utterly weak in ourselves, but our faith will be in the One in whom there is all victory.

If you are in a trial of faith you will likely have to deal with much confusion. You will have reactions – some of them not very Godly – and doubts. It would hardly be a TRIAL of your faith otherwise. But it is only if we face all of these challenges in OURSELVES and in our circumstances that the Truth about God and our faith in Him can be proven. It is easy to say I believe. But when that faith is contradicted, but nevertheless proven, then there is a greater faith and victory.

Faith is a relationship with God. And so in the final analysis, all of this is about strengthening our relationship

of trust and dependence upon God. A trial of faith will address what hinders that – unbelief, self-righteousness, self-ownership, and blindness. If we will let ourselves go to God for, “no matter what it takes,” we will be brought into a greater inward realization of Jesus Christ and a greater faith will come to be in us in Him.

Chapter 20 Seeing God

If we want to know Jesus Christ – to actually SEE GOD – then we have to lose ourselves to Him. Jesus is both life and light, and He must become our life in order for us to see light; see Him. Therein is the goal of any trial of faith: That we might lose our lives to Jesus Christ and grow to SEE GOD. If we do our faith will likewise be built.

The book of Job is the story of the trial of the man Job. At the end of that trial Job said to God, “Now I see YOU.” But it took a lot of suffering to get him to that point. Thus, within that book we find many Truths that are applicable to this great purpose in the Christian life.

The book begins:

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright. And he was one that feared God and hated and avoided evil. (Job 1:1)

Now, this is not only the inspired Word of God -- so we can believe that this is a description of the true character of Job -- but God Himself is going to repeat this in a few verses. Of course, we must take this in context. Every one of us is a sinner -- save the grace of God. So was Job. But in the context of where Job was presently in his walk with God, God was able to say this about him. In short, Job was walking in the light that he had been given.

Chastisement, Not Punishment

The next significant even in the book of Job is that God took the initiative to start a conversation with Satan about Job:

And the Lord said unto Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job -- that there is none like him in the earth -- a perfect and upright man, one that fears God hates evil.’ (Job 1:8)

God makes it clear that trial and suffering of Job was NOT because Job had sinned. Neither was it because God was, “punishing,” him. No -- not even for unconscious sin, such as self-righteousness. There is NO sense of, “punishment,” here whatsoever. But God was about to

CHASTISE Job. CHASTISEMENT is love. It's for our betterment. And in the end, Job saw God in a way that was impossible otherwise.

The Truth for us in this is that we could possibly be 100% in the will of God -- in the context of the light we have; we could possibly be believing and obeying God the best we are able to do so with the light given -- and yet God may allow a great trial to come upon us. He will allow it so that we might KNOW HIM.

I say that because it is so easy -- if we are believing and obeying God -- to assume that God is unfair, or that we have sinned, if something bad happens to us. Isn't that true? That's what we usually think. In fact, Job and his friends spent the better part of 40 chapters arguing that point back and forth. And yet it was not so. They didn't know about God's purpose in the life of Job. And so they were left to their own understanding.

God's Great Purpose

There is no room here to discuss the rest of the conversation that took place between Satan and God. Needless to say, God always intended to allow Satan to touch the life of Job -- it was the only means by which God could bring Job to the place He desired.

So the Lord opened the hedge around Job -- he lost everything. He lost all of his possessions and his sons and his daughters. Then he lost his health. And even though Job never lost his faith, he was faced with the greatest challenge possible to that faith.

All that is discussed in the book of Job comes down to one question: How could God be faithful if He has allowed this to happen to Job without cause? Job's friends answered that there was a cause -- Job had surely sinned. But Job knew he had not sinned -- and yet he could not offer any other explanation as to why God had allowed his suffering.

When we are in a trial of faith, most often what we ask God to give us is INFORMATION -- we want to know WHY we are suffering. We think that if God would, "just tell us," then we could correct the reason for our sufferings, alter our course, and escape the suffering. But there was

NO information or reason that God could give to Job for his suffering. Job would have never understood.

What God intended to give Job through his suffering was not INFORMATION, but REVELATION – a revelation of Himself. But Job did not know that he needed a revelation – Job was blind but did not know that he was blind. Thus, the only way in which God could deal with Job was to bring him to the place where he could SEE GOD.

If you read **John 16:20-21**, you will see there that Jesus alludes to that -- he says, "In that day, when what is born -- a revelation of Jesus Christ – in that day you are not going to ask Me any more questions because I will BE your answer." Jesus Christ is the Truth. Jesus Christ is all that God has for us -- and all that is in Him. You come into a revelation of Him; you come into an inward realization and knowledge of Jesus – and in THAT day you will not ask as many questions as you did before. You will ask SOME, because there is never any end to His unfolding. But that is what Job came to see and know: God Himself. And the questions ended.

Job's Amazement

All of us are born blind. But worse, we don't know we are blind. In fact, we think that we see. This is, of course, a description of deception.

A person MUST be born from above if they are to have the capacity to see God. Note that I said, "capacity." Even if I am born from above I am not going to immediately see Jesus Christ in fullness. No. That will take a lifetime. But just as a normal baby is born with the capacity to see, but must grow to where they do see, and then understand what they are saying, so it is when we are born anew.

Job was not born from above in the NT sense. But God did show him that he was blind – much of his suffering was geared to bringing him to see that there was nothing in himself. And then God did give him a tremendous revelation of Himself. That not only gave Job the reason for his suffering, but changed him forever.

Job said, ***"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye sees YOU."*** (Job 42:5) Job had known many facts about God. But he was blind to God Himself. He didn't know that all during his trial. Thus,

when Job finally saw God, he was able to say, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

There is no other possible outcome of seeing God – because if we see God we will likewise see ourselves in comparison. But that is not the end of the story. Once Job saw God – and his own hopeless condition without God -- he was able to leave himself alone in the hands of God. This fulfilled the purpose of God in Job's trial. Job had lost himself into the hands of God and could now move forward on a completely new basis – the basis of the true knowledge of God.

Job had said, "I wanted answers. I wanted information. I wanted to see WHY." But God said, "I am not going to let you see why, and I'm not going to give you information -- I'm not going to let you see the answer. I'm going to give you something better: I'm going to let you see ME."

And you'll notice that the end of the book of Job, that when he got the revelation of God, he was still suffering. It didn't end at that point. Now it eventually did. But from that point Job no longer was going back and forth about it -- because God was his answer. He no longer needed to ask WHY.

This book of Job has in it great revelation for us. Most of us pray for information; for answers. Most of us want to know WHY -- we want God to explain things to us. And I understand that – I've done that. You have done it – we are human -- and God knows that. But the lesson of Job ought to tell us what we really ought to be praying for: We ought to be praying -- NOT for answers; NOT even, "to have more faith." We ought to be praying for a REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

Paul said that he prayed that God would give the church, ***"a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself."*** (see Eph. 1:16) How many understand that if God begins to reveal Christ IN you and I, that faith will come -- because faith comes by hearing the Word. HE IS the Word. How many understand that if we SEE JESUS that questions will begin to cease. We need an inward, ongoing revelation of Jesus -- which is exactly what God says He WANTS to do -- and He uses suffering to accomplish it.

So this is the purpose of God in suffering: That we may come into an inward realization of Jesus that will set us free and be the foundation for inheritance; the foundation for holiness; the foundation for being able to live, and walk, and commune with God, forever -- throughout the eternal ages.

Chapter 21

Victory in Christ

What is your definition of Christian VICTORY? Many Christians today are being taught that VICTORY is when we get OUR will, or OUR desires, or when God solves some problem for US. Others are teaching that victory is a matter of preaching the gospel into new geographical areas. Is that it? Well, it is entirely possible for those things to happen, but for us to have very little victory in Christ at all.

In reality, VICTORY means God getting His will to His glory, not simply in my life, but OVER ME personally. In other words, I have victory when JESUS CHRIST IS LORD over me – practically and in experience. Any thing less and it really isn't complete victory in Christ Jesus.

Victory is His Resurrection Life

Paul describes the possibilities of our victory in Christ in I Corinthians:

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:54-57)

Paul is describing OUR experience of His victory in this passage. He states directly WHEN victory happens: "WHEN this corruptible shall put on incorruption...." – THAT is victory. When death is swallowed up by the resurrection life of Christ – IN US – then we have HIS victory.

Losing Our Life to Find Him

But practically speaking how does this work? We know that if we are IN Christ, we potentially have all victory that He has won. But do we automatically live IN real victory just because you are saved? No. So how does the victory

that is already finished in Christ Jesus become something we can experience?

Contrary to the Word of Faith Heresy and other false teachings, we do not experience the victory of Jesus Christ by confessing it over ourselves. Rather, we experience the resurrection life of Jesus Christ only if we take our place in His death.

This brings us back to the passage quoted a few chapters ago, from Matthew 16:

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matt. 16:24-25)

Victory is Jesus Christ – His resurrection life. But if we want to practically discover Christ as our life -- want to live in His victory -- we must unconditionally relinquish the old life in which all defeat is rooted. We must relinquish our self-ownership, for it is that sin of self-ownership that is the root of all other sin. We must lose it into the hands of Jesus – which will result in God bringing the work of the cross. We can ask God to do whatever it takes to bring us to this surrender. And then when God does do whatever it takes, we must pick up the cross and work out our surrender to Christ. Only then will there be a realization of Christ; a realization of His resurrection life in us.

Paul said that God gives us the victory through our LORD Jesus Christ. It is when Jesus becomes our personal LORD – in experience -- that we begin to live in victory. And unless we are losing ourselves to Him He cannot be our Lord.

Victory is the result of LIFE swallowing up DEATH. Thus, if you want to find life in Christ, you must lose YOUR life. You have to relinquish control over everything – by faith – and fall into His hands. Then, if you have died that death, you can live unto God. And you will live in His victory because He has victory over you.

Faith is the Victory

For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4-5)

What is the victory? OUR FAITH. Why? Because our faith is to be in the ONE who IS victory personified. By faith we abide in His complete victory over all. Our faith IS the victory because by faith – which always leads to complete relinquishment to God, Jesus becomes our living Lord.

This is, of course, “victory through surrender.” It is the purpose of God in trials, suffering, and really, goes hand in hand with the forming of Christ in us. God intends to make Jesus Christ Lord of all.

The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.....Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. (Rom 8:16-17, 35-37)

Do you want to have spiritual authority? Do you want to be more than a conqueror? Then BECOME CONQUERED by Jesus Christ. If you do, your life will no longer belong to you. It won't be about what you want or even about what you want to do for God. It will be about God's will to His glory. But you will also find that this is really what you wanted – had you known Him. And your faith in Christ – or, if you will, your RELATEDNESS TO HIM – will be THE VICTORY. It will be an eternal, incorruptible victory what swallows up all death and power of the enemy.

Faith is our victory because through our faith we surrender to Him for HIS victory. It is a matter of our believing, yielding, and obeying the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ – yes, generally, but in any specific situation.

Victory is achieved when God has His will IN US, and then, in our lives.

Strength Through Weakness

For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he sees me to be, or that he hears of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. (II Cor. 12:6-10)

The principle of, “strength through weakness,” found in this passage is not a religious position we take, or merely a fact to which we agree. It is a condition to which we are brought -- by God in our relationship with Him if we would walk with Jesus Christ.

We could say this in another way: “Strength through weakness,” is the TRUTH being manifested in and through human beings who are rightly related to Christ by faith. If you and I walk with Jesus Christ, “strength through weakness,” is the ONLY POSSIBLE outcome.

Christ is God's Power

Victory in Christ does NOT mean that our weakness and failures are gone. Many believers wrongly expect this will be the case – and continue to look at themselves for proof of victory. No. Victory in Christ means that in spite of myself, and my failures, my faith is in Christ. Any freedom from sin must begin with faith in Christ despite ourselves.

If I have sin I cannot overcome I must continue to abide in Christ by faith regardless. I don't need to overcome in order to abide in Christ. Rather, I must abide in Christ in order to eventually get free from sin.

Read again Paul's experience. He isn't talking about God GIVING him strength to overcome; about God MAKING him strong. No. Paul is talking about abiding in Christ by faith -- and for the power of Christ to rest upon Him and work through Him. That is much different. Most of us think that God gives us, "a power," to use. No. God gives us His Son -- and tells us to abide and rely in Him by faith. As we do, Christ is the power of God THROUGH us. He is our victory.

Christ is the power of God. (I Cor. 1:24) Christ is the power of resurrection LIFE. Thus, do we want to overcome sin? Turning inward and, "working on sin," is futile. Rather, turn to Christ by faith and LOSE the life in which the sin is rooted. Then the sin will gradually lose power because ***death has been swallowed up by His LIFE. (I Cor. 15:54)***

This is a simple principle and yet one to which most of us are blinded. Why do we think that despite all of our sincere efforts to overcome sins and habits that we continually FAIL? Didn't Christ die to set us free? Sure. So what is the problem? It is often that we are trying to overcome sin -- all the while holding onto the SELF in which all sin is rooted. We don't know any better. But if we would LOSE our lives into the hands of Christ, and find Him as our life, the Cross would undercut the flesh life in which sin is rooted, and we would learn to truly walk in newness of life.

There is no power in us -- not even, "some power," given to us by God -- by which we can achieve victory. Thus, rather than lose heart over our failure to overcome, we ought to realize that perhaps God is showing us the Truth about ourselves. For only then will we be able to lose our lives and be free to put our entire faith in Christ. Put faith in Him -- and as Paul, rejoice in being weak, and in those things that prove we are, because this will ever more press us to abide in Him -- His strength will be in us for all.

The Ways of God

Now, if you gather all of this up, the conclusion is inescapable: God has no intention of making us strong. Rather, God intends to make us weak -- indeed, He intends to show us that we have always been weak -- so

that by faith we may abide in Christ as our strength. This is fundamental to victory in Christ.

This ought to be encouraging. Is your Christian walk nothing but a pattern of trying, but always failing? Have you yet come to where you are convinced that there is NOTHING in you? Well, this is the spirit of God showing you the TRUTH. There is nothing in you. You have no strength. Indeed, God never intended you to have strength in yourself.

Victory in Christ Jesus is experienced only if He is our life. His resurrection life IS victory over every enemy. But this will require that we are reduced and exposed – and put our faith in HIM. Christ is the power of God IN US. That is victory.

Chapter 22

Seated In Christ

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, (Eph 1:20)

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (Eph 2:6)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (Eph 1:3)

Paul says that Christ is seated at the right hand of God in the eternal spiritual realm, i.e., heavenly places. He then says that WE are seated together in those heavenly places IN Christ. Then he says that because of this, we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings that belong to Christ.

Paul doesn't say maybe. He doesn't hope for someday. He is saying that these things are FACT – right now. They are as final as is the finished redemption that made them possible. If you are IN CHRIST, then everything Paul says in these verses are the Truth for YOU personally.

Now, note carefully. Paul doesn't say we are seated in heavenly places beside Christ, or because of Christ, or separate from Christ. No. We are seated IN Christ.

Now perhaps you think that Paul was only speaking in a legal sense. Maybe you think that he is telling us that because Christ paid the price for sin that God then had legal justification to imagine that we are seated with Christ. In other words, maybe this is only a legal or, "positional," Truth. In other words, we aren't REALLY seated in Christ in heavenly places, but it is a nice thought that we can use if we get depressed. We can imagine ourselves as a part of the legal and positional Truth of the Redemption.

First of all, there is no such thing as legal or positional Truth. You will never find any such distinction made in the Bible. There is just, well, there is just TRUTH. Period. What I am saying is this – the only reason there are legal and positional aspect of Truth is because there is the

living Truth. Legal and positional Truth are terms and vehicles WE have invented for the purpose of trying to explain Truth. But despite this sincere attempt, we must never attempt to separate Truth into compartments. No. There is just Truth. And the Truth IS that right now believers are seated IN CHRIST in heavenly places.

Spiritually in Christ

So HOW are we seated in Christ in heavenly places? Well, the question, and the verse itself tell us: We are seated in Him in HEAVENLY or SPIRITUAL places. In other words, this is spiritual, and not physical. But never think that this makes it less real. No. It makes it MORE real.

Is the realm of God MORE real than this physical realm? Sure. That is not to say that the physical realm is our imagination. But the point is that the realm of God is eternal. The physical realm is not. Do the math. Which realm is more real?

Paul is saying that if you are in Christ, then you are ONE with Him in spirit. Consequently, you are seated in Him where He is seated, at the right hand of God. This Truth is established in the definition of salvation itself. Salvation is Christ in us. We are made one with Christ, and because He is LIFE, in Him we have LIFE. Note that this is not just a legal classification. No. If you have salvation – if you are eternally alive – then it is because you are one with LIFE HIMSELF. Thus, we see that salvation is not a THING that is given us. It is a Person with Whom we have become ONE. We have life eternal because we are one with Life Himself.

So when Paul says we are seated in Christ in heavenly places, he means exactly that – it is real and it is the Truth. Christ is seated in heavenly places at the right hand of God – and if we are spiritually one with Him, then we too are seated in exactly that place. This is not just a nice thought, or, "positional Truth." No. It is THE Truth. It is Truth that not only beyond the physical, but it is Truth that supersedes the physical.

Victory

This Truth about being seated in Christ at the right hand of God is the basis of so much in the Christian life that

one hardly knows where to begin. But if nothing else comes into view through this Truth, then there ought to at least be one thing that is evident: To be seated in Christ above all is the place of absolute final and complete victory.

When Jesus Christ finished His Redemptive work, He ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. All that God wanted Him to do was FINISHED. And now, we are seated IN HIM.

You will notice that there is no suggestion by Paul that we ought to be TRYING to claw our way into this position. We are not TRYING to be seated. We ARE seated. Indeed, it is absolutely IMPOSSIBLE for you to be IN CHRIST without being seated where Christ is seated. If you are IN CHRIST, you are in this position of victory because He is in that position.

So what this means becomes quite evident: Instead of trying to win any victory, we need to operate from a victory already WON. The battle then, rather than win a victory, is to BELIEVE. Our battle is never to win ground or gain position. Rather, our battle is to believe and HOLD FAST to what Christ has already given us, and to the reality of being seated in Christ.

Many believers continue to look at themselves and live in defeat. We see that are entangled in the flesh and that we fail continually to live in victory. But if you read the Bible you will not find a single verse that tells us that we ought to ever allow our sins and failures to keep us outside of Jesus Christ. Indeed, Jesus Christ died so that we could enter into the Holy place regardless of our failures. We are told repeatedly to take possession of Christ by faith despite all of our failures. Indeed, the only way in which victory is possible is if we first put ourselves aside -- and solely on the basis of Jesus Christ -- take possession by faith of all that He is, and all that He has done.

Why did Israel refuse to take possession of the Promised Land? Hebrews says that it was because of UNBELIEF. But if you read the account, their unbelief was that instead of trusting God despite their weakness, they stumbled over their weakness. Their weakness in comparison to the enemies in that land was not a surprise

to God. But He told them to enter in by faith IN HIM – despite their utter inability to live in that land. He tells us the same thing today: Enter into the fullness of Christ despite what YOU are. Enter in on the basis of Jesus Christ.

Seeing the Truth

Victory in Christ is FAITH IN CHRIST despite the fact that there is nothing about me that merits it. Victory is when I refuse to allow anything about myself to keep me out of His promises. His promises were never based upon anything about me to begin with. They were always based upon HIM.

Regarding trials, victory in Christ is not so much that I have gotten out of a trial, or solved it. Rather victory in Christ is when the trial can do nothing to get between myself and God. The obstacles in the Christian life we encounter all boil down to some version of ONE obstacle: Unbelief. That is why the Bible is able to say that FAITH is the victory.

If we realize that we are seated in Christ, then we will see that this is the battle: Unbelief vs. faith. For if we see we are seated in Christ, we will know the real battle is already won. Not maybe. It is. Thus, the real battle is that we believe God and surrender and embrace His victory – which amounts to letting God have victory over US. We must be shaped by God in accordance with His will and purpose. Then we will reign and rule with Him from the seat of Christ.

It is one thing to be seated IN Christ, but another to actually reign and rule with Him from that seat. If I am to reign and rule, the seat must become a throne. What makes this possible is that I be changed. To the extent that Christ rules in me, I rule through Christ.

This is overcoming. Overcoming happens when God gets His will IN ME. I refuse to allow any form of unbelief to come between God and myself – I overcome unbelief with FAITH. And the basis for this is that I see that I am already seated in Christ.

The Word of Faith Heresy

The Word of Faith heresy is based upon a complete misrepresentation of this Truth about our being seated in Christ. Those who teach this heresy will often quote the scriptures that tell us about being seated in Christ. Then they will say that we have authority from Christ to do this or that in His name. They will say that we simply need to speak out the Truth – the Word of Faith -- and things will happen.

This is a denial of the Cross. It is through the work of the personal Cross that you and I are brought into an inward realization of Jesus Christ – and are able to manifest Him. It is through the work of the Cross that we are reduced to utter weakness and dependence upon God – and only then can God work through us. It is through the work of the Cross that we not only realize we are seated in Christ, but we are able to live by faith from that position.

Without the work of the personal Cross, you would have believers exercising great authority from out of soul power. Without the work of the personal Cross, believers would seek to bring to pass the interests of man, and not the interests of God. It is only if we lose our lives under the work of the personal Cross that there is any power able to work through us -- and even then, there is no power in the life of the Christian but the power of Christ, and the power of Christ does ONLY the will of God.

The Word of Faith heresy says very little about the work of the personal Cross. It is blind to the reality of the Living Christ within. Instead, the focus is upon the authority of the believer. But there is no such thing. There is only Christ, who is the power of God, living in and through us to HIS glory.

Victory in Christ Jesus

Victory in Christ is already complete. Christ is already seated at the right hand of God above ALL. Indeed, if we are in Christ, we are seated IN HIM. This is finished.

But we have to be brought to where we see it and live it. That is only possible if our weakness is exposed. Then, if we embrace the Truth, our faith will be solely in Christ.

FAITH in Him is what makes His finished victory ours in a way that can be experienced.

Victory is found in a PERSON. It is not a, “thing,” or merely a position. It is only as the Person of Christ is unfolded to us that His victory will be unfolded. God wants to bring us into an inward realization of His Son, and if that happens, all the victory that is in Christ can be revealed in us.

Chapter 23

The Hope of Glory

Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily. (Col. 1:26-29)

Christianity is, "**Christ in you.**" (Col. 1:27) But you will notice that attached to, "Christ in you," is the phrase, "The hope of glory." The word, "hope," that is translated in the English NT means, "a positive and confident expectation." Thus, it carries no sense of uncertainty as the word often does today. No. "Hope," speaks of an expectation based on the Truth that I know. Thus, we have, "Christ in you, the expectation of glory."

Can we see that Paul was talking about the present reality of Christ in the believer – but was pointing towards a greater realization? In Romans, he defines his usage of this word, "hope." He says, "**For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for if a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.**" (Rom. 8:24-25) In short, Christ in us during this age is all unto something that will not be fully seen until the next age. That is why Christ in us is our HOPE of glory.

Christ in us NOW is, "the hope of glory." But all through the NT, we are told that this, "hope of glory," is unto, "the REALIZATION of the fullness of His glory." And we are directly involved. In fact, Paul says, "**For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us...for the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.**" (Rom. 8:18-19)

Note: His glory – not our glory – but HIS glory is to be revealed, not merely TO US, but actually IN US. This is the full manifestation of the sons of God – when Christ,

who is NOW the, "hope of glory," will be fully manifested IN HIS PEOPLE as the full, "realization of the God's glory."

This is the purpose towards which God is working through the indwelling of Christ in us NOW. It is the inheritance of God's people – the full realization of Jesus Christ in us – in a resurrected body THEN.

Face to Face

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1 Cor. 13:12)

Here we see another contrast between the experience of those in Christ during THIS age, and what will be the case in the NEXT age. ***"NOW, see through a glass darkly, but THEN face to face."*** See what? See Jesus Christ. God.

The glass through which we see Jesus Christ now is natural man. Not necessarily sinful man, but natural man. Even though Christ dwells in the believer, and this does equip us with the capacity to grow to see Jesus Christ, in this age, and in this body, we will never be completely free from the natural. In one way or another, we are going to see Christ through -- and even interpret Him through -- what we are in our natural man. Much of the Christian life is a matter of God setting us free from doing so. But in the end, this is why faith is so vital.

But 1 Cor. 13 we are told about the future. The last phrase in the above verse says it all: ***"THEN I shall know even as also I am known."*** During this age, there are times when I cannot see God. There are other times when I do not see Him clearly. But regardless, God sees me. Right now, I am known by God. We are being told that there will come a point at which all of the natural will be transformed and we will know God and His Son, Jesus Christ, face to face – we will know God as He already knows us.

Little children will often cover their eyes if they are shy – somehow they think that if they cannot see you, that you cannot see them. But note: In their innocent attempt to keep you from seeing them, they block their ability to see you. It is like this with God – if we think we are keeping

Him from seeing us we are only blocking our own ability to see Him. This is why coming into the light and confessing our sin and need is vital – if we open ourselves to God it does nothing to help Him see us. But it makes it possible for us to see Him. There will always be limitations in this age. But God wants us to open to Him NOW, for it is His will for us to see Him THEN, face to face.

What is being described here is what it means to have God, and His Son, Jesus Christ fully revealed IN US. If we are ***joined to the Lord NOW (1 Cor. 6:17)***, we are still encumbered by this natural. But at the resurrection, the natural body will be no more. We will be released from it and be able to fully experience the fullness of Jesus Christ – through the means of a resurrected body. In effect, there will no longer be a dark glass through which to experience the Lord. We will see Him and experience Him face to face.

"THEN I shall know even as also I am known." That is an unbelievable promise. God knows me so thoroughly that to Him, whether I sense it or not, I am as if totally transparent. ***"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."*** (Heb. 4:13) We are being promised that when these things come to pass, we shall know GOD in this very same way that He knows us. God is NOW preparing us for such a revelation, indeed, for such a life in Himself.

