

# **The Mystery of Godliness**

**By Ian Thomas**

## Reflecting God's Glory

I tell you the truth, *anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing...* And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. (John 14:12-13 Emphasis added)

The Son of God came into the world to display His Father's life of love. Both His way of life and the works He did were a result of His Father working through Him in the power of the Holy Spirit. He brought glory to the Father by permitting His Father to express the Kingdom-life through His mortal body.

The children of God were never intended to live by their own strength. If your life can still be explained in terms of you – your personality, your gifts, your talent, your will-power, your money, your courage, your dedication, your scholarship, or your anything – you are not yet walking as Jesus did. You will need to learn how the Son lived by the power of the Holy Spirit before you can become a true vessel of God's glory.

In the same way Jesus received His life from the Father and thereby displayed the Father's glory in this world, we are to receive our life from the Son. Jesus said, "And the glory which You {the Father} gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me." (John 17:22-23) The Son is able to continue bringing glory to the Father as we permit Him to display the light of His life and works through our mortal bodies while walking in this world. "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness." (2 Pet. 1:3)

God's children were created to reflect the light of God's glory. We have been designed in a way that will permit the divine power of Christ's Spirit to work through us. We are therefore expected to reflect a heavenly nature that is referred to in the Scriptures as the "light of life" in our daily activities. And according to God's Word, everyone who sees this "light" will know the life is coming through a work of God's power.

I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. (John 8:12)

Whoever lives by the truth *comes into the light*, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.  
(John 3:21 Emphasis added)

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

As we study these lessons, we will find that God expects His children to live through the power of His Spirit by dependent faith. Jesus, while living in a mortal body, was able to display His Father's glory because He depended on the power of the Spirit working through Him in everything He did. In the same way, we will be enabled to "walk as Jesus did" (1 John 2:6) when we are walking by the same kind of dependent faith. Jesus therefore said, "Anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing."

Jesus does not mean that everyone will duplicate His miracles. The Son does, however, intend to display His divine nature of love through each of His disciples "so that the Son may bring glory to the Father." The Father receives the glory because the "light of life" being displayed becomes a reflection of His life of divine love.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more...so that you may be pure and blameless...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:9-11)

## Doing the Impossible

To help provide an understanding of how Christians are to live by the power of God through dependent faith and display God's loving nature in everything they do, we will look at a lesson taught by Jesus when He fed the five thousand. We find Him using Philip as an example to help explain this spiritual principle.

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what He was going to do. (John 6:5-6)

Jesus was always prepared to respond to the situations presented to Him by His Father. Even though He had surrendered His own power and glory to live as a man in a weak mortal body, a life that required Him to depend on the Father for everything, nothing overwhelmed Him. He was never baffled. Jesus continued to trust in His Father's ability to be in everything He did. As One who lived in the light, it could therefore "be seen plainly" how His works were being done "through God." (John 3:21)

Jesus presented the problem of feeding the five thousand to Philip to expose a darkness that still existed in Philip's thought processes. Philip had not yet learned to live by faith in God's power. His thinking was still connected to the way that man naturally lives – by his own efforts. Jesus knew that if Philip continued to live by human wisdom and strength, it would be impossible for Philip to reflect the glory of God in this world as he was created to do.

The other disciples would have undoubtedly given a response similar to the one given by Philip. Jesus was merely using Philip as an example. His response to the question reflects a natural human thought process. He said, "Eight months wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" (John 6:7)

Can we see what Philip was using as the basis to resolve the problem? Was he thinking in terms of what God is able to accomplish through His power? No! He naturally turned to the purchasing power of money! Philip had not yet learned to consider God's power when confronting difficult situations.

What are you depending on? Have you learned to walk in a way that truly depends on the power of God? As you were making your various decisions over this past week, did you naturally turn to your own sufficiency? Did you have a tendency to live by your own wisdom and strength? Did you take into account that Jesus has gone to be with the Father to enable you to live as He did through the power of God?

You will need to repent in every area of your life where you have not learned to live by faith in God's power. If you are not yet living in a moment by moment dependence on your risen Lord, if there is somewhere you are still trying to be adequate without Him, then you are not yet walking as a spiritual Christian. And, of course, if you are still living by your own strength, others will not be able to see the light and glory of God working through you. (John 3:21)

Jesus next asked His disciples, "How many loaves do you have?...Go and see." (Mark 6:38) "Another of his disciples, Andrew...spoke up, 'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?' " (John 6:8-9) Again, we see human wisdom getting in the way of living by faith in God's power!