When He Shall Appear

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

The verse could be paraphrased, "It has never yet been made manifest what we shall be, but we know that when what we are in Christ is manifested, that it will be out of His likeness, and that this will enable us to see Him as He is." This is based on the original Greek. It is an awesome thought. If you think about this, it means that what will be manifested is the new creature that we are in Christ – Christ FULLY manifested through us -- without the limits of the natural.

This is the same Truth we saw in *1 Cor. 13:12*: ***"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."*** And, ***"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."*** (*1 Cor. 2:9*)

These are tremendous promises that are spoken of throughout the NT. They speak of God's eternal purposes for the ages yet to come – this is what He is preparing for His saints. Thus, it does behoove us to grasp the Truth about how God is now doing this in Christ.

God is preparing us NOW – through the revealing of Christ in us – for that day when all will come into fullness. Again -- "It has never yet been made manifest what we shall be, but we know that when what we are in Christ is manifested, that it will be out of His likeness, and that this will enable us to see Him as He is." What we are in Christ is not yet fully seen – because we cannot fully realize Christ. But God is already working to make a home in us for Christ. The groundwork for eternal oneness with God is being laid in this age. But then, in the resurrection, we will see Christ just as He is – and because He is already revealed in us during this age, we will come into a full realization of Christ, and fully manifest Him through the resurrected body in the next age.

Hopefully, we can see that this is not about our glory. It is about His glory. We don't have any glory – and by the time God is done with us, we will not only realize this, but we won't want any glory. But we are the recipients of all that He is. Then He is able to live through us. We get to know HIM, see HIM face to face, and fully realize HIM. This is the glory – HIS glory – that is to be revealed IN US.

Note that John states that in this age, "it does not yet appear what we shall be." Can we see that even though our true identity in Christ can certainly be described in general terms that our true identity cannot be fully discovered in this age? Yet there are entire movements and ministries and lines of teaching today in the church that are focused upon discovering an identity that we are told by John does not yet appear, and thus, that we cannot know. It has even been stated by some that the

key to freedom for a Christian is to discover our true identity in Christ. No. The key to true freedom is to discover Jesus Christ, or if you will, to discover His true identity in us. That is what God is revealing NOW.

The Body of His Glory

For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. (Phil 3:20-21)

This passage is not translated well. It could read, "Who shall fashion our present limited bodies to conform to the body of His glory." The last part of the passage suggests that this fashioning has begun NOW – but that it is all unto the point where, at the resurrection, we will be clothed upon with a body that is able to contain and manifest HIS GLORY. In short, Christianity in this age is, "Christ in you, the HOPE of glory, but then, at the resurrection, there is no more need for hope, so it will be, "Christ in us, the REALIZATION OF HIS GLORY."

There are a number of ways to say the same thing. We might say that today, through the forming of Christ in us, that we are being prepared to fully contain and manifest the fullness of Christ in a resurrected body. By comparison, this is limited in our natural, or, "vile," body – we are joined to the Lord in spirit for this age – and can manifest Him to a certain extent. But it is only then that our body will be one that can fully contain and manifest Him.

It is little wonder why the apostle Paul could barely find the words to express the purpose of God for His people. One place he tried was in Romans 8:

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Rom 8:17-18)

There are a number of expressions in the Bible that seem a little odd to our way of speaking. For example, Paul says we are, "in Christ." He says there is life, **"in Christ Jesus."** (*John 1:4*) These seem odd to us because we tend to think of things in physical terms. Paul is speaking spiritually – when he says we are, "in Christ," he is referring to our spiritual oneness with Him. And when he says that life is, "in Christ Jesus," he is talking about Christ being the living source of all life.

In the above passage is another one of those expressions. Paul speaks of glory that will be revealed IN US. What does that mean? Well, as noted, it goes back to the fact that the core of Christianity is, **"Christ in us, the HOPE of glory."** (*Col. 1:27*) In other words, Christ already dwells in us – and HE is the hope of the glory spoken of by Paul in Romans 8. How so? If **Christ is being FORMED in us** (*Gal. 4:19*), and we are being **formed together with Him** (*Rom. 8:29*), then this is setting the stage for the time when, "we may be glorified together," with Him. In other words, He is creating IN US a spiritual union with Himself – much of it through suffering -- that is wonderful now -- although it will be released only to fullness in the eternal ages.

The Body of Christ

God is working His purpose in individuals so that He can have a purpose through the collective Body of Christ. Never get this backwards – Christ is first in you personally. That is the only reason you are in His Body. You cannot get saved, or right with God, by going first to the Body. No. Christ must be in YOU. Christ is being formed first in individuals. That is the only reason Christ can then be seen in His greater Body.

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him. (Eph. 1:9-10)

This passage is telling us that it is the purpose of God to gather all things in Christ – the meaning of which is to glue them all together by the Person of His Son, in the perfect will of God. Things cannot be gathered or glued

within the will of God in any other way. In fact, God will unglue all else.

The Body of Christ that is formed in this age is to be an instrument of God's greater redemption in the next: "***That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.***" (Eph. 2:7) The plan of God is rooted here, in this age, but it has a never-ending, and far-reaching impact in the ages yet to come.

Chapter 24

Sonship and Inheritance

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. (Eph. 1:1)

We have seen that God has freely given us all things in His Son. There is nothing that God has to give except it is already given IN His Son. And we receive all of Jesus Christ. Christ dwells IN US.

The Christian life, therefore, is NOT a matter of earning MORE of Jesus -- rather, the Christian life is a matter of you and I DISCOVERING more of the Christ that we have ALREADY received in fullness. So in other words, we receive all of HIM and we receive all that is IN HIM -- but then we grow in the grace and knowledge of the One whom we have received in fullness.

Primary to what we will discover as we discover Christ is the fact that IN HIM we are sons and daughters of God. And because we are children of God, we are co-heirs with Christ. In Christ, God has given a great eternal inheritance. Most of that will be experienced in the eternal ages. But because Christ dwells in us NOW by the spirit of God, we do begin to experience inheritance in Christ NOW.

Adoption

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. (Eph. 1:5)

Here Paul gives us, not a doctrine of unconditional election – for that is a false doctrine – but Paul states the purpose for those who ARE saved. The purpose for those that God HAS joined to Jesus Christ is that we should be, ***“adopted as His children BY Jesus Christ.”***

Let's talk about ADOPTION. Adoption of children, in New Testament times -- which is the time in which Paul wrote - - meant something different than it means today. And this is important. Today when we think of adoption -- under normal circumstances -- what we think of is someone who has been brought into your family through the adoption law -- someone who wasn't born into your family. In other

words, they are not -- as far as bloodline goes -- your son or daughter. You needed to go through legal channels to bring them into the family -- and we call that adoption. But in the New Testament times -- which is the meaning here that Paul is getting at -- it meant something else. In New Testament times, adoption was applicable only to those who were **ALREADY** legitimate sons and daughters through natural birth.

So what we have here are sons and daughters who **WERE** born into a family through natural birth. They are descendants through a bloodline. But when these sons and daughters came of age, and were then able, as mature individuals, to take possession and be responsible for, and live in, the inheritance of that family -- **THEN** they were said to be **ADOPTED**.

So what Paul is saying here is that if you are already joined to the Lord, and born from above, you **ALREADY ARE** a son or daughter of God through Jesus Christ. And God has **PREDESTINED** those who are **ALREADY** in Christ to come in to an inheritance that they can be responsible for, and live in. That is called **ADOPTION**.

So it is only those who are already in Christ as sons and daughters that can come into an actual possession and experience of God's inheritance in Christ. And at the point in their maturity where God determines that they are able to do that -- that is called **ADOPTION**. That's what God means by that term.

Inheritance is IN Christ Jesus

According to Paul, God desires that, **"we come into the adoption as His children BY Jesus Christ to Himself?"**

What does he mean, "BY Jesus Christ?" He means that we are only sons and daughters **IN THE SON**. Sure. We have already seen that we are joined to Jesus Christ and one spirit with Him. Christ dwells **IN US**. And we have likewise seen that everything that God has to give He has given **IN CHRIST**. In short, it is solely because we are **ONE** with Christ that we are sons and daughters -- and it is solely because we are **ONE** with Christ that we are co-heirs with Him of God's eternal inheritance.

Here is one way to actually describe the entire plan and purpose of God -- in terms of adoption and inheritance:

**There is God the Father,
THEN
There is the only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ,
BUT THEN
There are all of those who are IN Jesus Christ, who is
only begotten Son of God.**

Now that's inheritance. That's the plan and purpose of God. It's a family description, isn't it?

So again -- we are seeing that there is God, who is the Father -- the Son -- and all who are IN the Son. That is God's family. That is God's family plan of inheritance.

Sons and Daughters IN The Son

God's plan and purpose for the eternal ages is a family plan of inheritance IN and THROUGH Jesus Christ. It is God's intention for His sons and daughters to come into the fullness of Jesus Christ, and thus, to come UNTO adoption as children of God by Jesus Christ.

Again we see that we receive NOTHING except it be in Christ. It isn't simply that we get an inheritance, "in addition to Christ." No. What this is describing is God saying to us, "I have given to you ALL of My Son, an IN CHRIST is ALL inheritance that I HAVE to give. Now, grow to know HIM. Grow to experience HIM -- because it is IN HIM is all of the inheritance."

The inheritance that God has for us -- at the core -- IS the Person of Jesus Christ. HE is our inheritance. How many know that in the Bible, very often, it says that, "The Lord is our inheritance?" That's was a type and a shadow seen in the Promised Land -- when God gave them that land. But how many understand that if Jesus Christ is our inheritance, then all that God has given IN HIM is likewise, by extension, part of that inheritance? You cannot bypass the Christ IN WHOM is the inheritance, and somehow go straight to the inheritance that is in Him. No. IN CHRIST God has given us all things. You have to come into a fullness of HIM.

All in Christ and Christ in All

Paul goes on to describe the eternal purpose of God in the fullest and broadest sense. This is the purpose for

which Christ dwells in the believer, and it is the purpose for which the believer is growing to know Christ. He says in Ephesians 1:10 what that purpose is:

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, GOD MIGHT GATHER TOGETHER IN ONE ALL THINGS IN CHRIST, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in HIM.

This is God's eternal plan and purpose: That God might gather together all things in His Son.

What does it mean? Well, first of all, it certainly is talking about everything being brought under the headship of Jesus Christ as Lord. How many understand that in a broad sense of the word, REDEMPTION is a matter of God gathering all -- at least all who will respond, because some won't -- REDEMPTION is a matter of God gathering all together in His Son; under His Son as Lord? And THEN -- to reign and rule with Him -- as extensions of Him; as vessels He can use throughout the eternal ages.

God has begun doing that right now. When you are joined to the Lord at salvation, and made one spirit with Him, then you have, so to speak, been gathered up into Christ. You have been apprehended for the great purpose of God and have been brought into His inheritance as a son or daughter.

The Realization of His Glory

We are not, in this age, in this human frame in which we exist, able to fully experience His fullness now -- even though we can begin to experience Him spiritually.

Paul talks about that limitation. In fact, he refers to Christ in us through the spirit of God as, "the earnest of our inheritance."

That word, "earnest," in verse 14, means, "down payment." But note exactly what Paul says about this, "down payment:" He says that we have this, "earnest of our inheritance," UNTIL... UNTIL what? "Until the redemption of the purchased possession." What is he talking about?

He is saying that, "Christ in us" -- by the means of the Holy Spirit -- is the down payment NOW of a greater

inheritance experience. This agrees completely with his statement, ***"Christ in you, the HOPE of glory."*** That points towards the future. In other words, Christ in us by the means of the spirit of God is our, "present age experience." But that is our experience UNTIL a greater hope and realization. It is UNTIL we have resurrected bodies. And at that point our entire being will come under the Redemption. We will be raised in Christ with glorified bodies. And then you see, we will be released from this body and have a full experience of Jesus Christ -- in a way that in this age is not possible.

We saw this in the prior chapter from I John 3:2

"Beloved, NOW(in this present age)we are the sons of God.And (in this present age) it does not YET appear what we shall be (at the resurrection). But we know that when HE shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

We saw that this is the true meaning of John's promise:

Beloved it has never yet been made fully manifest what we shall be. But we know that when what we are in Christ is manifested -- that it will be out of His likeness -- and that this will enable us to see Him as He is.

"Christ in you, the HOPE of glory" -- at that point in time it is going to be, "Christ in us, the REALIZATION of HIS glory. It is going to be the realization of the glory of Christ in you and I -- in His fullness -- but also manifested THROUGH you and I in His fullness.

This will be our full realization of Jesus Christ, and all that is in Him. And primary to the inheritance that God has for us is this very full realization of God through Christ. HE is our inheritance. But it is through this full realization of Christ that we can likewise live in all that God has given HIM -- the full inheritance of God. The Father, the only begotten Son, and all who are IN the Son. This is God's family plan of inheritance.

Chapter 25

Eternal Rewards

One of the greatest delusions of the Body of Christ involves the expectation of REWARDS from God. Millions of professing Christian people expect God to REWARD them for how they live. They expect that reward NOW -- but they expect it once they die. Indeed, I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say that many Christian people actually think they are ENTITLED to a reward from God. For many, this expectation of a reward is actually their motivation for following Jesus Christ.

God has an eternal inheritance for us in Christ. This is really our REWARD. And our eternal inheritance, at the core, is our oneness in Christ. Oneness in Christ by the spirit of God is, in this age, the down payment on the inheritance. And the down payment is always representative of the fullness.

Reward

The Greek word commonly translated, "reward," in the NT does overlap the English word meaning. But it can be expanded to mean, "recompense, or wages." In short, the REWARD is not simply something I get in return for something I do. Rather, it is the OUTCOME of what I do.

To us, in English, a, "reward," from God is something we receive in return for something we do. We usually always think of this reward as a positive thing – it is a positive pay back that we have earned by our works. Indeed, despite the fact that most Christians realize that we cannot earn salvation from God, many nevertheless believe that we can earn a reward from God. The basis for this claim is usually verses that say that we will be, "rewarded according to our works." What emerges is the notion that we are saved by grace alone, but that once we are saved by grace, we will be rewarded, not according to grace, but according to the works we do as saved people.

The problem with this teaching, aside from the fact that it is contrary to scripture, is that it simply creates another kind of legalism. Rather than base your salvation upon your works, you base everything WITHIN salvation upon your works. The life that results from this is the same – one based on your works; one that is under the law. The

bondage that results from trying to earn a greater reward from God is just as much bondage as one that is lived trying to earn salvation.

All in Christ

God has wrapped up everything that He has for humankind in His Son. Anyone who questions this does not understand the Word of God, indeed, does not understand God Himself. There is nothing that God has for us that is not found in Jesus Christ, and there is nothing outside of Christ that is the goal of God. Many of the problems of the Christian church arise when this one Truth is distorted.

Well, what does any of this have to do with rewards? Plenty. If we are to understand what God means when He mentions rewards, we have to understand that ALL REWARDS are found in His Son, Jesus Christ. Rewards are not given in addition to Christ. No. Whatever I think God has for me in the form of a reward is already found in Christ.

But wait. Do we earn Christ? No. We receive Christ solely by grace. Indeed, Paul stated, "God has given us all thing freely in His Son." (Rom. 8:32) Once we read these verses, and believe them, we can no longer speak of the necessity of earning anything from God. We cannot earn, and must not try to earn, what God has freely given in Christ.

What we call a REWARD is actually a result, or a wage, that is the outcome of experiencing Christ. In other words, the REWARD is really equal to the INHERITANCE. Is Christ Himself not our reward; our inheritance? The Bible often says that, "The Lord is your reward." What could be a greater reward for following Christ than Christ Himself?

This Truth about rewards is actually imbedded within a statement that Jesus made to His disciples: "He that would seek to save his life will lose it, but he that loses his life for My sake will find it." Paul tells us that Jesus Christ IS our life – and so the life that Jesus is promising we will find is HIMSELF. If we lose our lives, we will experience Christ as our life. But everything is in LIFE.

So as we experience Christ we will experience all that is in HIM, including rewards.

Jesus might have just as well said, "He that would try to earn a reward from Me will lose it, but he that would relinquish all of himself, including any reward, for My sake, will find it." In short, to the extent that we try to earn a reward from Christ our heart is not right with Him – thus no experiencing of Christ is possible. But to the extent that we freely give ourselves to Christ to the complete disregard of any reward – it is to that extent that He is free to give us a reward. Why? Because to the degree that we unconditionally give ourselves to Christ we are faithful.

Faithfulness means that I freely give myself to Christ – without strings attached. I give myself to Him even if it doesn't pay me. I am living for Him – not for a reward – but for Himself. But if that is the case, I can freely receive what God freely gives – I can receive any reward God desires to give me. In contrast, if I am serving Christ for a reward, I am being faithful only to myself. I am not being faithful to Him. I cannot freely receive from God because I am not freely giving myself to Him.

Never divorce a reward from Christ from Christ Himself. No. The reward IS Christ Himself – a greater experience of Him. Then everything else emerges from Him – responsibility or possession throughout the eternal ages. These are all in Him, and found only in Him.

The Fire

There are many places in scripture that teach the Truth about rewards. We could turn to any number of the parables of Jesus. The one that comes to mind is the parable of the laborers in the vineyard from Matthew 20. This parable is a direct answer to Peter's question, "We have left everything to follow you, Jesus, so what will we receive as a reward?" Jesus tells the parable to show that if we serve God for a reward we will never value God Himself, and as a result, we will even resent the very reward for which we were serving Him. The point is that even if our reward is not diminished, WE will be diminished -- because the reward was our goal, and not Christ Himself. And we will not value the reward.

Another passage is found in I Corinthians 3. There Paul directly speaks to this idea of a reward as the outcome of ministry. Especially note verse 8, which reads, **"Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor."** The point Paul is making, first of all, is that despite the fact that all in the Body are fellow-laborers, the reward of EACH is based on the, "labor," of EACH – it is based on the individual. There is no reward here by proxy.

According to verses 10-13, the reward is going to be determined by WHAT and HOW a person builds upon the foundation – which is Jesus Christ. The picture given is that of ministry building upon Christ, which results in the house of God – Paul later says that WE are the temple, or house, of God. So the question becomes, "What are we building upon Christ – in the lives of His people, indeed in our own life? What kind of materials are being used, and what is the spiritual structure made of?"

According to the grace of God that is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. For no other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. (1 Cor. 3:10-15)

You will note that the whole issue here boils down what the building is MADE OF. There are, on the one hand, materials that cannot pass through the fire. There are, on the other hand, materials that CAN. That is a picture of what is OF MAN – and temporal – over and against that which is OF CHRIST – and is eternal. The eternal cannot, "burn," but abides. Everything else is burnt. And the, "reward," is directly based on whether what passes through the fire is of Christ, and abides.

Have we realized that all that is going to remain when God is finished is that which is of Christ? People glory in the big ministries they have built – they even will say God did it – but have we realized that everything that is material and temporal having to do with that ministry is going to pass away? All that will remain, and all that is of any value at all, is whatever is of Christ.

Now, don't misunderstand. When I say what will remain is only OF CHRIST, I am not saying that what will remain is what Christ built, or what we built for Him. No. I am saying that all that will remain is that which is of the Person of Christ Himself – that which is HIS LIFE and HIS TRUTH. Eternal values. If the foundation of the building is Christ Himself, then all that is built upon it must be an extension of Him; a manifestation of Him. You cannot have a building upon a foundation that is contrary to the foundation. No. What is built UPON CHRIST must be Christ – it must be in fellowship and oneness with Him. A house divided against itself cannot stand.

So God is saying that everything that we have built upon Christ is going to pass through a symbolic fire – and it will be exposed for what it really is. That which is of Christ will abide. That which is not will not abide. And the reward will apply only to that which is of Christ and abides.

Paul says that if, "any man's work abides through the fire," that this man will receive a reward. Sure. For all that can abide the fire is Christ – and all rewards are found in Him. Thus, if my fellowship with Christ is real, and I am one with Him, this will abide all manner of fire, and the result will be eternal fellowship with Him, and all the blessings that come with Him. If what I have built is NOT of Christ, then nothing will remain, although my salvation will remain.

All rewards are found in the Person of Jesus Christ. Thus, only to the degree that we are FOUND IN HIM, and to the degree that we are in real fellowship with Him, can any blessings or rewards be experienced. This is not about PAY BACK or MERITS. It is about the outcome of living in Christ.

The Goal

The goal of the Christian life is to know and experience Christ, resulting in the glory of God being made manifest in and through us. This is what we are to build – i.e., allow God to build in and through us. This is faithfulness to God. It is likewise the reward – to experience Christ Himself. To the degree that we become vessels for God's will and glory – this will be the degree to which we will be able to experience Christ and experience all of the spiritual blessings that are found in Him. Thus, our reward is Christ. But then as the outcome of life in Him, He can give us responsibilities in His eternal kingdom.

Chapter 26

The Kingdom of God

What is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is the reign or rule of God. It is not a place or a people, but the kingdom of God is rule of God OVER any places and people. Or to put it another way, if Jesus Christ is my personal Lord then I am IN the kingdom of God because I am under His rule.

Entering the kingdom of God, in the Bible, is synonymous with salvation. Indeed, we must be BORN FROM ABOVE to enter the kingdom; to see the kingdom of God. But notice what this really means: It means that salvation equals coming under the rule of God. The two are as one. There is no such thing in the Bible as a salvation that does not go hand in hand with coming under the rule of God. Jesus is Savior, but He is Lord – there is no other salvation God has to offer.

Jesus is Lord

The kingdom of God must have a KING. According to scripture, God has put all things under His Son, Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus is the King of the kingdom. But this makes Jesus LORD of all who are under Him in that kingdom.

Jesus said, ***“The kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:21)*** And we have seen that Christianity is CHRIST IN YOU. Thus, Jesus Christ IN US – as our personal Lord -- is the personification of the kingdom of God. He is our King and He is our Lord. That is why we are in His kingdom.

Seeking First the Kingdom

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Mat 6:31-33)

When we think of seeking the kingdom of God we usually think of seeking to POSSESS it. But once we realize that

the kingdom of God is the RULE of God our thinking ought to change. We will see that to seek first the kingdom of God means to seek first the RULE of God. In short, we are to seek first God's will and sovereignty over us. We are to lose ourselves to Jesus Christ our Lord.

In Matthew 6 Jesus said that we must seek first the kingdom of God. But He said that if we did so that all else that we need would be added. Thus, if Jesus is my Lord then He is free to provide for me all that is in keeping with His specific plan and purpose.

This Truth is found in the above verses. These verses conclude the longer passage of Matthew 6:19-34. If you read this passage, you will find that Jesus is talking about our basic needs for living, and God's desire to provide. But the fullness of God's will in this regard has a condition attached to it. Jesus says, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Why does He attach this condition? Because it is only IN CHRIST – who is the personification of the kingdom of God – that God has given us all things. If we disregard Christ or His Lordship over us, then God is normally not going to provide. No. If you want God to add to you, "all these things," you have to seek first the kingdom in Christ – for Christ contains, "all these things."

There is a Truth in this passage that is, quite frankly, awesome. It is one that is impossible to ignore if you want to continue walking with Jesus Christ. In one sentence, Jesus completely prioritizes true life in Christ. He says SEEK FIRST the kingdom of God. And He promises if we do, that God will take care of all else that we need.

God is promising us that if we lose our lives to Jesus Christ – which is the ultimate way of seeking first the kingdom – that what we will find is Christ as our life, and all that is in Christ. In Christ, God has freely given us all things.

The Right Basis

When a Christian tries to walk with God on the wrong basis, there will be confusion and other consequences. What do I mean by the WRONG basis? I mean that many

of us try to walk with God, not in Spirit and Truth, but in flesh and error. Instead of walking with God in the light, we walk in darkness, and then try to get God to join us. Instead of seeking to find the will of God, we try to get God to affirm our will. Instead of realizing God's purpose is Christ, we make His purpose US. Instead of losing our lives to find them in Christ, we seek to save our lives for ourselves, and then try to get God to help us. Instead of walking in faith, we walk in unbelief. Maybe the most common wrong basis is this: That of our OWN righteousness. Christians by the thousands, in ways that they don't even realize, try to walk with God on the basis of their own righteousness, instead of upon the righteousness of Christ. We walk under law instead of under grace. This is an appalling fact.

But it is always God's will to guide us into the Truth. Thus, if we are NOT walking in the Truth, God is not usually going to do anything to affirm it. This command of Jesus to SEEK FIRST the kingdom is a case in point. If Jesus says, ***"Seek first His kingdom....and all these things will be added,"*** do we imagine that if we seek first, "all these things," that God is going to give them to us, and then somehow tack on the kingdom?

What I'm saying is that if we violate scripture and the promises of God we are IN ERROR. God won't join us. He is the Truth. The only way in which we can walk in these Truths is to believe and obey God.

I would never say that God, in His mercy, would not provide for His people –especially if we are ignorant. But even then His goal will be to eventually guide us into the Truth. And there is no question that if believers serve mammon that they may prosper themselves. But their provision won't be from God. So provision is not always a sign of being in God's will, anymore than a lack thereof is a sign that we are out of God's will.

But if we are NOT seeking first the kingdom of God, at some point we are going to meet a crossroads with regards to God's provision. God is NOT forever going to add to us all things if we are NOT seeking first His kingdom – if we are, in fact, seeking the things of this life. He won't.

Seek First

Realizing the true nature of the kingdom of God – that this is Christ in us as Lord – tells us much about what it means to, "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." To seek first the kingdom of God is to seek first the Lordship of Jesus Christ OVER MYSELF – and over all with which I have to do. It means that I continually LOSE my life – which is MY kingdom – in order to FIND HIS. Under this naturally falls obedience. But behind it all is a relationship with God through His Son.

But Jesus as my personal Lord also means something else. It means that the will of God for my life, indeed, in any situation, is absolutely guaranteed. God's will is FIRST a relationship between Himself and us with Jesus as our Lord. But if that relationship is unfolding, then God's will is free to unfold UNDER HIM. God's will is that Christ be manifested in and through His people. That is always the outcome of seeking first His kingdom.

What I am saying is this: If we come under Jesus as our Lord – seek first His kingdom – the will of God is guaranteed as the kingdom is manifested. This is absolute. But if we don't seek first the kingdom, His will shall not be manifested.

Read the Lord's prayer. Jesus said to pray, ***"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done."*** There it is. There is no complete will of God outside of His kingdom. Indeed, we are seeing that God's kingdom IS brought to pass when His will comes to pass. And visa versa. The two are as one.

I mentioned earlier how Christians try to walk with God on the wrong basis. Here is the big example I noted. If we ask God for a THING we think is His will, yet are not willing to seek first His kingdom, or come under His rule, we are in error. We cannot walk with Christ and get far under such deception.

The Coming Kingdom

Herein we see a great and sobering Truth. Christian people often talk about the day Jesus comes back and sets up His kingdom. They expect to reign and rule with Him in it. But that cannot happen if Jesus is not reigning

and ruling IN US and OVER US now. Sure. If we are not NOW seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness, do we seriously think that when Jesus comes back that we are going to be handed His kingdom – to reign and rule with Him. Never.

There is a principle in this that is vital to see: To the extent that Jesus Christ is Lord over me now, I am reigning and ruling with Him now. That will correlate to my place in Him THEN. This is not about rules, merits, and earning rewards. No. Rather, it is about RELATIONSHIP with God through Christ. To the extent that I lose my life – relinquish my self-rule – I am able to find HIS life, and thus reign and rule with Him.

Read the many parables of Jesus that speak directly to this matter. Read how often people expect to receive a reward, or to be given authority, but who are completely deceived. They never allowed Jesus to be their personal Lord. And then they thought that He was going to hand them authority in His kingdom. He says, "I never knew you," or something that means the same thing. Again – you have to come under Jesus as Lord. You have to LOSE your life to find HIS. We cannot neglect these Truths. We will live to regret it if we do.

God's Will

To seek first God's kingdom is God's will is NOT OPTIONAL. Have we realized this? It is not simply what we need to do if we expect God to toss a few bucks our way once in a while. No. If we want to be in the will of God and seeking the Truth, we must seek first God's kingdom and righteousness.

But notice what else is NOT OPTIONAL: That God would provide all things. If we want to walk with Jesus Christ we are going to have to depend upon God for all things. There is no other Christian life. Indeed, I submit that there is no other possible outcome of seeking Jesus Christ than for us to come to the place of absolute dependence upon Him.

So what we have are two things – really one thing – that is God's stated will: That we seek Him first in all things, and for all things, and that He provide for us all things. Or to say it another way, God wants us to depend upon Him

for everything – to live from OUT OF HIM. And the result will be His provision.

Let me say this again: There is no other possible Christian walk IN TRUTH. There just isn't. The kingdom of God – Jesus as Lord – is a REALITY. We either live in it or we don't.

What we are seeing in all of this is that God wants ALL of us so that He can give us ALL of Himself. There isn't any middle ground. You cannot come to God only for help. You cannot come to God only when you need Him. You have to seek first the full Lordship of Jesus Christ over you – including over the matter that is at hand, but for everything else. A Christian, by definition, BELONGS to God and has been bought with a price. This is not only the Truth for now, but will simply expand throughout the eternal ages. As the OT says, "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." "And of His kingdom there will be NO end."

Chapter 27

The Two Covenants

What is the New Covenant? The New Covenant is simply, **“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”** Sure. The New Covenant IS Christianity -- and Christianity is, **“Christ in you.”** Therefore, the New Covenant is likewise, **“Christ in you.”** Likewise, a Christian is one in whom Christ dwells, and so it ought not be surprising that a person must be IN CHRIST, that is, have Christ IN them, in order for them to be under the New Covenant.

This definition of the New Covenant becomes all the more clear once we see the difference between the Old and New Covenants. In His Word, God Himself has told us the number one distinction between the two Covenants:

But now has he (Christ) obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he says, Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which is decayed and waxed old is ready to vanish away. (Heb. 8:6-13)

Hebrews 8 is a reference to a prophecy from Jeremiah 31. God is announcing that He intends to make a NEW covenant – one that replaces the OLD. But note upfront that God says that the NEW covenant will be one that is,

"NOT ACCORDING to the OLD." In other words, the New Covenant is DIFFERENT than the old.

In Hebrews 8, God tells us the difference between the Old and New Covenants. He says that the biggest difference between the NEW covenant and the OLD is this: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

According to God, the fundamental difference between covenants is that the NEW Covenant is INWARD. The OLD Covenant was OUTWARD. But that is a rather simple way of stating this difference. Paul the apostle explains further. He reveals that the New Covenant is CHRIST IN YOU. It is through the living Christ within that God writes His law and His mind within people – making His people to be, **"living epistles."**

Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.....which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: (Col 1:25-27)

We enter fully into the New Covenant when we enter into Christ, and thus, Christ enters into US. Get that. CHRIST IN US is the fullness of the New Covenant.

Now, once we see this Truth, we will likewise see the difference between the two covenants. In a nutshell, the Old Covenant was a type and shadow of Jesus Christ. But the New Covenant is the Living Christ Himself dwelling with His people. The Bible affirms:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the substance is Christ." (Col. 2:16-17)

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very reality of the things, can never with

those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. (Heb. 10:1)

Everywhere in the Old Covenant we find Christ – howbeit in type and shadow: The sacrifices, the priesthood, the ordinances, the tabernacle, the holy days, and of course, the law itself. But in the New Covenant we have Christ Himself – in His people.

The Baptism of John

John the Baptist was the last Old Testament prophet. In fact, he embodied the Old Covenant. His ministry was to make a straight path in the wilderness for the Lord -- which is exactly what the Old Covenant did. John actually brought to fullness everything God provided under the Old Covenant. His baptism therefore symbolized salvation under the Old Covenant. This salvation was LEGAL and not LIVING – that is – no one under the Old Covenant had Christ in them; was born again; or was a new creation.

We have already seen the contrast between the Old and New Covenants. Likewise we have seen the CHRIST IN YOU was a great mystery NOT revealed to ages and generations before the time of Paul. Again – the Old Covenant was a type and shadow of Christ. Everything about it pointed to Christ as the future Savior. But it was a covenant of law, and not a covenant of grace unto LIFE.

Once we see the nature of the Old Covenant, this opens up the truth about John's baptism. John's baptism was fully representative of salvation, not under the NEW Covenant, but under the OLD. As such, John's baptism was essentially a baptism into the Old Covenant. It symbolized the death of the old life, but could only anticipate newness of life. Again, it was LEGAL in nature.

Some Christians are confused about that fact. Many believe that John's baptism actually saved people – birthed them anew. And then they believe that those who were saved by John's baptism received a second experience in Acts 2 and later. But this is error. John's baptism did not result in CHRIST WITHIN by the spirit. Indeed, note the clear contrast made between John's baptism, and what Jesus would make possible through His Redemption:

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: (Mat 3:11)

For John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. (Acts 1:5)

Now, if we get nothing else out of these verses, what we do see is that the baptism with the Holy Spirit that Jesus would bring is NOT THE SAME as John's baptism. Can we see that? The two are being contrasted, and Jesus' baptism is stated as SUPERIOR. But how so? In exactly the same way in which the two covenants are contrasted. John's baptism was into the Old Covenant – it was as a type and shadow. But under the New Covenant we are baptized into CHRIST HIMSELF, and this brings the reality of all that God is, and all that God desires.

There is perhaps no clearer a statement to this effect than the one that Jesus made about John:

Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matt. 11:11)

This statement tells us that even John himself was NOT born again into the kingdom of God – not in the sense of the new birth through Christ. Do you see that? John was the greatest of all ever born of WOMAN – of all those ever born into this world through natural birth. That is NOT the new birth. Indeed, the LEAST of those who ARE born again into the kingdom under the New Covenant is greater than John! Thus, John could not have been born again in the New Covenant sense of the word.

Of course, John was saved under the Old Covenant, indeed, he was the full embodiment of it. John will be in heaven, as will all the OT saints. But the, "this life experience," of salvation was not the same for those under the Old Covenant as it was for those under the New. Yes, they were all saved by the same Jesus, and by the same Blood. But for THIS LIFE, they were not born again. They couldn't be. That was possible only once the New Covenant came to pass.

Now, the conclusion here is inescapable. If John, the greatest ever born of natural birth was NOT born again – because the New Covenant had not yet begun – then neither was anyone else born of natural birth ever BORN AGAIN – up until that time! Neither were the disciples of Christ, and neither were any of those people in the book of Acts who said that they had received only, "the baptism of John." Thus, when they did receive the Holy Spirit, it was NOT a second blessing. It was not a second blessing any more than what the disciples received in Acts 2 was a second blessing. Rather, they received CHRIST IN THEM through the Holy Spirit – they received the fullness of the New Covenant.

Baptized Into Christ

God said that the Old Covenant was DIFFERENT from the New Covenant – indeed, God Himself said that the Old Covenant was not without fault because it made no one PERFECT – the Old Covenant could not impart the Living Christ within. But the New Covenant could make believers perfect – Christ within us is our righteousness. Christ in type and shadow could birth no one anew. But Christ in us is our life and salvation.

Jesus likewise said that the spirit of God had been WITH people under the Old Covenant, but would be IN people under the New. Again, the Old Covenant was not the new birth. Christ dwelt in no one under the Old. But the New Covenant IS Christ in us. It is only if He is in us that we are born from above.

And John's baptism, which was for a legal remission of sins, could not birth anyone anew, anymore than the Old Covenant that it represented. But there was held forth the promise of a greater Covenant, and a greater baptism – a baptism with the Holy Spirit, whereby believers would be baptized into the Living Christ. This would be the New Covenant: Christ in you, the hope of glory.

All through the New Testament, God commands believers to stop trying to have a relationship with the shadow of Christ. He bids us to come into a living relationship with Christ Himself. We are no longer under any part of that Old Covenant. If Christ is in us, we are in the New Covenant.

Chapter 28

Law Versus Grace

In the last chapter we saw the distinction between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant: The Old covenant was Jesus Christ in type and shadow. The new covenant is Jesus Christ himself -- indeed, ***"Christ in us, the hope of glory."*** (Col. 1:27)

Understanding this difference between the covenants is necessary if we are to understand law versus grace. For if I am under the law, I am trying to live under the Old Covenant – whether I realize it or not. At best, I am walking with a type and shadow of Christ. But if I am abiding in the Person of Christ by faith, then I am living in the reality of the New Covenant. The difference between the covenants, in large part, is the difference between law and grace.

Purpose of the Law

The Truth of law versus grace is best explained if we turn to ***Romans 3:19***:

Now we know that whatever things that the law says, it says to them who are under the law...

Paul is saying that whatever the law says --whatever the Old Covenant reveals; whatever the Old Covenant teaches – this applies to those UNDER THE LAW. So if I am a person who is trying to keep myself right with God through works then Paul is going to tell me what the law is saying to ME.

Incidentally, Paul also states, ***"You are NOT under the law, but under grace."*** (Romans 6:14) That is the Truth for those in Christ. But many who are in Christ do not walk under grace. They walk under the law. The Galatians did. And so whatever the law says to those who are under the law applies even to believers who, like the Galatians, are walking contrary to the Truth of grace.

And so what is the impact that the law has upon those to whom it is speaking, i.e., to those who are walking UNDER THE LAW? Paul tells us the impact:

That every mouth might be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God.

If you gather up the entirety of the Old Covenant law, and ask the question, "What was God's intent and purpose in giving it?" Paul tells us, right here in this verse. He says, **"That every mouth might be stopped, and the whole world might be EXPOSED as guilty before God."** That's God's intent and purpose in giving the law.

How often have you and I ever been told that? How often have we ever been told that the intent and purpose of God in giving his law was to shut our mouth regarding our own righteousness, and to expose us as a completely barren and dead sinner? That's what Paul is saying.

Now, of course, all of that has a purpose -- and that is, to bring us into the Truth -- not just about ourselves -- but to bring us into the truth of Jesus Christ as the ONLY righteousness, and the ONLY embodiment of grace that God has for us. This is why God gave the Old Covenant.

And then in verse **3:20**, he elaborates: **"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified."** And to, "be justified," means to be, "declared righteous by God." Paul says, **"Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight. For by the law comes the KNOWLEDGE of my sin."** We might even say, "By the law comes the knowledge of my SINFULNESS; my true condition."

This is exactly what we just read in verse 19 that when the law speaks it exposes our true condition before God. The law was given, "to stop every mouth," about our own righteousness, and to show us as being guilty. So in other words, the law was given to EXPOSE our sin. That's the, "knowledge of sin," that Paul is talking about in verse 20. "For by the law...", in other words, is our realization of our sin and of our lost hopeless condition.

What is Wrong With Man?

Now, it is here that we need to see a fundamental truth -- and I think that most Christians probably understand this, at least in their mind -- but I think we continually need to be reminded of it. I think even though we might understand it intellectually, we really don't get it, or we would be trying to do some of the stuff we do. And that foundational truth is this: What is wrong with man is not -
- at the core -- found in what he DOES or DOES NOT DO.

In other words, what is wrong with man -- at the core -- is not found in our works. No. What is wrong with man is found in what he IS -- indeed, what he IS in relationship to GOD.

This is really important to see. Our works are merely a manifestation of something -- they are a manifestation of what we ARE in our alienation from God. Our works are a manifestation of the fact that we are spiritually dead. So you have to get past the works to the core problem: We are dead in trespasses and sins. We have no life in us.

If you ask people what is wrong with man they might say, "Well, man is a sinner." But that doesn't really get to the problem. What is wrong with man is that he's dead -- spiritually -- because he's not joined to the Lord. That's the core problem.

There is a verse in first John three that says that, "**sin is lawlessness**" -- it's *1 John 3:4*. One translation -- I think it's the King James -- says that, "sin is the transgression of the law." Now, even know that is true, that's not what the Greek text says. It's too shallow; it doesn't get at the real thought of the verse. Sin is the transgression of the law, but that verse is actually saying that, "sin is LAWLESSNESS." "Transgression of the law," is DOING -- doing wrong. "Lawlessness," is BEING. And that IS the problem the man has -- what he IS in Adam.

Now, just to follow this term up here -- lawlessness; transgression of the law -- how many see -- and this is what Paul is getting at in so many of his explanations -- how many see the folly of trying to take a lawless creature called MAN and trying to fix him with law? You CAN'T fix a lawless creature with law! The problem is he IS lawless! That's the problem -- you can't change lawlessness into lawfulness by strapping laws on a person. No. In fact, what will happen if you apply law to a lawless creature is exactly what Paul is saying will happen in verses 19 and 20 here out of Romans 3: You apply law to a lawless creature and that law will expose that creature AS lawless, because it'll show, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It'll show our sin. It'll define it. It'll expose it. Now, the law will expose us is lawless dead creatures IF -- and this is a big IF -- IF we are honest. IF we are open to God. If we're not -- well, then the law is not going to expose us as

being dead in sin. We will, in fact, try to use the law to make ourselves righteous.

So the solution for what we are in is not to give us laws to keep. Most of us ought to know that if we have any understanding of the gospel of grace. But there is legalism everywhere in the church today. We still think that what we need to do is keep rules and laws. And believe me I am not saying we're not supposed to obey God. I'm not saying that all right now I'm simply talking about the core need for people born in Adam. It's not to give them a bunch of rules and laws. That will not fix anybody.

Justification By Faith

Paul uses the term, "justification." He says that we must be, "justified by faith." But what does the term, "justified," mean? It means, "to be declared right before God." Now, it is God that declares you RIGHTEOUS.

But let's take it a step further. What does, "righteousness," mean? Well, "righteousness," in essence, means to not only be right BEFORE God -- in His eyes -- but righteousness really means to be right FOR God. It is one thing to be right BEFORE God, but it is another thing to be right FOR Him -- because if you're right FOR HIM, how many understand that you can live with Him and fellowship with him? So when God talks about righteousness, He is talking about being of a nature that is able to fellowship and live with Him. You're right FOR Him -- and justification is a declaration unto that end: You are justified, or made, or declared right FOR GOD -- and of course it is on the basis of Jesus Christ.

Now, therein of course, is where we have our Christian doctrine of, "justification by faith." The doctrine of justification by faith states that if we put our faith in Jesus Christ, God IMPUTES to Christ all of OUR sin, and God imputes to us all of HIS righteousness. And Paul talks a lot about that in Romans. And as far as this doctrine goes, it is the Truth. "Justification by faith," is a very true LEGAL explanation of how God is able to declare a sinner righteous because of Jesus Christ.

Now, you will notice that I use the term LEGAL. Paul works at explaining the redemption from a legal standpoint, because he needs to establish what God is

doing as being moral and legal. It helps us to understand what got accomplished through his Son through His death and resurrection.

So the doctrine of justification by faith -- wherein God IMPUTES to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ -- is true from a LEGAL standpoint. But it does not go far enough. God does not merely IMPUTE to us LEGALLY the righteousness of His Son -- what God really does is IMPART to us Jesus Christ HIMSELF. Christianity is CHRIST IN US; Christ is to BE our life.

How many see that if Christ is in us that because Christ is the embodiment of all righteousness, that Christ in us is a LIVING justification by faith? Christ in us is true righteousness.

I Corinthians 1:30 states that God, “***has made Christ to be unto us...righteousness.***” How many see that that's more than just having the righteousness of Jesus LEGALLY IMPUTED to you? No, if Christ is in us then Christ IS our righteousness. In short, if Christ is in you, then you are righteous with HIS righteousness – He is the righteousness of God IN YOU.

Now, I don't know about you, but that is an incredible blessing to realize that. To realize that this isn't simply a matter, so to speak, of God stamping you on the forehead with a big rubber stamp, "righteous" -- because of the death of Jesus. It isn't simply a matter of that. It is a matter of Christ in you who is the righteousness of God. And because He is, that's an eternal perfect righteousness -- with which you are one, because when you were saved, you were ***joined to the Lord and made one spirit with him. (I Cor. 6:17)***

And so justification by faith is the IMPARTATION of Jesus Christ HIMSELF. We are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him, and He is our living, ever present, eternal, unchangeable righteousness -- completely independent of anything about US or anything that we do.

Righteousness Apart From Works

Paul continues in Romans 3 and says:

But NOW, the righteousness of God, completely apart from law-keeping, is manifested. (Rom. 3:21)

The words, "completely apart," in the NT Greek, give a picture of a great CHASM. So what he is saying here is that, "the righteousness of God, completely apart from -- a chasm removed from any law keeping -- is manifested. And of course, he means that this righteousness that is separate from law-keeping is manifested in the Person of Jesus Christ -- who we receive by faith:

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God that is by faith of Jesus Christ. (Rom. 3:21-22)

And so if Jesus Christ dwells in you and I then we are joined and made one with Him in spirit. But if that is the case, then HE IS the righteousness of God in us. And if is Christ our righteousness then He is our righteousness absolutely independent of any law keeping or lack thereof on our part. And we receive Him solely by grace through faith.

All Unto Grace

The purpose for which God gave the law was to bring man to an end of his own self; to bring man to an end of trying to make himself right for God. As soon as you approach what Paul calls, "a holy, just, and good," law -- as soon as you approach a law like that -- you're going to be proven to be unholy, unjust, and bad. The law will speak the Truth about you -- so that you will see that your only hope is to turn to Jesus Christ by grace through faith. This is the outcome that God intended for the law.

So there you have in Romans 3 a tremendous description by the apostle Paul as to the intent of God's law. The law will SLAY us. But this is all unto the end that we might see that our only hope is a righteousness, indeed, a LIFE, that is NOT OUR OWN -- but which is given to us from above solely by grace. Our righteousness IS Christ.

Seeing that our righteousness is Christ will not lead to a life where we, "sin that grace might abound." No. In fact, we will want to obey God all the more. ***"By grace...through faith...unto good works" (Eph. 2:8-10)*** -- this will be the description of one who lives by faith in Christ. It will never be, "by good works, unto grace or

faith.” In short, Christ in us is the MEANS -- obedience is the outcome.

God has given everything that He has to give in the Person of His Son – with whom believers are one in spirit. We cannot get MORE of Christ through works. But if Christ is in us, then ALL of Christ is in us, and works will emerge. The righteousness of God Who is in us will be made manifest.

Chapter 29

The Last Adam

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. (1 Cor. 15:45)

Adam, the first man, is called THE FIRST ADAM. Jesus Christ is called THE LAST ADAM. Of course, the name, "Adam," means, "man." Man is a distinct type of being that God created in His image and likeness. But this raises an interesting question: How is Christ, "The Last Adam?" He obviously wasn't the last man ever born. So what does that name indicate?

Actually, to discover the answer to that question is to discover a fundamental Truth about the Redemption of Jesus Christ. Indeed, to discover why Jesus is called, "The Last Adam," is to discover the essence of His Redemptive work itself.

In Adam

Let's first talk about Adam. Adam was an individual -- the first man. He isn't an allegory or a picture lesson. He wasn't the product of evolution. Rather, he was a created being -- a man. God created Adam of the dust of the ground and breathed into Him the breath of life. ***He BECAME a living soul. (Genesis 2:7)***

Now note: Adam was created -- and is the ONLY human being ever created directly by God. Everyone else came FROM Adam. First, there was Eve. She wasn't born, but was created FROM Adam. But then everyone else was BORN of Adam and Eve. It is therefore a fact that the human race, through natural birth is born IN ADAM.

God began the human race with Adam -- and when God created him, God said that it was good. In a very real sense, the entire human race, through natural birth, ***IS*** collective Adam -- because together we comprise the Adamic race. We are all OF that original creation of humanity that God began with Adam. We are IN ADAM -- because we have all come FROM Adam.

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ was born as a member of the Adam race. But He was not born OF ADAM in the same way that we are born OF Adam. We are born OF the Adam race. However, Jesus was born INTO the Adam race **from the outside**. Jesus existed before His human birth. At physical birth, He had a human mother, but God was His Father. This is why He had NO sin nature.

So we are beginning to see a relationship between Adam and Jesus Christ. Adam was the original human being, created in God's image. He was the, "first man," or, "first Adam." He was created without a sin nature. But he rejected God and brought his entire race down into death – and this became the sin nature. Thus, IN ADAM all die.

Jesus, however, despite being born of that original Adamic race, did not inherit this sin nature. Thus, we have a SECOND perfect man – come into this world without sin. And Jesus would not fail. He would not sin. He lived a sinless human life and satisfied the heart of God and fulfilled the purpose of God for that ORIGINAL human race.

Do you see this? Where Adam failed – in the original race of man that God designed and created – Jesus succeeded. Jesus was born of the very same original creation God began with Adam, and brought through to God's glory what a human being was supposed to be.

Now we begin to see one reason why Jesus is called THE LAST ADAM – the LAST MAN. He was everything that God intended humankind to be. He lived it to God's glory. In that sense, therefore, Jesus Christ – as the sinless man – was the summation of man. And because He was the summation or finality of God's original thought for humanity. He was humanity wrapped up in one Person. He can therefore be called the LAST ADAM. There is no improving upon Christ.

The Last Adam

God made Adam for a purpose – to glorify and reflect God Himself. But instead, Adam chose to turn away from God. So Adam DIED. And from this death there is NO WAY BACK. It isn't a matter of God forgiving or letting things slide. No. Adam was dead – void of God, and

consequently, ruined as a creature. All of us inherit this condition through natural birth. As we have seen, it's called the SIN NATURE.

So what does Adam need? Well, if death is his problem, then Adam needs LIFE. But a reversal of death back again to the OLD life is not possible. No. That old creation is ruined. Adam needs a NEW LIFE.

This is where The Last Adam comes in. The name, "The Last Adam," really carries TWO dimensions. We have already mentioned one of them: Jesus' perfect life as the perfect man.

When Jesus was born of Mary, we've seen that He was NOT born as a NEW CREATION. No. That would come later through His resurrection. Rather, originally, Jesus was born of the old creation – of the very same Adamic order of humanity that God started through the first Adam. So what we had here was God Incarnate, fully God and fully man, born into the old creation of humanity from the outside.

Jesus lived a sinless life. He therefore became everything God intended the first Adam to become. Herein we see the first reason why Jesus was THE LAST ADAM: Because in Him was accomplished the fullness of God's thought for man – for, "Adam," as an order of being.

Again -- this is but one dimension of Jesus as the, "The Last Adam." He was the full Truth in human form. There could be no improvement upon Him as a man. He was The Last Adam in the sense that He was God's final word as to what He wanted in a human being – the fullness of God's glory shined through Him.

But incredibly, there is an even greater sense in which Jesus is, "The Last Adam." As a human being Jesus was the living fulfillment of God's thought for man. But then Jesus laid down His sinless life for us. And when He did, He brought to a **close** the Adamic race. In Him, ADAM – that original race – actually DIED.

The name of Jesus -- The LAST Adam – refers to the fact that through His death on the Cross, the original creation which God began with Adam DIED. It ended in Christ on the Cross.

The Last Adam BORE the FIRST Adam in His own body on the Cross. He then DIED. Thus, the entire Adamic race died IN CHRIST. But we do not end there. Having brought an END to the original Adamic race through His death on the Cross, Jesus was raised – not as a restored OLD creation, but as a NEW CREATION. And IN HIM, we are new creations as well.

For the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man bein Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Cor. 5:14-17)

The collective FIRST ADAM died in the LAST ADAM – and for those who believe -- are raised NEW CREATIONS in Christ Jesus. Jesus brought an END to that original Adam race by living it out to God's glory, and then by dying on the Cross. In Him, that original Adamic race is finished, closed out, and dead. This is why He is called THE LAST ADAM. And it is likewise why He is the Risen Christ.

Two Men

Jesus was the consummation of the Adamic race embodied in one Person – The Last Adam. He filled that to the full. He was perfectly sinless – the Lamb of God without blemish. But then, as The Last Adam, the perfect man, Jesus goes to the Cross.

Only The Last Adam could go to the Cross for us. Why? Because only The Last Adam – and everything we've seen that means – could offer Himself to bear the weight of the collective first Adam. Only The Last Adam could bear the collective Adam -- US – and be raised. Only The Last Adam could die for us – and bear us up to a resurrection unto newness of life.

It is only because Jesus became the fullness and perfection of everything God wanted in the first Adam, that He is able to offer Himself as the depository of everything which is of the fallen Adamic race on the Cross. He offered Himself as The Last Adam, and in doing

so, brought death to that original Adamic creation that God had made, but which had fallen. And then He was raised. As what? As a NEW creation! As the FIRST BORN. As the one through whom all of us can likewise be born again.

Now, unless that is true, then there is no NEW creation, is there? You cannot have a new creation if the old one is still hanging around. Unless all that is of Adam died in Christ, then there is no escape from Adam. We are still of that old creation, and are not new creations in Christ Jesus.

The key to so much in our understanding is the new birth as new creations in Jesus Christ. Grasp that and you will see that you are delivered from the power of the old creation – wherein resides the sin nature, the power of the enemy, and everything else which drags you down. Grasp that and you will see that you are a new creation who is raised in Christ Jesus, with power over all of those negative things. Of course, this is exactly why the enemy seeks to keep us from seeing this Truth. The Cross – which is where Adam died – is his defeat. So he seeks to hide from us the Truth about who we are in Christ Jesus.

In Christ

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (I Cor. 15:22)

When all is said and done, there really are only TWO MEN. There is Adam, and there is Christ. In the end, we are going to choose to be identified with one or the other. We are going to be IN ADAM, or IN CHRIST.

You and I are IN ADAM by natural birth. We are summed up under that one name: Adam. But we are IN CHRIST through the death of the old creature we are IN ADAM, and then through the NEW BIRTH as a NEW creature IN Christ Jesus. Thus, we are either IN ADAM – a member of that body of spiritually dead human beings – or we are IN CHRIST – a member of HIS Body, and partakers of His resurrection life.

Notice the phrase that Paul uses to describe the relationship of a believer to Christ. Paul uses a number of terms. But his favorite is a simple, "in Christ." What does it mean to be IN CHRIST?

To be IN CHRIST means to be united with Him through death and resurrection, and then, because of that, to be eternally one with Him in a spiritual union. This is another Truth that is vital to see.

The Son of Man

The name by which Jesus referred to Himself more than any other was, "The Son of Man." The name means much the same thing as The Last Adam. He was **THE** Son of Man – the consummate man – the fullness of what God wanted.

The first man brought death into the human race. But the LAST man, or LAST ADAM, brought LIFE. He did this by bringing an END to that first race through death on the Cross. And then by being raised to newness of life.

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Cor. 15:21-22)

The realization that salvation is a new creation in Christ – not a fixed-up old creation in Adam -- sets in order so many other Christian Truths. We are either IN ADAM or IN CHRIST. But if we are in Christ, we are a new creation – old things have passed away.

Chapter 30 Redemption

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (Rom. 3:24)

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. (Eph. 1:7)

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (Col. 1:14)

The term, "redemption," means to pay for someone's freedom. So the question is, "To whom did Jesus Christ offer Himself as payment?"

This whole question of to whom the payment of the life of Jesus was made is predicated upon a misunderstanding of the Redemption. That misunderstanding is that Jesus merely came to pay the penalty for sin – death -- so that this penalty could be removed from the Adam race. But that is not true. Rather than merely remove the penalty FOR sin, Jesus came to remove sin itself. Indeed, rather than remove death FROM the Adam race, Jesus came to remove – through His death -- the Adam race itself.

Jesus Christ is called, "The Last Adam." That is because as the only sinless member of the Adam race, He offered Himself to bear the sin of the entire Adam race, indeed, to bear the Adam race itself – and then die. Therefore, in the death of Christ, the Adam race died, ended, was set aside. Ultimately, it will be completely removed.

Now once we see this Truth, we see that Jesus did not need to offer Himself to any person so that we could be set free WITHIN the Adam race. Rather, Jesus delivered us from OUT of the Adam race altogether into a new creation; into Himself. His life was the redemptive means by which this was accomplished.

"Jesus is Accursed"

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man

speaking by the Spirit of God calls, “Jesus accursed:” and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. 12:1-3)

The Corinthians were Gentiles whose lives, before they were converted, were given over to the pagan worship of false gods. These false gods were really demons. False gods are always mean and angry. They control people with a spirit of fear. This is why the worshippers of these false gods were always trying to APPEASE those gods with some kind of sacrifice. The purpose was that the false god would pour out it's wrath upon the sacrifice instead of pouring it out on the worshipper. The worshipper could then feel safe – at least until next time.

Paul is directly stating in the above passage that no person speaking by the spirit of God will ever call, “Jesus accursed.” An, “accursed,” object or person was the sacrifice offered to one of these demon gods. The word, “accursed,” means, “devoted to destruction” – in this case the accursed sacrifice was devoted to destruction at the hand of the pagan god so that the pagan god could be appeased, and thus, the worshipper could escape it's wrath. Paul is saying that any picture of Jesus Christ in the Redemption that suggests that Jesus Christ was bearing the wrath, anger, or punishment of God on our behalf, is never of the spirit of Truth.

Why? Well, first of all, God is love. Despite all of the sin that humanity has committed against Him, God nevertheless has, “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” Why? To bear His wrath as an appeasing sacrifice? To become an accursed sacrifice devoted to destruction at His own hand? No. God sent Jesus to redeem and deliver us.

There is a second reason why the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is not a parallel to these pagan offerings of an accursed sacrifice: Such a redemption would not be a redemption at all.

Think about it. Lets suppose that Jesus merely came to bear the punishment of the world, which is death. Lets suppose that once Jesus did die for us, that God was then able to lift this satisfied punishment from us and declare us forgiven because payment has been made. We might say that we are LEGALLY forgiven. We might say that we

are delivered from the penalty of death. But what would any of that do to deliver us from OUT OF sin and death themselves? What would any of that do to deliver us INTO the new creation. Indeed, what would any of it do to birth us anew. The answer is that it would do NOTHING.

The fact is, if Jesus was an accursed sacrifice who died at the hand of His Father so that we would not have to die, then there is NO new creation. Rather, death would have been lifted from the Adam race – the penalty of death would have been lifted. Thus, the Adam race would today be in tact – even though, “forgiven.”

This is exactly the desire of Satan: To salvage, preserve, and fix up the Adam race. He wants people to think that this is what Jesus accomplished in the Redemption.

The first recorded lie in scripture is when Satan said to Eve, “You shall not die.” Today that continues to be his lie. He now says, “Adam is not dead.” This is the lie behind, “Jesus is accursed.” For if Adam is not dead, then the death of Jesus was not the death of Adam, but the lifting of death from Adam. That leaves Adam alive – simply needing to be fixed.

You will probably never hear the words, “Jesus is accursed,” in any supposed Christian teaching. But that is exactly what is being proclaimed loud and clear in any teaching that is geared to fixing up the old creation, rather than preaching the Cross upon which it died in Christ.

Death Necessary

There is no deliverance from sin without the death of the Adam race in which sin is rooted. There is no victory over Satan without the death of the Adam race over which he has power. There is likewise no new creation in Jesus Christ without the death of the old man in Adam.

God told Adam, “In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.” Adam did eat and he did die – first spiritually, and then physically. When Jesus died on the Cross, God did not LIFT the death penalty from the Adam race. Rather, God saw it carried out fully in Christ. Adam did die in Christ. The Adam race was ended at the Cross. But because we are able to die in Christ we are able to be raised in Him as a new creation.

When Adam died in Christ, the root of all sin died in Him. And when Christ was raised, all who take their place in His Cross are raised in Him. This is Redemption.

Redemption is not victory over the wrath of God. Jesus did not deliver us from His Father's vengeance. Neither is Redemption the commuting of the original death penalty for sin. Rather, Redemption is the carrying out of the death penalty in Christ – but unto the resurrection in Christ as a new creation.

Christ Above All

Redemption involved much more than the Adam race. It involved all of creation. Indeed, Redemption is the establishment of all of God's creation, included humanity, under Jesus as Lord.

God created human beings for a purpose. That purpose was to **have dominion** over all of the rest of God's creation. (**see Genesis 1:26-28**) But this was not possible unless those human beings were under the dominion of God. Man's dominion was absolutely dependent upon his relationship and oneness with God. Thus, when Adam sinned, that is why it all came crashing down. Not only did the Adam race become subject to the powers of darkness, but the creation over which the Adam race was to have dominion was likewise forfeited to the powers of darkness. This is why Satan is called, "the prince of the power of the air." It is why he is called, "the god of this world."

Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: (Eph. 2:2)

In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (II Cor. 4:4)

Since the sin of Adam, the earthly realm has been the ground and territory of Satan. Indeed, even in believers, our physical and soul makeup is Satan's point of access. It is only if we are joined to the Lord and made one with Him in spirit that we can walk in freedom. We must hand

over our earthly nature to the Cross of Christ, that the life of Christ might be made manifest.

Yet Satan remains the god of this world – the god of the earthly realm. Thus, the Redemption of Jesus Christ was not only the redemption of humanity back to God, but it was likewise the redemption of all of creation back to God.

But primary to the redemption of all of creation is the necessity of redeeming man. This began with THE MAN – The Last Adam, Christ Jesus. Jesus became the man – the God-man – in whom God got full victory. And that is why it is only IN CHRIST that humanity can be restored back to God, and have dominion restored over all creation.

Everything God has for man is given solely in His Son. Jesus Christ is LORD over all creation. Thus, if we are IN HIM, and have come under the dominion of His presence in us, we are able to have dominion WITH HIM. Believers are to be co-heirs with Christ, having dominion UNDER HIM over all of God's creation.

That is why Paul is able to say:

For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. (Rom. 8:19-23)

God has never ceased to be sovereign. But He created humanity to have dominion over all of creation under Him. Redemption through ONE MAN, Jesus Christ, is the means. Jesus Christ has won all authority and power; all dominion. But if we come to Him and take our place in His Cross, we can become sons and daughters IN THE SON – we can become co-heir under HIS dominion.

Jesus Is Lord

If you read the book of Revelation, you will find that it is a revelation of the Person of Jesus Christ in His redemptive work. It shows the restoration of all of creation under God through His Son – and the redemption of those who are in Christ as co-heirs; as those who reign and rule with Christ. Jesus as Lord of all under the Father is the ultimate purpose of God and the ultimate outcome of His Redemption. It extends to the eternal ages.

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him. (Eph. 1:9-10)

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he has put all things under his feet. But when he said all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. (I Cor. 15:26-28)

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11)

There is more to redemption than those who are redeemed. There is the Redeemer Himself and the Father who sent Him. In the final analysis, the Redemption of Jesus Christ is that Jesus might be Lord to the glory of God the Father. Those who are redeemed are privileged to share in, and benefit from, this eternal purpose of God.

Chapter 31

It is Finished

Through the death of Jesus Christ God has forever forgiven all of the sin of the human race. But only those who are IN Jesus Christ are united with Him in His death. Only those who are in Jesus Christ are likewise united with Him in His resurrection. Thus, only those who come to Christ and become united with Him are saved. "Christ in us" – His life -- is the only life that saves humanity.

Forgiveness

God's forgiveness in Christ is not probation. It is not conditional. It is based upon the fact that Jesus Christ died for ALL sin and is alive today in His people. This is an eternal forgiveness and redemption.

The death of Christ, and the forgiveness of God that He won, is not dependent upon our faith. Jesus died for all sin whether we believe it or not. The redemption of Jesus Christ was accomplished by God as an act of grace, completely independent of us. It stands finished, in place, and the Truth. Of course, it is only if we believe and embrace the Person of Christ that what He has done will do us any good.

What we see here is basic to Christianity. We are fully and forever forgiven for ALL sin because of Jesus Christ. Christians are not merely those whose sins are forgiven. More than that, Christians are forgiven people. We are forgiven forever and saved forever because we are united with the One who IS redemption.

It is Finished

God has not only forgiven us for all sin because of Jesus Christ, but He has likewise delivered us from all sin. We are forgiven for sin because of the death of Jesus on the Cross. We are delivered from all sin through His resurrection. In fact, we are delivered from the very Adam race in which all sin is rooted. That is just how completely finished is our redemption.

On the Cross when Jesus said, "It is finished," He meant that the old creation, and the Adam race, was ended – as

far as God's plan and purpose. This satisfied all justice in Christ. It is the basis for all forgiveness.

God had told Adam, ***"In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die."*** Adam did eat, and Adam did die. The wage of death for Adam's sin was never revoked. The death of Jesus Christ did not give God reason to lift the death penalty from the Adam race. No. Rather, in Christ, the death of Adam was carried out to the full: Adam died IN Christ.

Because Adam did die in Christ, God was able to declare that this wage of death was, "Paid in full," "It is finished." And if that is the case, then all forgiveness for sin is completed.

Herein we see why Jesus is called The Last Adam. Christ, the sinless man, bore in His body the entire Adam race – and He died. Paul affirms, ***"For the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."*** (II Cor. 5:14-15)

Note that ALL are dead -- the Adam race was ended in the death of Christ. That means that FORGIVENESS is total – forgiveness is as total as the death of Adam IN Christ is total. It really IS finished.

The forgiveness of God for sin is as finished and complete as the redemption that paid for it. God has done all the forgiving He is going to do, or needs to do, because Jesus has done all the dying He is going to do! Jesus died ONCE FOR ALL SIN. It really IS finished. We are forever forgiven, and delivered from sin unto a new creation.

The Bible repeats this Truth again and again:

We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Heb. 10:10)

For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God. (Rom. 6:10)

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Heb. 9:28)

So we see several things. First, forgiveness is finished. It is as finished and as complete as is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is eternally and forever in place as a finished reality IN CHRIST.

Second, forgiveness is for ALL sin. ALL sin was placed in Jesus Christ on the Cross -- NO sin ever committed by any human being was omitted – except the unpardonable sin.

Third, we also need to understand that the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ was an act of His grace – a work accomplished completely independent of anything about us. God's forgiveness never depended on anything about us to begin with, and it never will depend on anything about us. Again, it is of God's grace. It depends solely upon the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Fourth, this means that if not one person ever believed that Jesus died for sin, and if not one person ever believed and received God's forgiveness, it would not change the fact that IT IS FINISHED. Again – this reality is not dependent upon anyone's works or anyone's faith. It is dependent upon Jesus Christ only.

Fifth, this leaves us with only one responsibility: Believe and receive. Put our reliance for God's forgiveness where it belongs: On Jesus Christ – for His finished work is forever complete.

Unbelievers

Most of us have no trouble believing Christians are forgiven. But what about those who do not believe? Are they forgiven?

Well, ask: Did Jesus bear the sin of unbelievers? Yes, He did. Jesus bore ALL sin. So clearly, the price was paid for the sin of unbelievers. Consequently, unbelievers are offered the same forgiveness as believers. Forgiveness is final for all – IN CHRIST.

But wait. Are we saying that unbelievers are saved? No. They are NOT saved. Why? Because they are UNBELIEVERS. They are not IN CHRIST.

Christ did die for ALL, but we must come to Christ as unbelievers, and by faith take our place in His death. It is only if we take our place in His death that we are raised in Him – and are saved by HIS life. In other words, forgiveness is in place -- IN CHRIST. But it does an unbeliever no good if they stay OUTSIDE of Christ. You have to come to Christ and be united with Him in His death and resurrection.

Christ, Our Life

Can we see the absolute essential of CHRIST IN US? Forgiveness and redemption are not merely legal classifications that God hands us if we believe. No. Redemption is IN CHRIST – and it is only by being united with Him in His death and in His resurrection that our salvation is real. CHRIST IN US is our life.

In this we see that salvation is not accomplished solely by the death of Christ. Yes, forgiveness IS accomplished by His death and offered to all. But we must come to Christ – not just to get forgiven – but for new life. New life is ours only through His resurrection. Thus, we must be baptized into His death in order to be raised in Him. We must be united with Him – this is Christ IN US. Otherwise we have no new life – we have no salvation.

***For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly...but God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us...for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.
(Romans 5:6-10)***

What we see here is that everything necessary for the Redemption of every person is finished. But in order to receive salvation, I have to believe and embrace, by faith, Jesus Christ – what He has done, but Who He IS. Then I receive new life – which is what salvation is. I am raised with Him in His resurrection.

Now, for the sake of clarity and explanation, it is necessary to separate what Christ accomplished through His death from what He accomplished through His resurrection. But in reality, there is no separation, for these are both IN CHRIST. We are to be baptized INTO Christ – united with Him in both His death and resurrection – and we will remain united with Him for all eternity. Thus, our faith and our life are not centered in the events that brought about redemption. Our faith and our life is in the Living Person who finished those events, and today is the embodiment of those events. Christ IS our life.

Faith Necessary For Salvation

Faith is necessary for salvation. All men are forgiven for sin because Jesus paid the price for all sin. But only those who believe and embrace Jesus Christ are saved. We have to come to Jesus because salvation is IN Jesus Christ.

How do we come to Him? The Bible says, "Repent and believe." Repent of what? Repent of NOT BELIEVING! Then we will do what? We will BELIEVE!

We must repent of neglecting Jesus Christ. Then, if we repent of that, we will embrace Him. Makes sense, doesn't it?

God has done everything He can do to solve the sin problem. He has taken all of my sins and forgiven them in Jesus Christ. Nothing can change this -- not my faith, and not my unbelief. Yet it is by faith that I EMBRACE what Christ has done, and am thereby saved. Or it is by unbelief that I reject it. The reality of what Christ has done nevertheless stands eternally in place -- regardless of what I choose.

The Unpardonable Sin

In discussing God's forgiveness we must speak about the, "unpardonable sin." This is the sin, "that has no forgiveness;" it is the one sin that God CANNOT forgive. And if it is the one sin God cannot forgive that means it is the one sin for which Jesus did NOT die.

What is the unpardonable sin? It is the refusal of God's forgiveness. It is the refusal of Jesus's death. God cannot forgive the refusal of His forgiveness. Jesus did not die for the refusal of His death. To do so would be equal to God sanctioning unbelief.

If I refuse Christ I am not baptized into Him; not united with Him in His death and resurrection. How then could I be forgiven? How could I be saved by His life?

God cannot forgive the refusal of His forgiveness. It is because His forgiveness is solely dependent upon the grace of God in Christ that we are without excuse for refusing it. The fact is, the greatest gift in the world is God's gift of grace. But this same gift will judge us if we refuse it. For what can God do for us if we reject Christ?

The Finality of Forgiveness

The finality of God's forgiveness should cause us to forever leave behind the lie that any part of God's forgiveness depends upon us. For how can it depend on us if it is already finished? How can we earn or maintain God's forgiveness for us -- for sins past, present, or future -- if it is already an accomplished reality, eternally set in place in Jesus Christ?

This is not merely a doctrine to believe in. It is not merely a teaching to memorize. It is a PERSON that we embrace by faith.

Faith in the Savior

Our faith, whether we are talking about salvation or Christian living, is to be in the Living Christ. Our faith is to be in HIM – as opposed to merely resting upon what He has done. This is an important distinction.

There are some today who are preaching, “faith in the Cross.” Or, “faith in the redemption.” But despite the fact that Jesus Christ accomplished victory unto newness of life for us all through His Cross, our faith is not to be in the Cross. It is to be in the Living Person who hung on the Cross and died for us – and with Whom we are UNITED.

Jesus Christ is alive today, and if I am born from above, He is alive in me. HE is to be the object of my faith. This does not in any way minimize what He did on the Cross. No. For if we are IN CHRIST we are united with Him in both His death and resurrection. The Living Christ carries in His Person His death and resurrection.

To put faith in an event or in the Cross carries the danger of being blinded to the Living Christ who dwells in believers. It is indeed finished – but only IN CHRIST – and we must be baptized into Him; into His death and resurrection. Without faith in the Living, Risen Christ in us today the historical events would have no power for us.

Chapter 32

Freedom From Sin

Freedom from sin is impossible through LAW. I will never experience freedom from sin by finding an effective list of principles or laws to follow. I cannot walk in freedom from sin by taking classes, going through programs, or by memorizing scripture. Freedom from sin is never the result of fixing or repairing the earthly nature. It is not the result of discovering, "the real you." The only means by which I can find freedom from sin is by being united with Christ in both His death and resurrection.

Christ has already died and been raised. Thus, all redemption is finished IN HIM. But I must come to Christ and be united with Him in His death and resurrection if His finished work is to mean anything for me. But if I am united with Christ, then what He accomplished in His death and resurrection will be accomplished personally and experientially in me.

This is not a progressive salvation. No. If I am in Christ I am forever saved. But now I must grow to experience His finished salvation by experiencing and knowing HIM. Likewise, freedom from sin would be impossible unless Christ had already finished the redemption. But now we must learn to walk in that freedom by learning and experiencing HIM.

Once again, can we see that God has done ALL, and given ALL, in Christ? There is no freedom from sin apart from Christ. God has not handed us freedom simply because of what Jesus has done. No. God has given us freedom from sin IN HIS SON. We must be united with Him, and begin to experience Him for that freedom to become real.

Faith in a Person

We must see the difference between faith in what Christ has DONE – faith in the historical events of His death and resurrection – and faith in the Person of Christ Himself. My faith must not be merely in what Christ has DONE. Certainly all faith is ultimately based upon those historical events. But faith must be in the Person Himself – must be in the One in whom the finality of the redemption is forever carried.

It is possible to put faith in what Christ DID but to be blind to Christ Himself. It is possible to put faith in the Cross – to believe that Christ died FOR me – but to be blind to the fact that I must be crucified WITH Christ. What Christ did FOR me is final and complete, and is the basis for all. But it is only by being united with Him – and by walking with Him in faith -- that those realities and His finished work have any effect in me.

Freedom from sin is the result of being united with Jesus Christ – of being baptized into Christ – of being made one with Him in His death and resurrection. It is through this spiritual union NOW – Christ in us – that all that He has done in the past is made real in me. Freedom from sin is included.

United With Christ

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. (Rom 6:5-7)

You will note, from this passage, that freedom from sin is the result of being united with the Person of Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection. Of course, becoming united with Christ in spirit is exactly where true faith will bring us. Christianity is CHRIST IN US – we are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him. Spiritual union with the Person of Christ is equal to being made one with Him in His finished work of the Cross and resurrection.

Note that there is no mention of FORGIVENESS in this passage. That is, of course, included -- but here in Romans 6 we read about DELIVERANCE. Paul is here talking, yes, about freedom from sin through Christ. But he is revealing the root of all freedom from sin: Freedom from, “the body of sin;” freedom from, “the old man.” The possibility of this freedom was accomplished by the death and resurrection of Christ.

When Jesus Christ hung on the Cross, we are told that He actually BORE all of the sin of the human race. We are told that He BORE the body of sin – He became the fullness of the Adam race. In short, Christ bore US – our

old man in Adam. And He died. Thus, if we are united with Christ in His death, then the death of Adam in Him becomes the death of Adam in us. This is the basis for freedom from sin because the root of all sin is found in the Adam nature.

Incidentally, the Bible never teaches freedom from the presence of the sin nature, or freedom from the possibility of sin. This takes us back to what we saw earlier about the separation in the believer between soul and spirit. If we are joined to the Lord and one spirit with Him, then we have two natures in us. There is the new creation in Christ -- that is our union with Him in spirit. But there remains all that is not joined to the Lord in spirit, that is, the old Adam or earthly nature. The new creation is what is raised in Christ. The old creation is what died in Christ. Because we are baptized into His death, His death, through the ongoing work of the Cross will work upon our old nature. We will, "always bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." But likewise, because we are united with Him in His resurrection, His life will be our life -- "the life of the Lord Jesus will be made manifest."

There will be a continual conflict between the old and the new; between the flesh and the spirit. This conflict is really a battle for control over the individual. Thus, by faith we must pick up our Cross, and if we do, we will discover what God says is true: The old nature did die in Christ. And we will find Jesus Christ as our life.

That is exactly what Jesus told His disciples:

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matt. 16:24-25)

The Sin Nature

One of the biggest mistakes we make as believers is that once we lose our lives to Christ, and begin putting our faith in Him, we expect that, "something is going to happen" -- and what we expect is that all of our sin will be gone. We expect that all of our inward conflict, bad reactions, fear, anger, depression, and wrong thoughts, will somehow be shut down. And when this doesn't happen, some begin to doubt the Truth.

This misguided expectation is based in a blindness to the Truth. As we have seen, the sin nature is never eradicated. Our old nature remains as before. But what does happen when we are united with Christ is that that old nature is put under the Cross. And more importantly, we are raised up OUT OF IT in union with Christ as a new creation.

Many Christians have trouble understanding that when the Bible says that our old man is DEAD that it does not mean that our old man ceases to exist. It does not mean that our old nature cannot function or be at work in us. No. What the Bible means when it says that we are dead, or that our old man is dead, it means that if we live from out of Christ by faith that we are dead TO that old man of sin. From a practical standpoint, if we abide and live from out of Christ by faith, we are dead to that old nature. Christ is our power over it. But if we choose to abide in the old nature we will become alive to it, and will find that we are capable of sinning.

What this ought to tell us is that we will never overcome sin by turning in upon sin and fighting it – we will never overcome sin by trying to make sin go away, or by trying to eradicate sin. We will never escape our old man of sin by obeying laws. No. The key is to lose our old man of sin – leave our old man of sin alone. And how do we leave it alone? We leave the old man alone by abiding in Christ by faith.

Paul directly stated, ***“Walk in the spirit and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” (Gal. 5:16)*** In other words, don’t attack the flesh with programs, laws, and attempts at repairing the earthly nature. Rather, step completely outside of it – leave it alone -- and walk in the spirit. Paul also said, ***“Mortify the deeds of the body.” (Col. 3:5)*** The word, “mortify,” in the NT Greek means, “to destroy by neglect.” That is amazing. Why would Paul tell us to destroy the possibility of sin by NEGLECT? Why would he tell us to leave the flesh alone and simply walk in the spirit? There can be only one answer: It is finished in Christ. And if it is finished in Christ, then ACT LIKE IT. Leave alone what is already dead. Walk in HIS LIFE. And if we would, by faith, do this, we would find out that what God says is true IS, in fact, true after all.

Self-Ownership

When Jesus Christ said we must LOSE our lives in order to find new life in Him, He was speaking to self-ownership. Certainly, the old nature is utterly corrupt. But it is our continued ownership over ourselves that keeps us in bondage to it, and thus, keeps us in bondage to sin. This makes self-ownership the issue – it makes self-ownership the antithesis of faith. Sure. Self-ownership is THE SIN of unbelief.

Thus, to lose our lives to Christ, we must relinquish self-ownership – we lost voluntarily lose, “our right to ourselves.” As we saw in an earlier chapter, the place to start is by asking God, “to do whatever it takes,” to make the Truth of the Cross real in us.

So when Jesus said to, “deny ourselves,” He was not primarily talking about giving up THINGS, but about giving OURSELVES to Christ. This is an unconditional surrender to Him as Lord. Self-ownership – not merely the THINGS we own – but the spirit of owning ourselves – this is the core of the old nature; it is the core of the sin nature, and thus, the root of all sins.

Now, let’s ask a question: If all sin is rooted in the, “body of sin;” in the, “old man in Adam” – held in place by our spirit of self-ownership – then what is the ONLY way in which we could possibly get free of sin? We must LOSE our ownership over that old life down into a death. We have to lose the old life in which all sin is rooted in order to get free of the sin that is rooted in that old life. All other attempts to get free of sin are futile. Indeed, they are of unbelief.

This is exactly what Jesus commands that we do: Lose ourselves to Him. You will note that Jesus is not issuing a threat under punishment. Rather, He is simply stating a fact and offering an invitation to deliverance. You cannot get free from sin – you cannot follow Jesus Christ – unless make the commitment to LOSE yourself to Him, and then see it worked out by picking up your personal cross.

Christ the Solution

We must understand that no matter what manifestation of sin we are talking about – smoking, anger, greed, jealousy, homosexuality, addiction to pornography, adultery, fornication, self-righteousness, etc. – and no matter how we got into bondage to our sin -- the solution is the same: Jesus Christ crucified. But we cannot just hand over SINS to the Cross. We have to hand over OURSELVES, and relinquish our self-ownership, for it is in that old nature of self-ownership that all sin is rooted. We must become baptized into HIS DEATH and united with HIM in His resurrection. In other words, Christ must come be revealed in us. And then we can progressively walk in freedom from those sins through an inward knowing and walk in Him.

The Power of God

Christian people, because we do not understand the basics of the Truth on these matters, continue to ask God for some power over sin. Or, we think that surely we must already have it. Thus, we try to exercise this, "power," and find that it does not work. This often leads to discouragement.

But God never gives us a THING called, "power to obey Him." God has given us CHRIST. Thus, the only way in which we can experience power is by losing our lives and abiding in Christ by faith. We have to live from out of Him as our life.

And as I noted earlier, the possibility of sin will always remain. To the extent that I abide in Christ by faith, I will have forsaken self-ownership, and thus, I will be able to more effectively obey God. But to the extent that I claim my right to own myself, I will again slip back into the root of sin and sin will manifest. This will be a conflict going on all of my life. That is why it is essential that I grow to know Christ and see and obey the Truth.

Freedom from sin is finished and final in Christ. But I must be united with Him in both His death and resurrection – and then learn to abide in Him by faith. Freedom from sin is possible only if I abide in the One who won it.

Chapter 33

Unity in the Body of Christ

God desires unity among His people – throughout the Body of Christ. But if we are honest, He has generally gotten very little of it. Despite the fact that there have been pockets of unity here and there throughout history, or even today in the world among God's saints, there really isn't much real unity in the Body of Christ.

There is a reason why there has never been much true unity. At the foundation, TRUE unity is only possible in the Person, Jesus Christ. But what does that mean? It means that if I am a partaker of Christ – in communion with Him – and you are a partaker of Christ – in communion with Him – then we are partakers of each other – in communion with each other. That is the basis of unity. Of course, it still has to be LIVED OUT. But if the Person of, and the life of, Jesus Christ, is not the foundation of our unity then whatever unity is there is merely a façade. And in the end, it will prove to be destructive.

Now, if you examine this core of true unity you will see that the unity of the Body is fully dependent upon the communion that each individual has personally with Jesus Christ. This is the opposite of what many Christians believe and what many churches and groups practice. Many groups believe that unity is achieved from the, "top down," that is, unity is imposed through law, or legislated from the top down through a statement of faith. Even worse, unity is often not in the Person of Jesus Christ, but in doctrines and facts about Him. The individual's communion with Christ thus becomes, not the basis of unity, but an issue that isn't even considered at all.

We need to be clear on this matter: It does not matter how much you, "submit," to authority, nor, "sign off," on a statement of faith, or intellectually agree with doctrines – it does not matter how much you hop aboard the "band wagon" of your local church or a ministry – it does not matter how much verbal assent you give, or how much physical service you contribute – your unity with other members of the Body of Christ is directly dependent upon your personal and individual communion with Christ Himself.

Can we now see why there is so little true unity today? If my communion with other believers – and I speak not so much of the fact of unity as I do about the living out of it - is dependent upon my personal communion with Christ Himself – then this demands that I come to realize and experience the reality of Christ within me. I need not be greatly mature in Christ. But if Christ is the basis of communion with others, then I have to know Him, and I have to at least be in some fellowship with Him. In short, Christ needs to be REVEALED IN ME. Then there will be a basis of fellowship with others in whom Christ is revealed. But today, “Christ in us,” is rarely talked about. Having Christ revealed in us, is either ignored completely, or misunderstood. And if that happens, then Christ is replaced as the basis for unity by something instead of Christ.

Look around at the Body of Christ, indeed, look at the history of the church. Granted, Christ is talked about. Most of the time, Christ is the central subject. But is that spiritual unity in Christ – that everyone assents to Jesus as the central figure in our theology or in our faith? You can find Christian people pulling together to make a, “movement,” successful. You can find communion among Christians in experiences, in pet doctrines, in various ministries. But communion is not found in these things. Again – unity among believers is based upon, “Christ in us, the hope of glory,” and the on-going purpose of God to form Christ in us – that He may BE our life and that we may know Him. That is INWARD. It is spiritual. And it must happen on the personal and individual level if there is to be any unity in the Body as a whole.

The Purpose of Ministry

The direct purpose of ministry is NOT unity. No. Unity is supposed to be a RESULT. The direct purpose of ministry is edification in Christ -- personally and individually. And if this is happening in the individuals in the Body, then the RESULT will be the Body as a whole operating in unity.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the

measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: (Eph. 4:13)

Christ in you, the hope of glory, whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (Col. 1:27-28)

The fact is, if individuals in the Body are being built up in Christ, then the Body as a whole is being built up in Christ, and in turn, is able to continue to build up the individuals, etc. This is the process of growth. It is silly to imagine that an individual could grow in Christ by simply being physically present in a Body of believers – because at some point, even if that Body is spiritually healthy, that person must individually come to know Christ in an inward way for themselves. You cannot know Christ by proxy. You cannot, “absorb,” Christ through some spiritual process of osmosis. You have to personally have Christ revealed IN YOU, and come into a personal realization of Him. The ministry of the Body is supposed to be unto this end.

The Vine and the Branches

The picture that Jesus gave of Himself as the Vine and we as the branches illustrates this Truth. Jesus said, ***“I am the Vine, and you are the branches.....abide in ME.” (John 15:5)*** He did NOT say that we were to first abide in EACH OTHER. No. He said that communion among branches is the result of first abiding in Him. It is secondary. EACH branch must first abide in the Vine for themselves – the life of each branch is found only in the Vine. Nothing else is possible without this foundational communion between the branch and the Vine; between ourselves and Jesus Christ.

Jesus also said, ***“If a branch is not abiding in the Vine it will die.”*** He did not say, “If a branch is not abiding in the other branches, it will die.” This is not to minimize the value of fellowship among believers. But imagine if the branches were all abiding in each other, but not in the Vine. They would all die.

Do we realize that unity – let us continue in this picture of the Vine and the branches – do we realize that unity among branches is possible even if ALL of those branches

are not abiding in the Vine? Sure. You can have groups of professing Christians in full agreement and in full communion with each other – but their agreement is in some error; their communion is not in Christ, but in something instead of Christ. They will have unity. But it will NOT be unity in Christ. It will be unity is something instead of Christ.

What is the core problem here? Not unity. They have unity. Cults have unity. Boy, do they have unity. But their unity is not in Christ. It is unity, yes, in a list of false teaching. But really, their unity is in their blindness and unbelief – regardless of the false teaching that emerges. And you do not need to be in an official cult to have such false unity. You could have a group of Christian people all of whom are under the same deception and the same spirit of unbelief – they could actually be celebrating their unity – but none of it is in Christ.

How many realize that unity among any group of people can achieve much? How about Nazi Germany? They had great unity – they achieved much evil. Thus, as far as proving it is good, or the Truth, or that God is in it, UNITY MEANS NOTHING. In fact, it is the will of God to utterly and completely destroy all unity that is not in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ said:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (Matt. 10:34-36)

Jesus Christ is clearly stating that there is only ONE UNITY that is of God – it is unity IN THE SON. Not just unity in doctrines or facts about Jesus. That is good. But true unity is more. It is a unity that is the result of individuals who share in common the Person of Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is in me, He is to BE MY LIFE. If Jesus Christ is in you, He is to BE YOUR LIFE. Then we are EACH partakers of Christ. But that makes us partakers of each other; that means we are in communion with each other. This is communion IN CHRIST.

Every other unity is outside of God's will, and ultimately destructive. Jesus essentially said, "I am come to bring division to all of these other kinds of unity;" "I am come to destroy unity in all else by MYSELF." Notice the words, "I am come." If Jesus COMES to dwell in a person, or if the Truth and life of Jesus is introduced into a group, that is a great thing. But one of the first things Jesus Christ does when, "He comes," is to break apart all that is not of Himself. He will break apart all unity that is not in Himself so that, once this is broken, there can come to pass a true unity in Himself.

Jesus does not come to affirm the status quo. He IS the Truth. He IS the Light. And Truth and Light will at first result in JUDGMENT of all that is not of Christ. Do we want revival? This will be the first step. But it is good. It is redemptive. And it is the ONLY possibility if we want to walk with, and have unity, in Jesus Christ.

So again, we see this Truth: The ministry of the Body of Christ is to edify each other in Christ. God wants to use ministry as a vehicle by which individuals can personally come to know and realize Jesus Christ for themselves. But if individuals are growing in Christ, then the Body as a whole is growing in Christ, and can, in turn, help the individuals grow.

The foundation of Christianity is, "Christ in YOU." Christ dwells in His Body – not in some unidentifiable, nebulous way, but Christ dwells in His Body by dwelling in the members of His Body, individually and personally. This is the basis of unity: We are all one IN JESUS CHRIST – the "all" becomes "the one" only because the "we" – the individuals -- are first IN CHRIST personally. The Body of Christ is mature only to the degree that, "each person is mature in Christ."

The Essential of Life and Truth

There have always been people and movements that have sought to IMPOSE unity in the church through law. This has taken many forms. Some churches have demanded that you must belong to their church, or group, to truly receive God's highest – or to even be saved. Cults and cult groups do this – they impose unity through either fear of punishment from God, or through the promise of some reward. There have also been various movements that

have tried to impose unity. The shepherding movement of the 1970's was a horrible example of imposed unity. Many accountability groups have mimicked this error. There is the doctrine of, "submission to authority," as the means to remain right with God and in His blessing. I could go on. But all of these errors are nothing more than the result of a blindness to Jesus Christ, at best, or the product of people lusting for power and prominence over others.

You cannot impose unity in the Body of Christ. That is because real unity in Christ is NOT the product of law. It is the product of Life and Truth. Get individuals established and built up in the Person of Jesus Christ and unity will emerge without the need for law.

Not once in the NT will you ever read that we are supposed to CREATE unity. Rather, we are told to KEEP the unity. This is done, not through law, but by continuing to keep Jesus Christ as the life of all.

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. there is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Eph. 4:3)

This is not to say that there are not times when leadership will have to take action – to stop heresy or sin from polluting the life of the Body. But again, this is not a matter of imposing unity through law. It is a matter of keeping the unity that is of Life and Truth, by stopping those things that would hurt the Life of Christ in others.

Paul the apostle continually faced threats to unity. There were times when he had to take drastic action to deal with heresy, sin, and division. But he never demanded that anyone submit to HIM – just because he was an apostle. No. Rather, he brought Jesus Christ front and center. With Christ there could be no compromise, and with the Truth no gray areas. In short, since division happens when people lose sight of Christ, the return to unity is only possible when Christ is once again made the life of the Body.

Chapter 34

One Mediator: Jesus Christ

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Tim. 2:5)

A MEDIATOR is the One through whom we must go to connect to another. Jesus Christ is the One Mediator by which we connect to God. In short, if we are in Christ, then we are in God. If we are joined to the Lord and made on spirit with Him, then we are joined to the Father, because Jesus is one spirit with the Father.

What should be evident is that Jesus Christ is the ONE and ONLY Mediator unto God for EACH believer. He is the sole Mediator for EACH believer because He dwells in EACH believer. Thus, my individual and personal access to God is based directly upon the definition of Christianity: Christ in YOU. Because Christ dwells in EACH person, then EACH person in whom Christ dwells has personal access to God through Him. To say otherwise is to undercut the very definition of what a Christian is, and to distort the meaning of Christianity itself.

What ought to become obvious in looking into the NT on this matter, is that Jesus Christ is the Mediator of EACH believer – not simply because of what He has done FOR us – but He is the only Mediator for EACH believer because of His very presence IN US. Christ in you IS your access to God. There is simply no way to separate the reality of Christ in the individual from the fact that He is our individual Mediator unto God. The two Truths stand or fall together.

No Other Mediators

It is because the enemy has blinded the church to the reality of CHRIST IN YOU that error regarding Christ as the only Mediator of EACH has found a place in the Body of Christ. Indeed, one of the most oft-repeated errors of the Christian church over the last two thousand years is the error of introducing OTHER mediators unto God – either INSTEAD of Christ, or in ADDITION to Christ.

It was not long after the apostolic age that ecclesiastical systems began to emerge wherein leaders were considered to be mediators unto God. The most obvious

example of this error was the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. It was taught that you had to belong to the RCC, and be under the authority of the Pope, in order to be saved. This error denied Jesus Christ as only Mediator for the individual – it essentially denied CHRIST IN YOU, the individual – and it was upon this core heresy that so much other corruption was built.

Can we see that once the foundation of CHRIST IN YOU is denied or distorted, that all that is built upon such error will likewise deny Christ? Once people are blinded to the personal and individual reality of Christ within, then they will be blind to their personal access to God. They will then more easily accept a substitute mediator. The usual substitute will be a supposed Christian leader.

What began to emerge at the end of the first century eventually became the Roman Catholic Church. It bore almost no resemblance to the Truth of God in Jesus Christ – because the foundation of the Truth, Christ in the individual had been replaced with the religion of man.

But this error did not end at the Reformation. Not only did the RCC continue in this error, but also there have always been manifestations of it in the Protestant Church. That should not be surprising because where the foundation of Christ in the individual is not preached, and where the life of Christ is not the life of the church, there will always be an earthly substitute. Protestant churches have likewise set up leadership as mediators unto God in addition to Christ.

More recently, there was the, “shepherding movement,” of the 1970’s. This movement taught that God had vested His authority in various, “shepherds,” in the church, and that everyone else needed to submit to them. Throughout the seventies and eighties, Bill Gothard also taught that God has established authorities in the church (and really on all levels of life) that are as, “an umbrella of protection” – and if you did not submit to these authorities, you would be exposed to the realm and influence of Satan. This is heresy. It completely removes Christ within the individual as our only Mediator unto God and replaces Him with a leader through whom we must operate in our walk with God. In more recent times, we have C. Peter Wagner and his New Apostolic Reformation. These are a group of self-appointed apostles and prophets

who demand, “alignment,” i.e., submission, from the rest of the Body of Christ. There is nothing about this organization or movement that is of God.

There are also many television ministries today, whom claim that if you, “partner with them,” that is, send them money, that you will share in the supposed anointing that God has given them. You will be blessed financially, with good health, and see family members come to Christ. But if you look at what is being taught, they are saying that you need to, “plug into,” their ministry in order to, “plug into,” Jesus Christ. THEY are your conduit unto God.

Of course, as is always the case, this error of establishing other mediators unto God is practiced in small home groups and even churches. Leaders teach that they have a hot line to God – that God has given them authority over the Body of Christ – and that if believers truly want the will of God then they must submit to them. This demand can be heavy-handed, or it can be clothed in, “love and concern.” But either way, this is destructive heresy.

ANYONE who teaches that you cannot be right with God, or experience Jesus Christ – or that you will incur God’s wrath – unless you submit to THEM is a false teacher. ANYONE who teaches directly, or implies indirectly, that your personal access to God is dependent upon your relationship to THEM is a false teacher. ANYONE who makes your relationship to God dependent upon whether you are part of a group, church, belief system, or their ministry, is a false teacher.

Christianity is Christ in YOU. Christ dwells in the individual. And because He does, it means that the individual has personal and individual access to God solely through Jesus Christ. There are NO other mediators unto God. There is ONE Mediator between God and any person: Jesus Christ.

Vertical Governs Horizontal

We saw in the last chapter that the key to unity in the Body of Christ is for each individual to abide in Christ. Only then is there a basis for abiding in each other and for walking together in the Truth. True unity in Christ CANNOT be imposed by law. Where leaders sets themselves up as a conduit to God for others, and demand

submission -- that is exactly what they are doing: They are trying to impose unity through law – even if they avoid using the words.

Each member of the body is individually united in spirit with Christ. This unity with Christ – His very presence in each of us – is why we are all members of HIS body; members of each other. Thus, we are only members of each other because we are first members of Christ.

Mechanically speaking, you are not, “plugged into,” God or Christ because you are first, “plugged into,” a church, a leader, or even because you are first in the Body of Christ. No. That is backwards. Rather, you are, “plugged into,” God through Christ alone – personally and individually. That is the Truth of Christ as our ONLY Mediator unto God. And then, if you are in Christ, you are, so to speak, “plugged into,” his church.

Our VERTICAL relationship with God, personally and individually, comes first, and will govern all HORIZONTAL relationships with other Christians. It is going to do that even if we don't realize it. Walk with Christ in spirit and in Truth and this will result in a walk with other Christians in spirit and in Truth. But try to walk with other Christians first – allow the horizontal to govern the vertical – in order to keep some law or principle of submission to authority, or some principle of unity, and the entire body will end up in error.

Most often, “the glue,” that holds together an errant group is some form of, “submission to authority,” or submission to a certain belief system. Their unity is not the result of communion in Christ. Rather, they are all in submission to a common leader or teaching. Instead of Christ as the life of EACH, the religious principle is the life. The solution is to discard the system, and to discard the submission, and to begin to edify each individual in Christ so that they can know Him for themselves.

A Personal Relationship

Jesus Christ is the sole Mediator unto God -- for you and I. We don't have to, “go through,” anyone else, or through any group, to walk with God. We each have personal and individual access to God through Jesus Christ. HE is our

life. This is Christianity: Christ in YOU—Jesus, the ONE Mediator unto God dwelling IN YOU.

John the apostle was a leader in the Body of Christ. But let's take note of his words on this matter of whether the individual had personal access to God:

These things I have written unto to concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abides in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. (1 John 2:26-27)

John is not against ministry. In fact, in this passage, he is practicing TRUE ministry. He is clearly stating that ministry will never replace CHRIST IN YOU. Ministry must never become a substitute mediator unto God for you. Indeed, all ministry that is of God is going to teach what John is here stating: That Jesus Christ dwells in you – and that HE is your life, your Truth, and your sole Mediator unto God.

Christ dwells in the individual because EACH person is joined to the Lord and has become one spirit with Him. Thus, the presence of Jesus Christ in us is our access to God. There is no such thing as a person who is IN CHRIST except that Jesus is likewise their only Mediator unto the Father.

A Warning

If a believer who is in Christ is supposed to be living evidence of Him – a living epistle that points others to Christ – then what does it say about those who would seek to control others? What does it say about those who, out of a desire for power, prestige, position, and gain, would control the lives of fellow believers, or make merchandise of them, “in the name of Jesus?” It says that they are not only violating the Person of Jesus Christ, but it says that somewhere in their heart they are personally not right with God.

Fruit has a source. If a leader abides in Christ, the fruit will be of Christ. Leadership will therefore be a vehicle whereby others can learn Christ for themselves;

experience the fullness of Christ as individual members of His Body. That is freedom. But where leadership abides in a vine that is not Christ, but is of the flesh, what will emerge are the fruits of control, manipulation, fear, and imposed unity. This may look quite religious. But it is of the enemy.

Jesus Christ is the ONE and ONLY Mediator unto God for the believer. And any person who has found Jesus as their one Mediator is going to desire that others find Him in that way as well – and will allow God to use them unto that end for others in His Body.

Chapter 35

True Ministry

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death works in us, but life in you. (2 Cor. 4:1-12)

Paul is describing what creates the possibility of true ministry. He says, "Death works in us, but LIFE in you." True ministry is LIFE – it is the life of Jesus Christ manifesting and flowing through one member of His body to another – unto edification in Christ.

Christianity is CHRIST IN US. And once we understand this, then the purpose of all ministry ought to become obvious: All ministry of the Holy Spirit is unto the fullness of Christ in us. That is edification.

This is exactly what Paul said in Ephesians:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the

ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: (Eph. 4:11-13)

Paul here names five ministry callings, if you will, but gathers them all up into ONE purpose. He says all of these are to be at work until when? ***"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."*** Ministry is God's vehicle to bring people into an inward realization of Jesus; into the fullness of Christ.

Now, contrast this over and against what the goal of ministry is often made to be: The building of big churches. Or, often the goal of ministry is the indoctrination of people into, "our group" – into our church's teachings and doctrines ABOUT Jesus Christ. But the spirit of God is concerned about CHRIST IN US.

If you read John, chapters 14 through 16, and closely note what Jesus said the Comforter would do, "when He comes," you will see that His words agree completely with those of the apostle Paul. The work of the Holy Spirit is the fullness of Christ in the individual. Anything else, and it is not the Holy Spirit.

Paul said, ***"So then death works in us, but life in you."*** According to him, THIS was his ministry. God was doing something IN HIM so that Christ could be released THROUGH Him, and consequently, minister LIFE to others. This is NOT about anything less than the ministration of LIFE – the very life of Jesus Christ.

Epistles of Christ

What is an epistle of Christ? Such a question is important because Paul uses this picture as the desired outcome of ministry that is of God.

Well, think about it. A living epistle written by the work of the Holy Spirit would be someone whose life, "reads," in such a way that it glorifies God. In short, if I am a living epistle of Christ, my life will be an example of what

happens when God has His way with someone – through His Son, Jesus Christ.

There are many other ways to express this Truth. For example, if I am a living epistle of Christ, my life will not display MY righteousness for MY glory, but rather, my life will display what it means for someone to be a product of God's grace. Even when I sin or fail, my life will point to Christ – not as the source of my failures, but as my solution. Thus, a living epistle is not perfect – but is a message written in a human being about the One who has done a work of grace in me despite the fact that I am not perfect. My life points to CHRIST, and not to ME.

A living epistle is a witness to Jesus Christ – not a witness to how wonderful God has made ME. The life of a living epistle is DEFINED by their relationship to Christ – through dependence and devotion. Thus, this isn't about how righteous I have become, or about how much of a spiritual giant I am, or about how much faith I have. No – that would be a sad commentary on MYSELF. Rather, a living epistle is a witness to how wonderful Christ is – because I live in dependence upon, and devotion to, HIM.

This is an especially important point. So many Christians, because they know that God wants to do a work in THEM, and wants to set THEM free, and wants to make THEM into a vehicle for His glory, continue to focus on THEMSELVES. But the best such a focus can do is write an epistle about ourselves. Ugh. No. God does want to do all of those things IN US – but we need to recognize that if He actually does do it, that one thing this will set us free from is a focus on OURSELVES. Thus, we won't be an epistle or a living testimony about ourselves. Rather, the Holy Spirit will set us free from ourselves, and make us vehicles who glorify Christ.

The bottom line is that a living epistle is someone in whom God can do as He pleases. This is someone over whom Jesus Christ is Lord. We cannot determine what God is writing in us, and we cannot decide what kind of epistle God will write. No. All of that must be surrendered. A living epistle unto Christ is someone in whom God has written His Son, and someone in whom God is writing a message to His glory.

In the end, ministry is LIFE. It is the life of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, working through you and I to others. This LIFE manifests along certain lines – certain callings. But it is all about LIFE – His life in us. Anything that is void of His life is NOT ministry.

The Anointing

Today we are being told, as never before, that, "the anointing," is a THING or a GIFT that God gives a person that enables them for ministry. It is sort of God's unconditional blessing upon them – and because of that, what they do is going to be blessed. Therefore, since God's supposed, "anointing," is upon such a person, you and I need to go to them in order to partake of that, "anointing." Indeed, on Christian television today, we are being told that this, "anointing," is, "tangible and transferable." That's an exact quote. We are being told that if we give them money, and PARTNER with them, that the anointing they have been given will be passed onto US.

This is a lie. What it does is completely bypass the PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST and turn the anointing into a THING that God's gives to people so that they can minister. The Bible doesn't teach this. And the damage such heresy does cannot be measured.

The apostle John wrote directly of what he called, "the anointing." It is, in fact, the only place the term is used in this way.

These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which you have received of him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in him. (1 John 2:26-27)

Can we see from this passage what now ought to be the only thing that makes sense, that Jesus Christ in us IS the anointing? Sure. "Christ," means, "anointed one." And that because Christ is in us through the Holy Spirit – ONE blessing, not two – that this automatically means that we have come UNDER the anointing, that is, that we have

been apprehended for the work of the Holy Spirit to make Jesus our life?

The purpose of all ministry is that the fullness of Christ might be made manifest in the individual, and then because of this, through the Body of Christ. This is the purpose of the anointing in the individual, and then by extension, in the body of Christ. We are to become living epistles of His glory, because we have come under the redemptive power of His Lordship.

One Mediator

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Tim. 2:3-5)

The fact that Christianity is, "Christ in YOU," carries great ramifications. Above all, it means that Jesus Christ is our sole Mediator unto God. This means that you are personally and individually joined to the Lord and one spirit with Him. It means that everything that Jesus Christ has done, and everything that He is, He is to you personally and individually. In other words, you have personal and individual access to God solely through His Son who dwells in you.

Jesus Christ is certainly our sole Mediator unto God by what He has DONE. But more than that, Jesus Christ – right now – is our sole Mediator unto God by who HE IS IN US. If I am joined to Jesus Christ by the spirit, then I am joined to God the Father, because Jesus is one in spirit with God the Father. This is an eternal fact.

Now, once we realize this Truth about, "Christ in you," then we are likewise about to see what CANNOT be the Truth. For example, we never need to obtain or maintain our access to God through another person, a group, or belief system. To use an illustration, we never need, "to plug into," Jesus Christ, or, "plug into," God the Father, by first plugging into an authority, a leader, or a group. There are NO other mediators unto God. There are no, "sub-mediators," in addition to Christ. Our relationship to God is never by proxy. Rather, Jesus Christ is the one and only Mediator unto God. Any other thought is not only error, but it is a denial of the very foundation of what

Christianity IS: Christ in YOU – personally and individually.

Members of One Another

Church history is littered with corruptions of this Truth. One of the most often repeated errors of the church age is the demand that believers must come to God, or maintain their relationship with God, through a leader, authority, or group. Certainly, this was the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. They taught, and still teach, that you must belong to that church, and be under the authority of the Pope to be right with God.

But Protestants are just as guilty of teaching and practicing this error. In more recent history, there was the Shepherding Movement of the 1970s. There is the devilish teaching on submission to authority called, “the umbrella of protection.” There are other ministries, cults, and churches, that teach that you must, “plug into them,” in order to be thoroughly, “plugged into,” God. There are accountability groups everywhere today. All of these teachings and movements try to IMPOSE submission and authority through law – and through fear, peer pressure, and religious tyranny. They are all denials of Jesus Christ as the sole Mediator of each believer. Indeed, they are denials that Jesus Christ is to be OUR LIFE.

We read earlier how clearly John the apostle states that Jesus Christ dwells in EACH believer. John was not against ministry – his epistle IS ministry. But John, like Paul, knew that the purpose of all ministry was the present EACH believer mature in Christ; to build up EACH believer in their personal relationship with Christ. Only if that is accomplished is true unity realized.

Chapter 36

Signs and Wonders

Signs and wonders have always been a magnet for religious people. Indeed, today as much as ever, professing Christian people flock to, and are greatly influenced by, signs and wonders. Many assume that a supernatural sign is God's affirmation upon a ministry or church. But if we would honestly read scripture, we would find God's teaching about signs and wonders:

Then certain of the Scribes and the Pharisees answered saying, "Master, we would see a sign from you" (Matt. 12:38)

Matthew 12:39 records the response of Jesus:

But Jesus answered and said unto them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. There shall no sign be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Note the answer that Jesus gave to those who demanded from Him a sign or a wonder to prove Himself: "Here is THE SIGN I am going to give to you: My resurrection from the dead." Of course, He did so by referring prophetically to Jonah. But He was essentially saying, "THE SIGN I have for you is My resurrection."

This answer from Jesus is curious, seeing that He did do MANY signs and wonders that were witnessed by these same Pharisees. But this ought to tell us something. First of all, can we see that signs and wonders, in and of themselves, can do nothing to change a person's heart? No. The Pharisees, the very ones who ask Jesus for a sign, and who had seen many signs, had stood face to face with Jesus Christ and said He had a demon. They completely rejected Him. The miracles of Jesus did nothing to change their hearts.

Christ in Us

Signs and wonders cannot change anyone. They may excite people for a while. Perhaps they will seem to be drawn to God. But none of that will last long. At some point, when the excitement fades away, they will have to

encounter Jesus Christ in Truth. There were also many people who initially followed Jesus because of His miracles. But along the way, many no longer followed Him.

If signs and wonders cannot change people, then what can change people? The only thing that can change people is exactly the sign Jesus promised He would give: Death and resurrection in Christ. This is what changes us. This is a fact spoken not only in the Old Testament in type and shadow -- not only spoken of here in the Gospels as THE SIGN -- but later in the Epistles it is stated outright that THE SIGN -- really the evidence of Christianity itself is RESURRECTION.

Jesus said THE SIGN would be His resurrection. Today His resurrection remains THE SIGN – but there is added another level: Our resurrection IN Christ. Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead believers who take their place in His death can likewise be raised IN HIM. That is the same evidence – our resurrection life in Christ is the sign that He rose from the dead. Our resurrection is predicated upon His resurrection.

John the apostle, in I John 5, speaks directly to THE evidence of God; the sign of God. But he does not mention outward signs and wonders as evidence of God. Rather, he points to the indwelling of CHRIST IN US.

Now, in reading this passage, we are going to encounter in the King James three different words: Witness, testimony and record. In the New Testament Greek, these three are all the same word – they all mean, “evidence.” So, in copying this passage, I am going to use the word, “evidence,” for each of these words, because it is the Greek meaning.

In verse 9 it says:

If we receive the evidence of men, the evidence of God is greater. For this is the evidence of God, which is testified of His Son, he that believes on the Son has the evidence in himself. (1 John 5:9-11)

What we are being told here is going to be affirmed in the next couple of verses: That the evidence of God is IN you and me -- and is a Person, Jesus Christ. “Christ in you, the hope of glory” -- His presence in you; His life in you;

His resurrection life in you, and the fact that you have been raised in Him – Christ in you IS the evidence of God.

It says -- and I will re-read the first part of 1 John 5:10:

He that believes on the Son of God has the evidence in himself. He that believes not God has made Him a liar because he does not believe the evidence that God gave regarding His Son.

In verse 11, we find an affirmation:

And this is the evidence that God has given to us, eternal life and this life is in His Son.

And so these verses agree 100% with what Jesus Christ said would be the evidence; would be the sign or wonder that He would give: Resurrection.

A sign or a wonder is supposedly evidence that God is there. Jesus said, "You want a sign? I am not going to give you the signs that you think you need. But I am going to give you ONE sign and ONE evidence -- and that sign is My resurrection from the dead. For those who believe, you will have this very evidence -- this very resurrection -- IN YOU. You will be raised WITH Me."

So, in other words, Jesus is saying, "Do you want proof that I am with you? Don't look for it 'out here.' The proof that I am with you is that I will be IN YOU. ***"Christ in you, the hope of glory."*** (Col. 1:27) This is THE EVIDENCE.

Christ in Us the Evidence of God

The evidence of God is CHRIST IN US – the Living Jesus Christ is the SIGN. Once we recognize this, and then turn back to ***Matthew 12:39***, things begin to become clear. Jesus says, ***"An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but there shall be no sign given but the sign of the Prophet Jonah."***

So note: An evil and adulterous generation SEEKS after a sign. Why is Jesus able to make such a strong statement? Simply because if I SEEK AFTER – note those words closely – SEEK AFTER – Jesus is able to make that statement because if I SEEK AFTER outward signs and wonders it indicates I have not come into an inward

revelation of Jesus Christ. In other words, I am blind to the true evidence of God, Christ in me.

You can take this as a principle -- to the degree that we have received an inward revelation of the Christ and are walking in Him, we will NOT seek after outward signs and wonders. You can also turn this principle around and say it in reverse: We will seek outward signs and wonders to the degree that we do not know Jesus Christ.

You will note that nothing about this negates the possibility that God could do a miracle or give a sign or wonder. The issue is whether people are SEEKING AFTER them instead of seeking after knowing Jesus Christ. Indeed, in this we find why God does NOT do all that many signs, wonders, and miracles today: He does not want people to get entangled in them and to begin to seek them, and live in them. He wants people to come to know Christ as their life.

Satan has succeeded in BLINDING millions of people to the Truth and reality of Christ in us. So, what we do is resort to what I call, "the great default" -- we resort to some substitute that is of the flesh. A part of this is to seek signs and wonders. I think a lot of people who seek after signs and wonders think that doing so IS Christianity. They think Christianity IS signs and wonders. They think that Christianity is, "to feel good," and so on. This is deception. Yet, the Truth is right here in the Bible. The risen Christ is the evidence of God -- and believers have that evidence IN THEMSELVES.

God Does Speak Today

We have seen that **Hebrews 1:1-2** clearly states that in times PAST God USED to speak to us through the prophets -- and of course we could lump into that signs and wonders. Yet it goes on to say there: **"But in these last days, God is speaking to us in His Son."** "Speaking to us Son-wise," is what it says in the Greek. In other words, the way God is speaking today -- or the, "language," if I can use that term, in which God is speaking to us is Christ. God is speaking to us through an on-going inward revelation of His Son. How many know that if you are, "hearing," Christ, then you are hearing Truth. You are hearing light -- and this will result in your being able to know God's will, and in your being able to see and to know.

Certainly one of the ways in which people seek after signs and wonders is to constantly badger God for what we call today, "leadings of the spirit." We want to be, "led by the spirit" -- so that we will be sure to, "do the right things, in the right way, at the right time," -- insuring that our lives will turn out right. That reasoning is the way it works out in our heads. Sure, some people do want to be led by the spirit because they want to please God. I am sure that there are some. But regardless, so many Christian people think that in order to walk with God in the spirit, Jesus has to talk to us in our head every five minutes. I've known people who think He does do that. They say, "The Lord told me this; the Lord told me that; the Lord led me here; I just feel in my spirit; I feel prompted to do this and that," and on and on it goes. I am not discounting that as a possibility once in a while -- as the means by which God leads people. Of course not. God can and does do those kinds of things.

But this is NOT the primary way in which God leads us. It is not the primary way in which the Bible says Christians need to, "walk in the spirit." No. The way we walk in the spirit is through the ongoing, inward, progressive revelation and unfolding of Jesus Christ.

Everything God says, even if He does give a word, has to be understood in the light of the fact that God is today speaking to us in HIS SON. And if this is true -- and we are coming into an inward realization of Jesus Christ -- we are not going to need for God to give us, "marching orders," like we did before. We are not going to need for God to give us signs and wonders. We will know God's will instinctively -- because we know Jesus Christ.

All discernment is the by-product of knowing Jesus Christ - - who dwells in you. He is the Truth -- He is the Light -- isn't He? Know Him and you will know what is OF Him and what is not. If you really do need God to speak to you, He will do that because He is your Father. But more and more, life will become a knowledge of Jesus Christ -- and less and less of dramatic words, and leadings, and signs and wonders.

The Possibility of Deception

God gives warnings; indeed, He gives tests for the Truth, all through scripture. We ignore these warnings at our

own peril. Ignore them and you are likely to become deceived. For example, in **2 Corinthians 11**, where Paul is speaking of false teachers, he says in verse **13**, ***“For these are false apostles, deceitful workers transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.”*** Note: He is talking about people who are self-appointed apostles and prophets and pastors and teachers. They have transformed THEMSELVES into these things. He goes on to say, ***“And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”***

This is a frightening statement by the apostle Paul. Think about this. An angel is a messenger -- and light is what? It is that which illuminates, and that which brings clarity. It is that which exposes -- the light of God is the Truth of God that will set us free. So, an angel of light, who is really Satan -- for the purposes of deceiving people -- is going to bring that which looks like light, feels like light, acts like light, smells like light, tastes like light, has certain ramifications of light -- and the people who are under this deception will say, “I have been set free.”

Well, they haven't been. They have actually taken another step into darkness. Many people who are deceived think that they have been set free because they have gotten what THEY wanted. How many understand that once you get what you want, all the conflict ceases, and you will say that you have peace? But it's the peace of the world -- and not the peace of God. Yet you will feel like you are at peace because there is no conflict anymore. You have gotten your way. You have won out. You might even rejoice.

There are people by the millions right now who raise their hands every week in church with tears rolling down their cheeks, singing hymns and praising God, who are absolutely deceived. They are walking in a way that is contrary to the Truth. Jesus said, in **Matthew 6:22**, ***“Beware lest the light that is in you”*** -- and He is referring to the light that you THINK you have -- ***“beware lest it actually be darkness.”*** This is deception. And so much of it today is being cemented in people through signs and wonders that are purported to be of God.

Now, Jesus, in that same Matthew 6 passage, told us what is the protection against deception; against thinking you have light but are actually in darkness. He said, “Keep your eye single to the Lord.” What does that mean? It

means to tell God to do whatever it takes to get His will and glory in your life. It is amazing how much comes back to that. Of course it does, because all roads lead to Christ.

We need to take these warnings and these words of Jesus Christ seriously. Have we forgotten the scriptures that have told us that the time is going to come when the deception of the enemy will be so convincing that even the elect -- even those who know Christ -- if possible, could be deceived? Remember, it said, "if possible." In reality, it isn't possible if we stay close to Christ. But anyone can be deceived if they don't.

Also, in the Book of Revelation, it says that there will come a day when the enemy will work through people, and fire will be called down from heaven in the sight of people.

Now, you are seeing that kind of thing going on right now. It may not be literal fire coming down from heaven, but you are seeing in churches people who are claiming all kinds of miracles. Soul power in the psychic realm is a powerful thing. It can substitute for the Spirit of God and it can make people think that God is present. It is a sign and wonder -- but not from God.

Can we see another reason why it is dangerous to seek after signs and wonders? It is dangerous because the enemy is able to produce signs and wonders. If you are seeking after those things and the enemy is in them, you are going to be led, through those signs and wonders, into falsehood and darkness.

Deuteronomy 13 speaks exactly to this point. Verse 1: ***"If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and they give you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder COME TO PASS..."***Now, note: This is not a situation where the sign or the wonder or the prophecy fails. No. It really does come to pass.

But read on: ***"The sign or the wonder that the prophet spoke comes to pass -- BUT if they say to you, 'Let us go up to other gods which you have not known, and let us serve them,' then you shall not hearken unto the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God proves you."*** In other words, God is allowing this that we may ask Him; turn to him -- and come into a greater knowledge of Christ in rejecting it. He

is proving whether you love the Lord your God with all of your heart.

Now, what we are reading here shows that it is entirely possible for a FALSE prophet to make TRUE predictions. That may seem strange. How could he be a false prophet then? Well, the earmark of a false prophet is not that his predictions never come true. No. The earmark is that they use those predictions -- true or false -- to lead people away from Jesus Christ to another Jesus. Can we see that? I could work all kinds of miracles and if Satan was behind me those miracles could be real. I could prophesy and those prophecies could come to pass. But if I am using those things to gain a following, or to steer you in a direction that is other than a relationship with Jesus Christ, then this is the reason why I am a false prophet or a false teacher.

Miracles

Does God work miracles today? Yes. Can God manifest Himself through signs and wonders? Sure. Are all of the gifts possible for today? Yes, they are POSSIBLE. But there are counterfeits. And most importantly, if we divorce these possibilities from the revelation of Jesus Christ we are on thin ice. If we create movements and ministries focused on miracles and signs we are outside of the Truth. The purpose of the spirit of God is to reveal Jesus Christ to us and in us. Therefore, all that God does through His Spirit is going to be unto that end.

CHRIST IN US is the sign and the evidence of God. The spirit of God confesses, that is, reveals, "Jesus having come in the flesh." But if we are seeking other signs, we can get into deep trouble. We dare not take these warnings of Jesus Christ lightly.

Chapter 37

The Great Lie

Jesus Christ called Satan, ***“the father of lies.”*** (see ***John 8:44***) Indeed, according to Jesus, Satan does more than just tell lies. Rather, Satan IS a lie. By nature, he is contrary to God and to all Truth.

Satan has a purpose. His purpose is to oppose God. Therefore, if we want to more specifically understand the purpose of Satan, we need only understand the purpose of God.

God’s ultimate purpose is that Jesus Christ be all in all. God has begun that purpose in this age through the Redemption of Jesus Christ -- whereby Jesus Christ has come to dwell in believers. ***“Christ in us,”*** embodies the purpose of God -- HE is the foundation or ROCK upon which God will build all else in His people.

Thus, if God's purpose is embodied in, ***“Christ in us,”*** then it is Satan’s purpose to either blind people to the reality of Christ within, or to redefine it in such a way that will lead people astray.

Satan will rarely oppose God directly. Rather, he will do it indirectly, through deception – and almost always by offering a counterfeit. The Bible reveals Satan as, ***“an angel of light.”*** (***II Cor. 11:14***) He presents error AS Truth. That is what a liar DOES.

Satan does indeed offer a counterfeit to, “Christ in us;” to Jesus as our life. He offers the ADAM life; the earthly life. Satan wants to deceive people into thinking that their own earthly nature – their, “soul man” – IS Christ within; IS the spirit of God in them. This deception is everywhere today.

If believers do not know the genuine article, they will not be able to discern the counterfeit. Satan will present an earthly Christianity, based on MYSELF, that seems so good and right that I won’t suspect that I am totally deceived. The only solution is the work of the Cross whereby this lie is exposed, leading to an inward realization of Jesus Christ.

Earthly or Spiritual

In prior chapters we have seen that there is a division between soul and spirit in each believer. If we are in Christ, we are one spirit with Him. That spiritual union is the new creation in Christ. But outside of our spiritual union with Christ there remains our earthly nature – our soul and body. These are not united with Christ in this age. Each believer has two natures; two kinds of life – the earthly, Adam life – but also the life of Christ received in Christ from above.

Christianity is CHRIST IN US, and the life that emerges is supposed to be a continual discovery of Christ. But it is here that the enemy will seek to deceive the believer. It is the most common goal of Satan to blind believer to Christ and to offer as a counterfeit our Adam or soul life.

To try to live our Christian life within the earthly nature is, in large part, what it means to walk according to the flesh. It will be a walk that is not necessarily SINFUL as we normally define the term. Rather, a walk in the flesh can be quite religious. But it will be a walk that is according to ME – based on my emotions, bias, feelings, and temperament. But if I am blinded to Christ, I may believe that the entire experience is that of the spirit of God. I may be walking in the flesh and think that I am walking in the spirit. This deception is the goal of Satan.

Flesh vs. Spirit

The goal of Satan in offering any counterfeit is not merely to entangle believers in the counterfeit. Rather, the primary goal is to keep believers from the REAL. The secret goal of any lie is always to hide the Truth.

Satan offers the believer natural man because He wants to hide the Truth and reality of Christ. He offers us natural man because we easily embrace our old nature – it is all we have known. We are all preoccupied with ourselves by nature, and if we are offered a Christianity that feeds that, and operates upon the basis of ourselves, we will normally easily embrace it.

Of course, we are not innocent victims. If we are in Christ, we have the Truth Himself in us. Thus, despite the attempts of Satan to get us walking upon the basis of

natural man, God will be faithful to show us the Truth. This will often create a conflict within us, but it is an opportunity to set us free. This conflict and opportunity for freedom will continue for our entire life.

Paul said, ***“The spirit lusts against the flesh and the flesh lusts against the spirit. And these are contrary one to the other.” (Gal. 5:17)*** Don’t think of this merely in terms of sinning or not sinning. The real issue is FAITH or UNBELIEF. We are to live from out of Christ by faith. Satan desires that we live from out of our natural man – but he wants us to do so thinking that we are living from out of Christ.

A Root Lie

Right from the start, Satan has offered a counterfeit alternative to Jesus Christ. He has offered another LIFE, another object of our FAITH, and another purpose of God. But he has not offered this alternative AS an alternative. No. He has offered the counterfeit AS Christ. He has offered this using Bible verses. As noted, that alternative to Christ – the counterfeit of Christ that Satan offers -- is ADAM. It is the Adam life instead of Christ.

This choice – Adam or Christ – is really a choice for SELF or God. It has been the goal of Satan right from the temptation in the garden to deceive man into choosing himself before God, rather than choosing God before self.

Because God created Adam with a SELF – with a free will – then by definition it was always possible for Adam to choose SELF before God, or to choose God before SELF. Those are the TWO TREES. God made man to live in Him forever through Jesus Christ. This is represented by the tree of life. But the alternative was always there – that man could seek to find life in himself; live independent from God.

In the temptation in the garden, we find a root lie of Satan in his attempts to destroy man’s relationship with God. We read in ***Genesis 2:17*** that God told Adam that if he ate of the forbidden tree that he would DIE. But the father of lies, Satan, then spoke the first recorded lie in the Bible. Satan answered, ***“You shall NOT die.” (Gen. 3:4)***

But take note: “You shall not die,” is certainly a lie. Yet it is not the root lie. The root lie is this: God is not LIFE - God is not your life – God is not God. That is the root lie that is merely implicated in the lie, “You shall not die.” For if Adam could eat and NOT die, it meant that Adam had life IN HIMSELF – which in turn meant that God was not his life; God was not the source of all life; God was not God. So the real temptation for Adam was the offer to find life in himself – to be as God, deciding for himself good and evil. All of that is wrapped up in the lie, “You shall not die.”

Also note that once Satan told Eve, “You will not die,” that he immediately began to draw her attention to HERSELF - to what they would GAIN for THEMSELVES by eating. Satan showed Eve that the tree was good and the fruit was good. They would have their, “eyes opened.” Satan presented this as a GOOD thing – and it was intended to appeal to their SELF life. But Satan said nothing about what he knew they would LOSE by eating and rejecting God. (see **Gen. 3:5-6**)

This is a blueprint as to how Satan deceives. He will seek to appeal to our SELF life; to our natural, earthly makeup. He will appeal in such a way that it makes what he is saying seem right and good. He will focus upon what we will GAIN by embracing the lie. But he will seek to blind us to what we will LOSE.

When people choose a path of unbelief, they do so because there is something about that path that appeals to their earthly makeup. That appeal may be positive, or it may be negative. But there are reasons why people choose to believe a lie – and that reason is that it agrees with the lie that is in them. There is some sense of GAIN – of pride; sense of safety; sense of religious self-esteem. But they are blinded to the LOSS of what could have been in Christ.

When Satan said, “You will not die,” he did not say, but, “You will not live in God.” No. He offered them life – another life -- and that seemed like great GAIN. They allowed themselves to be blinded to the incredible LOSS.

Today millions are being led astray by the lying promises of a happy and fulfilled self-esteem. They are being offered inner healing, a sense of self-worth before God,

and identity. But they are not being told what they are losing: True life in Christ; the true knowledge of Jesus Christ.

To the degree that I am preoccupied with myself – before the Lord as a Christian – I will not know Jesus Christ. But to the degree that I come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ I will be set free from a preoccupation with myself. Satan wants us preoccupied with ourselves and offers that which will keep us there, blinded to what we have missed.

The Lie Continues Today

Satan said that if they ate of the forbidden tree that they would NOT die. Of course we know that they did eat, and that they DID die. But despite the fact that the human race died in Adam, Satan has nevertheless continued this lie. Before the sin, Satan said to them, “Adam, you shall not die.” But NOW he says to us, “Adam has not died.” It is the same lie.

“Adam did not die,” is the greatest lie of all because it is a denial of the greatest Truth of all: God is all. God is life. God is GOD. If Adam could eat of the forbidden tree and not die, then Adam does have life in himself, and God Himself is a lie.

The lie of Satan is that Adam did not die. So ever since Adam died, Satan has suggested that Adam was merely damaged. Or Satan has suggested that the problem is that God got mad and withdrew from Adam. Any substitute for the Truth that Adam actually DIED will suffice. For once people are blinded to the fact that Adam DIED, then they will more easily accept a solution other than the Truth of the Redemption.

Any suggestion that Adam is not a dead creation will inevitably lead to the denial of the Cross – for if Adam did not die then on the Cross Adam did not need to die in Christ. In fact, any doctrine or religious program that tries to fix up, or repair Adam, is the outcome of this lie – for if Adam can be fixed up or repaired he did not die. And certainly all of these things deny the need for a new creation – for if Adam did not die then what is really needed is not a new creation, but some other solution to breath life into the old.

Those who are deceived by this great lie will not suspect that they are denying the Cross or the new creation. No. For they will be occupied with SELF – they will be occupied with what they think are the benefits of their walk. But the denial will be there – in practice. Unbelief is a walk in darkness, wherein we cannot see the Truth to which we are blinded.

Believers MUST realize that Adam died -- which means that THEIR ADAM is dead. This is utter and final. And likewise, we must realize that in Jesus Christ the Adam race – OUR ADAM LIFE – died. God has complete set aside the Adam life. There is no repairing of the Adam race. There is no fixing of it.

We must realize this as a finished fact, but also what means. It means that your personal earthly nature is NOT what God is building. Rather, it is under the personal Cross. Jesus Christ – the Christ to whom you are joined in spirit – is now your life; your only life. Thus, your Christian experience is NOT a discovering of yourself. It is a discovery of Jesus Christ. This is the only path to freedom, and the only purpose that God has for you.

The Spirit of Antichrist

In **Matthew 16:21**, Jesus told the disciples that, ***“He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”*** He was describing to them His Redemptive work – the redemption that was necessary because Adam died and all of humanity in him. But he was likewise announcing that through His resurrection there would be a NEW creation.

Peter protested. And it is in this protest that we once again see this great lie of Satan. Peter did not expect a Messiah that would die. None of the Jews of that time did. Instead, Peter wanted a Messiah and a kingdom that would serve Israel's interests. He said to Jesus, ***“Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”*** (Matt. 16:22)

Peter was telling Jesus that the Cross was unnecessary. Unwittingly, and in ignorance, Peter was actually saying, “Adam did not die, and so, Jesus, You do not need to die.” Jesus’ answer to him is revealing. He said to Peter, “Get

thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou desire not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

Why did Jesus address Satan? It was because Satan was using poor Peter, in all of his ignorance and self interest for the kingdom – to try to stop Jesus from going to the Cross. Herein we see what we might call, “the gospel of Satan.” It is the same lie as we saw before: “Adam is not dead. Therefore, Jesus, you do not need to die.”

Satan was suggesting through Peter a kingdom without the necessity of the END of the Adam race; without the necessity of the Cross. This is what Satan is always after – ADAM as THE man – instead of the NEW man in Christ. It is the greatest lie of all.

After Jesus rebuked Satan, He said to His disciples:

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matt. 16:24-25)

God pronounced the judgment of death upon Adam for sin – and Adam did die. But God send His only begotten Son to die FOR the Adam race, so that the Adam race could die IN HIM. On the Cross Jesus became THE ADAM and bore the entirety of the Adam race down into its death. Thus, the Adam race ended with the death of The Last Adam. What arose three days later was not a repaired Adam race – but a new humanity in Christ Jesus.

Jesus is telling His disciples that despite the fact that His redemptive work will be finished and final, that the experiencing of it will need to be worked out through our humanity. We must pick up our Cross as God brings it and bear about in our earthly nature the death of the Lord Jesus – we must LOSE our lives to Christ -- in other words, we must by experience become crucified WITH Christ. But if we do, we will find Christ as our life – Christ will be manifested in us and through us.

Herein we see the complete setting aside of Adam. There is no repair job; there is no cure. There is only total DEATH – but unto a resurrection as a new creation in Christ. It should not be surprising that the greatest lie ever told – Adam is not dead -- is a subtle attempt to destroy

the greatest Truth ever established: Christ lives in us; the new creation in Christ Jesus. Satan will always oppose the plan and purpose of God.

Chapter 38

The Antichrist

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. (1 John 4:1-3)

What is antichrist? The term means more than, "against Christ." In fact, the literal meaning is, "the instead-of anointed one." In other words, "antichrist," is one who is presented as God's anointed -- instead of Jesus. This is a substitute or counterfeit. The meaning of, "antichrist," is INSTEAD OF CHRIST.

Now note: If the primary lie of Satan is that Adam is not dead, then it is obvious that the Adam life is the great counterfeit Satan offers INSTEAD OF Christ. Satan offers the supposedly repaired Adam race – AS the new man in Christ. He offers this counterfeit INSTEAD OF CHRIST – this is the essence of antichrist.

Testing the Spirits

In the passage above from ***1 John 4***, John gives a test for Truth that affirms these facts. The greatest lie ever told is, "Adam is not dead." This lie is of antichrist. The greatest Truth – and the one this lie contradicts – is that the Living Christ dwells in His people – that ***Jesus Christ is come to dwell in flesh and blood human beings***. The spirit of antichrist will never confess this Truth. The reality of Christ in His people is precisely what Satan desires to hide with the counterfeit.

John begins by saying, ***"Hereby know you..."*** Note that: "Here is HOW you will know the Spirit of God." John is, in this passage, giving us a TEST FOR TRUTH. He is telling us how we can know what is of the Spirit of God, and what is of the spirit of antichrist.

Of course, John was speaking to a heresy that had invaded the church during his time: Gnosticism. The

Gnostic heresy stated that the entire material world, including flesh and blood human beings, was evil. Therefore, God could have nothing to do with the material world, or with the flesh and blood human beings that lived in it. Jesus Christ would never come to dwell in flesh and blood humanity.

This nonsense has nothing in common with Christianity. But as is often the case, people tried to, “Christianize,” this pagan religion; tried to bring it into Christianity and paste on it the name of Jesus Christ. Thus, once this error invaded the church, people taught that Jesus Christ was NOT actually God become man – for God could have nothing to do with the material world. Rather, these people taught that Jesus merely, “appeared,” to be a man.

This heresy had further ramifications: It tried to change the meaning of Christianity itself. For if the Word could not become flesh – because flesh was evil – then this likewise meant that Jesus could never come to dwell in believers. Thus, Gnosticism was a flat-out denial of, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” It was therefore a denial of the very nature of Christianity itself.

Now, before we continue, note what a denial of, “Christ in you,” leads to: It leads to counterfeit basis for Christianity. For if Jesus Christ does not dwell in the believer as our LIFE – then what is the basis for our life? There can be only one answer: The Adam life – for unless Christ is our new life, then we are left in the old. Thus, indirectly, but with certainty, Gnosticism in the early church was a denial of Christ in us, in favor of a Christianity based upon the old man in Adam.

Can we see that Gnosticism was the same lie of Satan: Adam is not dead? Gnosticism taught that through self-discovery man could then discover God and be saved. This is a denial that Adam is dead. It stated that the source of life is not Christ in us. Rather, the source of life is ourselves – we simply need Jesus Christ to ignite what is already in us; to bring out all of our latent potential. That is exactly what is being taught on so many levels today. It is the lie of Gnosticism repackaged – it is the lie of Satan.

John sets the record straight: The Holy Spirit will always confess, “***Jesus having come in the flesh.***” This is the

correct Greek. Indeed, this equal to, "confessing" Christ IN US – that is – the work of the spirit of God will always be to REVEAL Jesus Christ in believers; bring believers into an inward realization of Christ. We will come to know Him as our life; as our all.

The fact is, there is no way to come to know that Jesus Christ is in us; that Jesus Christ is our life – unless we begin to lose our lives. And we will not begin to lose our lives until we see that Adam is dead. Paul said, **"You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God."** (Col. 3:3) It could not be clearer.

In contrast, John says that the spirit of antichrist will NOT preach Jesus having come in the flesh – will not reveal the reality of Christ in the believer. Antichrist will preach something else – anything else -- as a counterfeit. Antichrist will, in effect, present a false Christianity, based on something other than the reality of, "Christ in you." That, "something other," will be some form of the Adam nature.

This passage is part of the inspired Word of God. Thus, despite the fact that it did have aspecific application for the day in which it was written, God inspired and preserved it for the entire church age. There is a spiritual principle being revealed in this passage that applies universally for all time.

The Foundational Truth

The centrality and importance of this Truth ought to be apparent from the passage itself. John says, **"Here is how you will know the Spirit of God."** All things can be tested by whether Jesus is being confessed as abiding in the believer, and whether the Jesus who abides in the believer is being revealed IN the believer. That is the work of the Spirit of God, and the Truth that John is stating.

When John wrote, "Jesus HAVING come," he did not use the PAST tense. Rather, he used the perfect participle. This indicates a past event having existing results. In other words, everything John says is based upon the fact that Jesus DID come in the flesh – that is the past event. But the test for Truth that he is giving accentuates the EXISTING results of that past event. What are those existing results? That, "Jesus IS come in the flesh," today

– Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit of God, comes to dwell in flesh and blood human beings who receive Him.

So John is saying that the Holy Spirit will always confess – yes, the past finished work of Jesus Christ – but based upon that -- the Holy Spirit will always confess and reveal the PRESENT reality of Christ in us.

"Jesus is come in the flesh," is nothing short of a description of Christianity. It is, **"Christ in us (see Col. 1:27),"** stated in other terms. **"Jesus is come in the flesh,"** is a summary of what constitutes the new creation in Christ Jesus. Thus, John is talking here about the very definition of what Christianity really is. His test for Truth is just that important.

The Omission

John states that the Holy Spirit will ALWAYS confess Jesus having come in the flesh. But then note what he says regarding antichrist: Antichrist will NOT confess this Truth. John does not mention anything specific that antichrist WILL confess. Did you notice that? He simply states that antichrist will NOT confess Jesus Christ having come in the flesh.

Here we see error by OMISSION. According to John, where there is an OMISSION of the present reality of Christ in people – where CHRIST IN US is omitted as the centrality of God's purpose – this is not only evidence that the Holy Spirit is absent or grieved, but it is evidence that antichrist is at work.

The OMISSION is enough. Why? Because Christ in us is the core of Christianity – and the purpose of the spirit of God IS to reveal, confess, and unfold Christ IN the believer. Thus, this omission alone keeps people blind to Christ. Then, once people are blinded to the Truth, Satan can bring in ADAM as the counterfeit. It doesn't matter what form other teaching takes – because if people are blinded to Christ they will eventually revert to some form of Christianity based on the Adam or earthly nature. That has always been, and always will be, the, "default;" the great lie.

Where people are blind there is created a blank space in their understanding. And it is into that blank space that

Satan will insert lies. If I am blind to Christ – to Christ as my life and my all – it will be a simple matter for Satan to substitute for Christ with that which I will easily accept: Some form of Christianity with SELF as the focal point.

We are all preoccupied with ourselves by nature. It is really ALL that we know. Thus, if I am blind to Christ, any substitute that fosters my preoccupation with myself will likely appeal to me. Thus, we have all of today's false teaching in the church seeking to fix up, improve upon, and repair the old Adam life. Satan is teaching people to save their lives for themselves, and to try to get God to help them.

The Spirit of Antichrist

"The spirit of antichrist," as John uses the term, indicates something more than just the LETTER; something more than doctrine. It is talking about the real INTENT behind what is spoken, written, or taught. John is telling us that the real intent of the spirit of antichrist is to establish ADAM instead of Christ: Adam – the old earthly nature – instead of the new creation. The spirit of antichrist is found in the words, "Yet not Christ, but I!" – instead of the Truth of, "**Yet not I, but Christ.**" (*Gal. 2:20*)

You can expect that the lie, "Adam is not dead," and the counterfeit Christianity based upon Adam instead of Christ to look good, feel good, and sound good. Sure. Satan always appears as, "an angel of light." And yet the intent behind it is deception and destructive.

Not One Individual

People continue to look for an individual called, "the antichrist." But clearly, antichrist is spiritual in nature – John says so. Thus, despite the fact that the spirit of antichrist has always had human vehicles – some of them more prominent than others – antichrist is NOT an individual person. I would submit that antichrist is a COLLECTIVE PERSON – governed by the spirit of antichrist.

And what is this collective person? It is ADAM. The antichrist is that collective body of people governed by Satan, who represent the counterfeit Adam life – the life

that substitutes for Jesus Christ. Just as there is a body of Christ, so there is a body of antichrist.

John did not speak as if antichrist was one human being:

And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.
(1 John 4:3)

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. (1 John 2:18)

Whether we choose to believe that there will appear one individual who is THE antichrist, or whether we believe that antichrist is a spirit governing many people, this much is sure: The lie of Satan – “Adam is not dead” – is behind it – which blinds people to the fact that Jesus Christ has indeed come to dwell in flesh and blood human beings.

Deception

Obviously, people who are religiously deceived don't know they are deceived. People who are religiously blind don't know they are blind. They usually don't care, and they don't know TO care. Many are not even asking questions or seeking God for Truth. Some of them are quite happy. Ignorance can be bliss.

This is a blindness to Jesus Christ. It may not be a doctrinal blindness. But it is a spiritual blindness. It is a matter of being locked into a limited RELIGIOUS frame of reference that carries no sense of anything else.

We have also seen the spirit of antichrist will deny Jesus Christ by OMISSION – by blinding people to the Living Christ. But we have also seen that filling in that blank space with a substitute for Christ is what actually seals this blindness. Antichrist means, “instead of Christ.”

Practically speaking, deceived people who profess Christ have embraced a false Jesus; a false gospel. This may not express itself doctrinally as much as it does in their personal faith and knowledge of Jesus. The spirit of

antichrist has mesmerized them. They don't even realize what is happening to them.

Deception must have a basis, and that basis is always found in US. It is therefore vital that the believer keep open to God. Jesus promised to guide His people into all Truth – and He is the Truth. Therefore, it is not necessary for anyone to remain deceived. As the apostle John says, the Spirit of God will always want to reveal Jesus Christ TO us and IN us.

Chapter 39

The Man of Sin

Antichrist has always had human representatives – some more prominent than others. But as stated in the last chapter, antichrist is NOT some individual person. One of the passages often used to support that antichrist IS an individual is II Thes. 2:

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (2 Thes. 2:3-4)

Who IS this, "man of sin?" Is this, "man of sin," an individual person?

No. One reason is that no present or future individual man could be called, "THE man of sin." No present or future person could rightly be called, "THE son of perdition." These names are all encompassing." Regardless of how evil a person might be, or how much Satan might use them, these titles cannot apply to one person who is present or future.

I submit that, "The man of sin," is a man that represents the fullness of what SIN IS IN MEN. Indeed, "the SON of perdition," is one who is born OUT OF perdition, or destruction. There is only ONE man to whom these names could apply. That man is ADAM. It was Adam through whom sin entered into the human race. Adam brought perdition upon the race of humanity. He alone could merit these titles.

But this is a prophecy. It applies today. "The man of sin," is therefore the Adam nature – the collective Adam nature of people. But in context, it is the collective Adam nature – having rejected the Cross and having exalted itself above God.

Lawlessness

There are two other names in this passage used to refer to this, "man of sin."

For the mystery of iniquity does already work... and then shall that Wicked be revealed. (II Thes. 2:7-8)

The same Greek term is used in both these names: Lawless. The phrase, "for the mystery of iniquity does already work," can rightly be translated, "for the covered up lawlessness is already active." And the phrase, "then shall that wicked be revealed," could read, "then shall the lawless be uncovered."

We see two things here. First of all, the term LAWLESS refers not merely to acts of law-breaking. Rather, it refers to a NATURE. Through his sin, Adam became a LAWLESS creature. This means that yes, he did lawless ACTS, but more than that, he became a human being who was CONTRARY to God. Adam was responsible for the entire human race becoming, by nature, contrary to all righteousness and holiness. Man is a LAWLESS creature – who shows his nature by doing lawless things.

The second thing we see is that John clearly avoids saying that this, "man of sin," is an individual person. He uses the terms, "the mystery of iniquity," and, "that wickedness." This is obviously a governing spirit over a collective or corporate man of sin. It is this corporate man who represents the ultimate outcome of sin in man – that of proclaiming himself as his own god.

The ultimate outcome of sin in humanity is that the lawless nature eventually is uncovered – it will work itself out and be made fully manifest – to where humanity openly and without shame proclaims themselves as their own god. Isn't this exactly the sin of Adam – "to be as god, deciding good and evil?"

In the Temple of God

Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now restrains will restrain, until he be taken out of the way.

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. (2 Thes. 2:5-9)

The man of sin is Adam – but in this prophecy of Paul the man of sin is a collective man who is firmly established in ADAM – opposing Jesus Christ.

This is clearly seen if we read on. Paul says that this, "man of sin," "Opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." But then Paul goes on to say that this man of sin, "AS GOD sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

What IS the temple of God? Would Paul the apostle call the temple in Jerusalem, or some supposed future temple, "the temple of God?" I submit that he would never do so. God called Paul to show that the entire religious structure that centered around the physical temple was no longer valid under the New Covenant. The temple in Jerusalem was no longer the temple of God. Rather, Paul said to believers, "***YOU are the temple of God.***" (*I Cor. 3:17 and II Cor. 6:16*)

The temple of God in the NT is always, first, the individual in whom Christ would like to dwell. But then it is also the collective church – the body of Christ. Thus, this man of sin is to sit WITHIN – as part of – indeed, as having dominion OVER – the true temple of God, which is the body of Christ.

Now, the picture here is inescapable. We have already seen that John's test for Truth states that the Holy Spirit will always confess the present reality of Christ in the believer, that is, will always confess that Jesus IS come in the flesh – the Holy Spirit will always reveal the Christ who dwells in us. But here we have, not Christ, but the man of sin sitting in the temple of God proclaiming himself to be God. Is this not a picture of ADAM exalted as THE LIFE? Is this not the ultimate outcome of THE LIE, "Adam is not dead?"

Again – go back to the temptation in the garden. What we are reading here in II Thes. 2 regarding this, "man of sin," is precisely what Satan promised Adam and Eve: Adam

will not die. You shall be as God, deciding good and evil." In Genesis we have merely the ROOT. But in I Thes, 2 we have ADAM in his fullness. It is 666 – man in his completeness without God – reprobates, self-ruled, and opposed to Christ.

There is going to come a time – and it is already starting – wherein the Adam life replaces the life of Christ within the true temple of God, the CHURCH. Instead of Christ sitting in the true temple of God and living and reigning and ruling, we will see this man of sin – Adam in fullness -- doing so.

This will happen corporately because it is happening individually. More and more people today are denying the need for the personal Cross. They are being deceived into accepting the GOSPEL OF ME. They would not say the words, but they are practicing and celebrating the lie that Adam is alive. They will, through deception, exalt Adam above all that is called God. And this deception will be so convincing that signs and wonders will accompany it.

Is this not a shocking picture of those who reject Christ as their life in favor of ANOTHER LIFE – the Adam life? This is a picture, not of Jesus as our Lord, but of the fallen nature as our lord. Yet all presented AS true Christianity!

As we have seen, there have always been only TWO MEN – Adam and Christ. In fact, Christ is called, "The Last Adam." From the start, Satan has wanted to exalt Adam instead of Christ. This was the temptation in the garden – the suggestion was, "you can be as god." And once you anoint Adam instead of Christ, you have the makings of an, "instead-of anointed one," which is the literal meaning of the term, "antichrist." If Satan can substitute the corporate Adam for Christ as the one who sits in the temple of God, the church, then the entire basis of Christianity is no longer Christ. It is Adam – and Adam is, "the man of sin." Satan will have his ground upon which to work and abide.

Here we see the ultimately outcome of Satan; the ultimate outcome of the spirit of antichrist. It is man – natural, religious man -- sitting in the temple of God, sitting within the body of Christ. This is a man-centered Christianity.

This is not, "Jesus is come in the flesh," but rather, it is flesh – Adam -- taking the place of Jesus.

Apostasy

If I want more evidence that this is what Paul is revealing, I need only read what Paul clearly states is the cause of this, "man of sin," coming to where it can be revealed. He says that, **"there must come a falling away FIRST."** (*II Thes. 2:3*) He is telling us that an accelerated falling away is gong to RESULT IN, "the man of sin being revealed." In other words, this man of sin is built up and hardened – and able to be finally manifested – as the result of the falling away or apostasy.

Apostasy is a falling away from, or a standing aloof from, Jesus Christ. But not merely a falling away from doctrines about Christ. No. Apostasy is a falling away from Christ Himself. This is a faith problem.

But note: People do not fall away FROM Christ unless they are falling away TO something or someone else. And that alternative – that counterfeit – is as we have seen: Adam. The Adam nature; our earthly nature. This has always been the goal of Satan – to convince man that Adam is alive and that it is God's will for us to abide in him, rather than Christ.

I would repeat that for those who are deceived by this great lie it will appear to them that they are in the will of God. This is the whole point of a counterfeit or angel of light: To pass off a lie for the Truth; to pass off the fake for the real. People are going to rejoice in, and celebrate, this terrible man of sin AS IF HE WERE GOD. That is deception.

The Light of Christ

I would also repeat that don't need to be deceived. Jesus has told us to lose the earthly life that is the ground for deception in each of us. He has told us to keep our eye single to God. This is not a matter of being smart enough to avoid deception. Rather, it is a matter of asking God to do whatever it takes to reveal Christ in you. To the degree that Christ is revealed in you, you will not accept the Adam nature as a counterfeit.

This is God's promise through Paul on this matter:

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. (2 Thes. 2:8)

The only real way to expose and destroy a counterfeit is to bring in the genuine article. The only way to destroy a false Christ and a false Christianity is for Christ Himself to be revealed. It works that way NOW. How much more THEN?

Armies do not destroy this, "man of sin." He is destroyed by the Truth (Word of His mouth) and by LIGHT – by the very presence of Christ. He is destroyed by the Truth because that Truth will reveal that Adam IS dead, but that Christ is THE LIFE.

The protection of professing Christians against the deception of antichrist is KNOWING JESUS CHRIST. Knowing the Truth. Having light. This brings us full circle, for John promised, "The Holy Spirit will always reveal CHRIST IN US." And the revelation of Christ in us will expose the man of sin for exactly what it is in each one of us, and in the church.

Revival?

Many believers today are praying for, and expecting, an end-time revival. Some are even teaching that it is the responsibility of the church to bring this revival to pass before Jesus Christ can return. Others are saying that the church must take over the world on all levels, or become the manifest sons of God, or bring all believers under one authority. You name it and it is taught. Many are not only expecting such things, but they are actively trying to bring them to pass.

The Bible does NOT prophecy an end-time REVIVAL. Rather, we are warned about an end-time APOSTASY. We have just seen from out of Paul's writings that the one indication of the return of Christ that he gave – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – is end-time APOSTASY. Could God be clearer about this?

But if there is one thing we need to understand it is this: In order for end-time APOSTASY to be effective, it must look like end-time REVIVAL. Can we see that? Millions of people being swept up into a false Christianity, based on SELF, will look like end-time REVIVAL. But it is actually end-time APOSTASY. Of course. How else would a great deception appear? It would appear as an angel of light.

Those who desire end-time REVIVAL need to come to terms with what REVIVAL actually means. It means JUDGMENT. The first impact of any REVIVAL is God's judgment – by bringing the Truth; by bringing the CROSS – upon all that has made revival necessary. But the APOSTASY – which will in various forms be, “the gospel of me” – will offer people exactly what they want – their lives, their value, and their SELF. God has warned us. We need to take heed.

Chapter 40

The Gospel of Me

The manifestation of antichrist in these last days is everywhere. Some of those manifestations are subtle. But as time passes, and the body of Christ becomes more at home with the spirit of error, these manifestations are becoming more blatant. Today many ministries are openly teaching that which is directly opposed by scripture – and they are teaching it all in the name of Jesus.

Perhaps the greatest example of today's apostasy is what might be termed, "The Gospel of ME." Another name for it might be, "The Gospel of Self-Esteem." Not only is this false gospel a self-centered and self-focused corruption of the Truth, but just as is usually the case with deception, it is clothed in such a spirit of error as to suggest that it is the good news of Jesus Christ.

Built on a Blindness to Christ

As we have seen in our examination of John's warning found in I John 4, the deceptions of the enemy are often built upon a blindness to Jesus Christ. For if it is the purpose of God to reveal Christ IN US; if it is the travail of God that we come into an inward realization of Christ; if all discernment is the outcome of knowing Jesus Christ – then if the enemy can blind people to Jesus Christ it will be much easier to fill in that blind spot with error. And certainly teaching that makes ME the center of God's universe will appeal to most of us.

As noted in the discussion of antichrist, John says that the spirit of God will always preach Christ TO us, and reveal Christ IN us. Everything God does is unto this end – that we might come into the fullness of Jesus Christ, through the ongoing revelation and forming of Christ within. But most believers today are blind to that purpose – it is not that most reject it – they are simply blind to it. People do not know, and they do not KNOW TO KNOW. That is blindness. And it is of Satan.

Today we rarely hear mentioned the Truth of, "Christ in us, the hope of glory," and where we do hear of it, this core Truth of Christianity is wrongly defined, misinterpreted, or simply corrupted. Indeed, today even the Truth of, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," has been twisted into just another version of, "The Gospel of Me."

Gnosticism

We have seen that one of the greatest heresies that began to invade the early church was Gnosticism. The Gnostics believed that each person through natural birth had a spark of light and life in them. Thus, to them, salvation was a matter of coming into the knowledge of this inward capacity of man. Thus, we have the term, "Gnostic," or, "knowledge." Of course, in the NT, we find a, "Christianized," version of Gnosticism that had invaded the church -- against which John and Paul wrote.

Gnosticism taught that Jesus Christ could have nothing to do with flesh and blood human beings, because flesh and blood was evil. But this left the need for life from somewhere. Thus, instead of Christ in us as our life, the Christian Gnostics taught that man has within himself the essentials for salvation – indeed, the essentials for knowing the Truth. This is a denial of Jesus Christ – it is a denial of the very definition of Christianity: "**Christ in you.**" (Col. 1:27) It is a denial that Christ in us is ALL that God has for man.

Gnosticism obviously denied that Adam is dead – but has life in himself that simply needs to be reignited. Jesus came to bring us into this inward revelation – not of HIMSELF – but to bring us into inward revelation of OURSELVES.

Of course, those who teach this evil message present it in Christian terms. They will say that the new creation in Christ IS manifested when Christ brings out all of our latent greatness and potential. They will say that that knowing Jesus Christ will result in an inward revelation of OURSELVES. They teach that knowing Christ will teach us to value ourselves. And they will teach that true freedom IN CHRIST is the result of discovering OUR true identity in Him. Lost in all of this is the fact that knowing Jesus Christ will reveal to us HIS value, and that true freedom is the result of discovering HIS identity in US. None of this will make us more preoccupied with ourselves. It will, in fact, set us completely free from any need, or any desire, to make ourselves the center of our universe.

But you see, Satan knows how to maintain the use of Bible verses, and Bible terms, all the while using them to affirm error that is in complete contradiction to the Truth.

So the heresy of Gnosticism – the form that corrupted the Christian church -- is that there is something within the Adam race upon which Jesus Christ came to build; that Jesus merely came to bring out capacities already in us. The application of this spirit of error could be to salvation, or really, on any level.

So note the contrast: Gnosticism taught that Jesus came to bring out a life that is already in me. Christianity teaches that Christ comes from the outside of me into me -- and becomes my life.

The Original Design

When God was finished creating Adam, and then Eve, He said that it was very good. Indeed, we are given a description of God's finished creation of Adam and Eve as they were BEFORE the sin:

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Gen. 2:25)

This is a description of the NORMAL man – according to the mind of God. It is how God created humanity to be. It says they were NAKED, but NOT ashamed.

Putting aside the physical, to be NAKED means to have NO assets; no resources in yourself. Left to yourself you have NOTHING.

Now note: God created man naked. And it was good. God never intended man to have any life, light, truth – God never created in man any sort of latent potential, the source of which was found in man himself. No. Adam and Eve were NAKED.

But they were not ashamed. They were not lacking in any way. There were barely conscious that they were naked. Why? Because at this point they were ONE WITH GOD. In other words, God created us to have nothing in ourselves – but to find ALL IN HIM. God created us to be dependent upon Him – to have all of our faith in Him – and if we do, then despite the fact that we ARE naked, we will not be ashamed. God will be ALL to us.

This was BEFORE the sin of Adam. But if you look at the description of Adam AFTER the sin, several things stand out. First of all, Adam was STILL NAKED. Adam was just as naked AFTER his sin as he was BEFORE his sin. Of course. As noted, God made him to be naked – nothing could ever change that – nothing could ever change the fact that man was made FOR God; to be fully dependent upon God for his very life. But now, because Adam had walked away from God, AFTER his sin he was no longer one with God. Thus, Adam, AFTER his sin, was still naked, but now he WAS ashamed.

After Adam sinned and lost his oneness with God, he was naked and ashamed – indeed, we see that he was utterly fearful and tormented. He was MADE for oneness with God and had rejected God. So now he was naked and alone – naked and void of the only ONE who could be ALL to him.

What did Adam do after he sinned? He went into hiding. Not only did he hide from God among the trees of the garden, but also he tried to cover his nakedness with fig leaves. Fig leaves are whatever man uses to cover his true condition without Jesus Christ. Some folks use laws and rules to try to cover the fact that they are spiritually dead and corrupt. Self-righteousness is a common fig leaf used by the religious. But others use, “The Gospel of Me.

“The Gospel of Me,” is just another fig leaf. It is a lie of the enemy that denies that man was created to be naked – and that it is only Christ in us, received from above, that can bring anything of value. Instead, “The Gospel of Me,” suggests that underneath our fig leaves is a potentially great person. It teaches that Jesus Christ came, yes, to peel off those fig leaves, but not to expose our utter nakedness without Himself, but rather, to expose our true identity and value to God.

We see this heresy manifested in much Christian teaching today. Some of the catch phrases are, “Discover the champion in you!,” “Your Best Life Now;,” “You’re All That!” Christian people are encouraged to, “declare over themselves the truth of their true identity in Christ,” until it, “sinks in.”

Another common ploy of the enemy is to offer believers programs geared to fixing what ails them. There are

twelve step programs, transformational prayer, and the casting out of supposed generational curses. But every one of these things is a denial – usually through deception – of the only solution for our Adam nature: The Cross of Jesus Christ leading to Christ in us. Every one of these things is nothing but an attempt to repair the old man in Adam – although that will be denied. Rather, it will be called, “inner healing,” or, “true freedom,” and God will, “be given the glory.” That is what deception always does.

God is not fixing up Adam. God is not peeling off Adam’s fig leaves and giving him better fig leaves. Neither is God peeling off Adam’s fig leaves in order to bring out his greatness. No. God has already declared Adam DEAD – in His Son. And in Christ God has made a new creation – restored back to the original design: In Christ we are naked but not ashamed.

Yet Not I, but Christ

When we are born from above, we are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him. This is the new creation in Christ Jesus. We begin a journey wherein God desires that we come into an experience of His Son – that we come into an inward realization of Jesus. Knowing Christ, and not ourselves, is the knowledge of the Truth. Knowing Christ is what sets us free to live with God. Abiding in, and drawing from Jesus Christ by faith is the means by which we are to live the Christian life. NONE of this is possible through a greater discovery of ourselves. No. It is only possible if we discover Him.

Human beings gravitate between high self-esteem and low self-esteem. That is all we know. But notice what both of these have in common: SELF. Indeed, low self-esteem is nothing more than a frustrated high self-esteem. Both betray the fact that we are still trying to cover our nakedness with fig leaves – instead of losing our entire life to Christ.

It was this very deception that was brought into the church from the start. Satan wants to salvage the old creation – because it is his ground – and deceive people into trying to establish Christianity upon it. Where he succeeds you will always have some form of, “The Gospel of Me.” It will be the Adam race fixed up – brought into it’s full, “potential,” supposedly by Christ. In reality, however, this is the very definition of the spirit of antichrist.

If I truly know Jesus Christ, I am not going to live in a miserable low self-esteem. But neither am I going to walk around in the delusion of high self-esteem. I will be delivered from SELF completely through a knowing of HIM. I will be able to leave myself alone – because I am caught up with HIM. This is, of course, something for which we have little frame of reference. But it is one of the facets of true freedom.

This requires that WE decrease that He might increase IN US. We must see the Truth about ourselves – that we can do nothing about ourselves – and we must see Him. But the result will be a human being whose life states loud and clear: “Yet not I, but Christ.”

The Inward Realization of Jesus Christ

Gnosticism is the knowledge of SELF. Christianity is the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Modern Christian teaching – if we dare call it that – has become saturated with Gnosticism. This is, “the gospel of ME.”

Many are teaching that the key to real freedom is to discover your true identity in Christ. That is a lie. The key to real freedom is to discover HIS true identity in you. Others are saying that it is when we discover our value to God that we will be set free. In reality, freedom comes when we discover His real value to us.

Paul the apostle stated outright that, “**Except Christ is in you, you are reprobate.**” (*II Cor. 13:5*) The term, “reprobate,” means, “of no use.” And if we look at Adam immediately after the sin we will see what humanity is without God.

Of course those who teach the value of man to God try to turn things around and say that our value to God is only because of Jesus in us. But this is just another example of how anyone can distort the Truth with words. In that regard, Paul said, “**That the excellency of the power may be of GOD, and not of us.**” (*II Cor. 4:7*)

The true purpose of God for humanity does not put humanity in a wretched position. But neither does it exalt humanity. The Truth exalts Jesus Christ and brings humanity into the purpose for which God created us.

And what is that purpose? God created humanity with ONE purpose: To be joined with Himself in spirit – and to receive and experience all that God has, and all that God IS – and thus, to glorify God. We were never meant to be anything other than RECIPIENTS of the glory of God solely by grace. That is not a bad thing. It is a good and glorious Truth.

Chapter 41

The Great Shaking

God has promised the following from the epistle of Hebrews:

But now he hath promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." And this word, "yet once more," signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire. (Heb. 12:26-29)

This promise of a great SHAKING is repeated using another picture -- that of God as a consuming fire -- in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians:

For another foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abides which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. (I Cor. 3:11-15)

God has repeatedly promised that when He is finished with His purpose in this age that all that is going to remain is that which is of Christ:

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: (Eph. 1:10)

Do we realize what this means? If all that will remain is that which is of Christ, then nothing will remain that is of man. But do we think God is talking merely about world governments, etc. No. Actually, those are secondary. Read again the passage from Hebrews. God does intend to once again shake all that is earthly. But He is also going to shake to the foundations all that is heavenly.

Thus, God is going to shake to the core all that appears to be spiritual, built upon Jesus Christ, or of Christ. That means churches, denominations, ministries, and movements. But most of all, that mean the personal spiritual life of believers. God promises to SHAKE us; expose us to a great fire -- such that everything will be exposed for what it is. And all that will remain eternally is that which is of Christ.

People call for revival. Do we realize that this is exactly what revival is -- revival is JUDGMENT? Revival is God shaking and judgment all things by Jesus Christ so that what remains is only of Christ.

You will note that when such a revival and judgment of God does come that people will, by their own choice, be divided into two camps -- there will be those who voluntarily lose all that God wants to burn, and there will be those who hold onto those things. Thus, the very cause of APOSTASY is going to be REVIVAL. Revival is the judgment of God upon that which is contrary to Christ. People will hold onto that which is contrary to Christ, and thus, stand apart from Christ. That is apostasy.

Any time God brings light there is a choice to choose either darkness or light. Every time God shakes us there is a choice either to hold onto what God wants to shake loose, or discard it and hold onto Christ. We are already seeing the prelude to all of this. But now it is merely that -- a prelude. The great shaking and burning is yet to come.

A Personal Shaking

There are millions of professing Christian people who, right now, have a faith and a life in Christ, that is built of perishable materials. It is not real. It is religion. Certainly ALL of us begin that way to a certain extent. That is why God allows trials in our lives. What is the purpose of these personal trials? Is not the purpose exactly what is stated in Hebrews -- to shake us so that only that which is of Christ remains? Is not the purpose to BURN up -- through the fires of the trial -- all that is temporal, so that only that which is eternal in Christ remains? Absolutely. Thus, many of God's people have experienced, in a personal way, what these passages promise. But again, there is yet to come a more universal fulfillment of these promises of God.

There is going to come a time when God shakes the core of what we today view as Christianity. He is going to shake it all -- so that the Truth about it will be exposed. Whether our faith resided upon the institutions, churches, ministries, and preachers -- or upon the person of Jesus Christ -- this will all be exposed. God is going to knock out from under us all of the crutches. This is going to be REAL and it is going to be traumatic.

Again, people are predicting some great end-time revival that is going to sweep millions upon millions into the kingdom of God. Almost like it is going to be a big party. But so many Christian lives are built upon sand. So many Christian people are living in a delusion of religion. Thus, a revival of any substance is going to require a tremendous COLLAPSE of everything that constitutes those houses that are built upon the sand. Indeed, the sand itself must be overturned and exposed, and those houses must fall. Only then can there be the true house of God built upon the Rock Himself. But when this happens, and it is going to happen, many will fall away. Thus, the great end-time revival that people cry for is going to bring about on a greater scale the great end-time APOSTASY.

Note: God is going to shake the heavenlies. He is going to shake to the foundations all that is spiritual in nature. This is judgment, yes, but unto the redemptive end that only that which is of Christ will remain.

How will this happen? We cannot know. But it is possible that we are seeing the beginnings. More and more Christianity is being openly mocked -- and is actually becoming illegal. What would you and I do if it became a crime to be a Christian? If churches were outlawed? If all preaching was deemed a hate crime? Today Christianity continues to be big business. Someday it will again be big trouble. God is going to expose our faith for what it is.

What if there was absolutely nothing you could rely upon for your spiritual life except the reality of Jesus Christ IN YOU? What if everything else were in chaos spiritually? Or even materially? What if there were no affirmations, no assurances, no crutches, no place of spiritual ease, and no hope whatsoever, save Jesus Christ Himself in His

people? I guess we would find out what is real. This is going to happen on a scale that most of us cannot fathom.

There are many of God's people who, at risk of sounding critical, are simply arrogant and self-assured in their Christianity. They think they are hot stuff. They think God is going to AFFIRM them. They feel invincible because they think that they have been so faithful to God that He could not possibly let anything bad happen to them. Think again. What happened to the disciples? To God's own Son?

But the real question is this: Do we really want Jesus Christ and only Jesus Christ? Are we willing to allow God to do whatever it takes to bring to pass His full will and purpose in Christ? Well, look around you. What do you and I think that IS going to take? It is going to take a great shaking -- the core and foundation of this fake institution we call Christianity is going to have to be shaken. And then Jesus Christ will be seen.

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? (I Peter 4:17)

If we want to know what we need to be doing in these times, so that we might be ready for the great shaking, the answer is that we need to allow God to shake us NOW. God wants to establish us in Jesus Christ NOW -- and if He does -- then we will have a Rock and an anchor that is eternal.

The Wheat and the Tares

Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that sows the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which

do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Matt. 13:36-43)

This is Jesus' interpretation of His parable of the wheat and tares. One of the keys to understanding this parable is to know that TARES are not weeds. No. Tares are FAKE wheat. And until both the wheat and the tares are matured, it is impossible to tell the difference between the two.

In this parable, Jesus is telling us ahead of time that during the church age God is going to allow much that is fake to grow along side of that which is genuine. Indeed, heresy, corruption, and error is going to be allowed by God to be present within the body of Christ. Why? Paul told us why:

For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are genuine may be made manifest among you. (I Cor. 11:19)

Heresies, and false teaching, are allowed by God within the body of Christ as vehicles by which those who truly want the Truth can grow. For when I encounter false teaching, indeed, even when I encounter the Truth, I have a choice. I will either adjust the Truth to fit myself, or I will allow the Truth to adjust me to Christ. I will either allow the error to lead me astray because it appeals to the error in my heart, or I will seek God with all of my heart for the Truth. According to the apostle Paul, God allows heresy as a tool by which God can bring people who honestly want the Truth – who have genuine faith -- into a greater knowledge of Jesus Christ. Likewise, if my faith is not genuine, the heresy will bring that out as well – I will be deceived if I do not turn to God.

This is really an explanation of the parable. In the parable, the tares are people – but can be expanded to me ALL error that is within the body of Christ. These will be allowed to grow along side of the genuine during this age. In fact, it may seem as if God is not doing much about it. But in the end, it is all going to be sorted out. All that is NOT of God – the tares – are going to be rooted out and discarded. What will remain is only that which is of Christ.

This great shaking – sometimes pictured as a burning, and sometimes pictured as a sorting out of wheat from tares – is going on RIGHT NOW. The impact of Christ in the life of each believer is that of dividing, sorting, shaking, and burning – the work of the Cross – all unto the end that only that which is of Christ might remain. The ultimate outworking of this will take place at the end of the age.

God wants us to lose ourselves to Him NOW so that we might not be judged later – so that there need not be any, “surprises,” later. But make no question about it, God is going to have His will. He is going to have Christ as all in all. That is His promise and that is His purpose.

Chapter 42

God is Love

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear hath torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. (1 John 4:16-19)

It is easy for Christian people to get wrapped up in doctrine, teaching, and church practice, all the while losing sight of the Person of Jesus Christ. But while we must believe and teach true Biblical doctrine, and do it without compromise, God did not send His Son to give us a correct list of doctrines. He sent Christ to give us HIMSELF – and to give us all that is IN CHRIST.

In the beginning, Christianity did not emerge from doctrines. Doctrines emerged from Christianity – doctrines emerged from a personal experience of, and a knowing of, the Person of Jesus Christ. If a person is living in Jesus Christ the doctrines that will emerge will rightly represent Christ, and the plan of God through Him. They will agree complete with the Bible. But in the end, Christianity is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” It is not merely consist of faith or belief in a list of doctrines.

If we read the passage above from 1 John 4, we will read that, “God is love.” That is a doctrine; a doctrine of the nature and character of God. But how far does the sentence, “God is love,” really take us? The letter of the Word is Truth. But in order for us to actually experience God’s love, and experience what is written in this passage, we must experience the revelation of, and life of, God Himself through Jesus Christ.

What is the Love of God?

The Greek word that God uses for His love is AGAPE. But what does that word mean? Well, first of all, AGAPE is not an emotion.

If we were to see Jesus Christ and experience God’s love through Him, I would hope that we would have an

emotional reaction. But our emotional reaction is just that: Our reaction. The emotion itself would not BE LOVE. It is simply how a human being reacts emotionally to experiencing God.

The actual love of God might be described as follows:

The agape love of God is His commitment to His highest for the one loved, regardless of the personal cost to Himself, or to them.

This is a description, not of emotion, but of will and intent. And if you read this, you can see that there is likewise an application of AGAPE between God's people:

The agape love of God is our commitment to Him for His highest for the one loved, regardless of the personal cost to them, or to us.

What you can see from these descriptions is that AGAPE is GOD CENTERED. It is not a, "thing," or merely a fuzzy emotion. No. AGAPE is from out of God unto His own will and purpose. And that means it is always unto God's highest – unto redemption, restoration, and fullness in Christ.

John the apostle said, "God IS love." It isn't that God merely does love – He does – but God does love because God IS love. AGAPE is the very nature and character of God. In effect, since God cannot be other than His own nature, then all that God is, and all that He does is AGAPE. It is all unto His highest for all.

God's greatest expression of His love was that He gave us His Son, Jesus Christ. And once God gave us His Son His love did not run out. Rather, if Jesus Christ is in a believer, then the love of God is forever in that believer – Jesus Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit personifies the love of God.

The Wrath of God

The Bible speaks of the, "the wrath of God." So the question is, "If God is love, then how can there be such a thing as His wrath?" Well, the first thing we have to do is get out of our thinking any comparison between the wrath of God and the wrath of man. The anger of man does not work the righteousness of God. But the wrath of God

DOES work His righteousness. The anger of man is usually from a sense of personal offense. The wrath of God is never from a sense of personal offense. Indeed, the wrath of God is simply an expression of AGAPE – His love.

How is God's wrath His love? In the same way that the anger of a parent is FOR the child, rather than against the child. Human parents are imperfect, but ideally, when a parent is angry at a child it is because they LOVE the child. So it is with God. He always wants His highest for us. But if we reject Him, such that He needs to take drastic action, His love does not change. His, "wrath," is His love.

The WRATH OF GOD is a phrase that captures the necessity of God's judgment upon an individual or a situation. God, "pours out His wrath," not in an angry fit, but as a redemptive measure, when things have run their course and God can no longer, in His love, let them continue.

God has given humanity a free will. But God is, in the end, going to have HIS WILL. When things reach an impasse, and God can no longer permit humanity to reject His will, God will take action. He will come in and judge. It is all unto redemption for those who will turn to Him. But regardless, there is a point where God will no longer let things go along as they have. And when God acts and brings judgment, this can be called, "the wrath of God."

We can see that the wrath of God is His love even in the final condemnation of those who reject Christ. God has given us His Son, Jesus Christ. God has done all that it is possible to do to save all humanity. He has freely given ALL humanity his LOVE through His Son. But God will NOT violate free will. Thus, if people – knowingly and continually – reject Jesus Christ, they are rejecting God's love. God cannot love the rejection of His love. He cannot forgive the refusal of His forgiveness. Thus, if a person rejects the love of God in Christ, what is left for them is that God must judge them by telling the Truth about them. He must give them exactly what they have chosen. God's highest for a person who has rejected His highest can only be eternal separation. This is necessary if God IS God, and if Jesus Christ IS the Truth.

No Fear in Love

John tells us that, ***“God is love...there is no fear in love, for perfect love casts out fear.”*** Think about that. If God IS love, and there is NO FEAR in love, then there can be nothing about God – if we see Him in Truth – that could incite fear in us. There is nothing about God to be afraid of. Indeed, if perfect love CASTS OUT fear, then if since God IS perfect love, then the more we know Him, the more fear will be CAST OUT.

Fear is never of God. Ever. “The fear of God,” that the Bible mentions is a REVERENCE for God. It is not a matter of being AFRAID of Him. Reverence for God is the result of the love of God. Being afraid of God is the result of deception.

If you read the Genesis account of Adam’s sin, you will note that the first impact of Adam’s separation from God was FEAR. This was not merely an emotional fear. It was Adam’s spiritual condition – it is what happens to a human being who is separated from God. They are governed by, “the spirit of fear.”

Paul wrote to Timothy, ***“God has NOT given us a spirit of fear.”*** This indicates that FEAR, while we may emotionally react to it, is not emotional at the root. Fear is spiritual in nature – it is of the enemy.

But Paul’s statement to Timothy tells us something else: It tells us that fear is NEVER of God. It cannot be of God, for God has not given us a spirit of fear. He has given us His Holy Spirit, which Jesus called, ***“the spirit of Truth,”*** and which is said to be the means by which God imparts to us His love.

Fear in the sense of being afraid of God is NEVER the Truth. It is never the Truth regardless of how real it might seem, or how strong it feels emotionally. That kind of wrong fear is a lie. Indeed, it is a principle: Being afraid of God always goes back to somewhere that I have embraced a lie about Him.

One example will suffice. Suppose it was time to go to bed. I pull back my sheets to get in bed and I see a huge snake lying there on my bed. What a shock that would be! I would immediately react in fear. In fact, if I have a heart that is not healthy, I could die of a heart attack right on

the spot. But what if I then noticed that the snake was fake? It is rubber. Ask: Why was I afraid of a rubber snake? I was afraid because I BELIEVED it was real. My reaction of fear was REAL because I believed the snake was REAL. And if I had died of a heart attack I would be just as dead as if the snake was indeed a real snake.

The point is: If I believe lies about God I am going to react as if those lies are the Truth. And this may provide access for the spirit of fear. I may feel afraid, and be governed by that fear. And yet ALL of it is a lie. God is love. That is the Truth. And no lie, and no belief in that lie, and no emotional or spiritual reaction can change the Truth.

You cannot reason with the spirit of fear. You cannot get free of it by studying theology. You cannot make it go away through human effort, or human means. It will just pop up in another way. Freedom from fear is only possible if the fear is cast out by perfect love. Thus, our need is for God to bring us into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. If we begin to know Jesus Christ the lie we have believed about God, and the attached fear, will lose their grip on us.

Loving God

There are many passages in the New Testament that command Christians to love God, and to love each other. The same commands are there regarding forgiveness. But at some point you and I are going to come face to face with the fact that we CANNOT love God, and we certainly cannot love others. We can fake it, and we might be able to generate a certain amount of emotional, sentimental love. But the love of God? Left to ourselves, there isn't an ounce of it in us.

John gives us the answer: We love God because He first loved us. Can we see that this fact cannot be accounted for doctrinally? You can believe the doctrine, "God is love," until you are blue in the face, but doing so will not cause you to actually experience the love of God, let alone enable you to love others. That is because John is talking about experiencing Jesus Christ. He is talking about coming into an inward realization of CHRIST IN US. Only then can any of this be real.

John is stating a principle that governs everything in the Christian experience: That we have NOTHING in ourselves. Nothing. All that is of value – all that is of God – must first be received from above through the presence of Jesus Christ in us. And then, as we come into an inward realization of Christ we will be changed accordingly. Our minds will be renewed, and our hearts changed, such that Christ be able to love others through us.

Contrast this over and against you and I trying to muster up love out of ourselves, and then trying to generate it out to others. This would be human love at best, and despite what it might look like or feel like, it would have the interests of man. Look around the church today. So often what is called LOVE or tolerance in the church is not love. It is not a commitment to GOD'S HIGHEST. It is actually a destructive compromise with the holiness and Truth of God.

The love of God is not the affirmation of man. AGAPE is not in, "man's best interests." Rather, the love of God is OUT FROM GOD -- to humanity -- for God's interests. And God's interests are always the best for humanity. Jesus Christ did not come to give humanity the will of man. He came to give humanity the will of God.

It is not necessary for any of us to struggle loving or forgiving others. We can only love God if we have first realized His love for us. We can only love others if we have first realized the love God has given us. The same goes for forgiveness. The source of all that is of God is NOT US. It is not from out of our earthly nature. The source is Christ in us. Thus, what we need is an inward realization and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

If you read the epistles of John the apostle, you cannot but help conclude that the statement, "God is love," is the ultimate description that can be given of God. It covers all. AGAPE is behind all that God does because AGAPE is who God IS.

Chapter 43

What is the Gospel?

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 1:1-3)

What is the gospel? What is the good news of God? The good news is wrapped up in a PERSON – and that Person is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Paul said, “The gospel concerning His Son.” The gospel contains the message of good news from God. But ultimately, the gospel is the revelation of God’s Son, Jesus Christ -- and that He has done, but all that He IS.

If you read the New Testament, it becomes clear that the gospel, even though it is introduced through the message of salvation through Christ, likewise includes ALL that God has given in Christ. In short, the gospel is THE TRUTH that is revealed in the Person of the Son of God.

The Simple Gospel

The good news is that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to do for human beings what human beings could not do for themselves. And what was that? God sent Christ to deliver us all from sin through His death on the Cross -- and He sent Christ to usher in a new creation through His resurrection. He sent Christ to die and be raised so that we could be restored back to God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16-17)

God Become Man

Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He left that position in heaven and became a man. Such was the sacrifice He made to even come to this earth – Jesus was the Word of God – the only begotten Son of God – and God gave Him to us. This gift began when Jesus left the

Father, and while remaining God, became a flesh and blood human being.

Christ Jesus, who existing in nature and character as God, did not consider equality with God a prize to be grasped at and retained for Himself. But He emptied Himself, and took upon himself the state of a servant, and He as God came to be in the likeness of men. (Phil 2:6-7)

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

So Jesus voluntarily left His place in heaven, and became a human being. This was accomplished when He was conceived by the Spirit of God through the virgin Mary through a divine miracle. The virgin birth was essential because it means that Jesus did not begin to exist when He was conceived in Mary. No. Rather, He preexisted as God and was supernaturally transferred into Mary's womb – now as a tiny life. This is the Immaculate Conception. This miracle conception made it possible for Him to be born as a human being, yet fully as the eternal Son of God. And since Jesus was born of a virgin, and not the product of human reproduction, it means He was not born of the fallen human race. He was born without a sin nature.

His Sinless Life

When Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary into this world -- that BEGAN His journey. He lived a perfectly sinless life for over 33 years. The Bible calls Him, "The Lamb of God without blemish."

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Heb 4:15)

For God has made Jesus to be like sin for us, even though Christ knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor 5:21)

Death and Resurrection

At the end of His sinless life, and at the end of the three and one-half years of ministry, Jesus offered Himself up to the Cross for us all.

And being seen and known as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:8)

Jesus Christ did NOT die for an elect few. Jesus died for every human being that ever has, or ever will, live – and His Redemption paid for every sin that has ever been committed by every human being. Therefore, God offers Christ to ALL – no matter the sin, and no matter how old they are. "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." The good news is that Jesus died for ALL – and God invites all to come to Christ. But only those who do come and believe are saved.

Our Life in Christ

Deliverance from the old life into newness of life in Christ is possible because Jesus died FOR us and was raised FOR us. Everything depends upon His finished work. But in order for what He has done to have any effect for me, I have to come to Christ and be baptized into Him; be united with Him in His death. Only then will I be raised with Him in His resurrection. Salvation is not given out as a THING. Salvation is a PERSON, and is experienced only IN HIM.

It is the same regarding freedom from sin. Not only did Jesus win for us the forgiveness of God for all sin, but He also made possible for us to be DELIVERED from all bondage to sin. This is possible because Jesus did die FOR us – but become effective for us if we are united with Him IN HIS DEATH.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20)

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like

as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God. Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 6:3-11)

So through His death, and our union with Him, Jesus delivers us from all sin. But there is even more. Jesus delivers us from all the damage sin has done. How? Not by fixing the old man in Adam – but by delivering us from the old man in Adam. He gives us HIMSELF as our life. The body and soul will then be greatly impacted. There is redemption for everything in His Blood.

Christ in You

When a person see the Truth of the gospel and puts their faith in Jesus Christ, God gives them the gift of eternal life – yes, but more than that -- God gives them Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ comes to dwell in those who receive Him – He becomes one with our human spirit. This is how we are, "planted into His death and resurrection," – Christ dwells at one with us in spirit. But because of that, everything He has done on the Cross, and everything He is through His resurrection, is likewise given to us in Christ. Thus, Jesus Christ in us IS our salvation – He is our life. Christianity is, ***"Christ in us, the hope of glory."*** (Col. 1:27)

Repent and Believe

The good news of the gospel states that you and I do not need to do anything to be saved except, "Repent and believe on Christ." That means that we must realize we are lost sinners, and desire to forsake our lives and any sin into the hands of God through Christ. Basically, it means that we cry out to God in need for salvation. It

means that we come to the Cross and commit our entire trust for salvation to Jesus Christ and what He has done. We cannot earn salvation, and there is nothing we can do to KEEP saved. In fact, according to the Bible, good works are the outcome of salvation, and not the means of earning it.

For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:8-10)

There are a couple of other places in the Bible where the gospel is clearly stated, either in part, or in whole:

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. (1 Tim 1:15)

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand....for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: (1 Cor. 15:1-4)

This is the simple gospel. For those who embrace it, what follows is everything that God has given in Jesus Christ.