A small child offering his lunch to feed the multitude did not seem to offer any real help. But God, in order to display His glory, will often make use of things that appear foolish to the natural mind. He generally avoids using the most prominent or the most promising to accomplish His divine work. "But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong." (1 Cor. 1:27) He has chosen to manifest His glory by using those who come to Him in childlike simplicity and faith, offering what they have for His use.

There was a secret to the miracle Jesus performed. He wanted to teach this lesson to His first disciples. He also desires to share the same secret with His disciples today. This is a lesson we all need to learn.

"Jesus then took the loaves, *gave thanks*, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish" (John 6:11 Emphasis added) We are now coming to the very heart of *The Mystery of Godliness*! It is written that Jesus took the loaves and "gave thanks" to the Father. In other words, He expressed His complete dependence on the Father. Because He was truly relying on His Father to provide the power needed to do His

assigned work, and He had faith in His Father, He was able to express thanksgiving prior to the work being done.

The Son of God continually refused to do anything through His own strength while He lived as a man. He said, "I do nothing of Myself." (John 8:28) He depended on the Father for everything. He was enabled to miraculously distribute the food through the hands of His disciples by depending on a power that came from His Father in heaven.

Without question, Jesus Christ, who was God in a mortal body, could have exercised His own power as God to feed the five thousand. He could have lived by His own strength. But if He ever acted on His own {in His own sufficiency} while living as a man, He would have stopped living as God had planned for man to live.

Jesus came into this world to show fallen man how to live by the power of God through a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. He was called the Second or Last Adam because He came to demonstrate how man was originally designed to live by dependent faith in God's power. He set an example by depending on the Father for everything. He then told His disciples to follow Him into the same "light of life."

Living as a Son, Jesus Christ revealed the life and work of the Father through His mortal body. (John 1:18) He was an expression of His Father's life of perfect love. In all He said, in all He did, and in all He was, Jesus said, "it is the Father, living in Me, who is doing His work." (John 14:10) And He expects every Christian to walk as He did.

But if anyone obeys His word {and relies on the power of the Spirit as Jesus did}, God's love is truly made complete {perfected - NKJV} in him. Whoever claims to live in Him must walk {by dependent faith} as Jesus did. (1 John 2:5-6)

We need to understand this spiritual principle. It was the Father who fed the five thousand through a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, while He lived as a man, was a human vessel through whom the Father both displayed His divine spiritual life and did His mighty works.

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, how did He do it? The miracle was not from Himself. He said to Martha, "Did I not tell you that *if you believed*, you

would see the glory of God?" (John 11:40 Emphasis added) Faith in His heavenly Father was the key that enabled Jesus to display the glory of God. It required a real dependence on the working of the Spirit's divine power in everything He did.

Christ did every miracle in the same way that He fed the five thousand. He acknowledged the Father as the source of all power, and humbly depended on the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work.

God's glory can only be displayed as we depend on Him. It is as simple as that! "Then Jesus looked up and said, 'Father, I thank You that you have heard Me. I know that You always hear Me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that You sent Me.' " (John 11:41-42) He wanted the people to recognize how He was living through a source of power that came from His heavenly Father.

God reveals His spiritual children to the world by the way He answers their prayers with divine power. By turning from the independent and self-sufficient way of life we have all inherited from fallen Adam, we will have an opportunity to come into the light and walk as Jesus did. God can then begin answering our prayers as we enter into His will, and walk in the way that He originally created His children to live.

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. (1 John 3:22)

Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God. (John 3:21)

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing... And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. (John 14:12-13)

This is how God's children were created to live. Because the Son is now with the Father, and He is in a position where He possesses all power and authority in heaven and on earth, He can now live and work through His disciples. But He can only provide a clear manifestation of His life and works through us when we

have been fully sanctified {set apart} for His exclusive use {"For His exclusive use" is something other than doing "religious work exclusively"}.

While we are to pray to our Father, the Son is the One who will be working through our lives by the power of His Spirit. He said, "without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) He still needs to fulfill His role as a Son who lives to bring all glory to the Father. By manifesting His divine life and works through the members of His body here on earth, His disciples are enabled to become "the sent ones" who display the light and glory of God.

As God's children, we are to acknowledge Him as the source of everything that is good in the world and then rely on Him to direct our steps according to His plans. As we walk in this path of dependent faith, there also needs to be a real reliance on Him as the One who will accomplish our assigned work. And even though He will generally make use of our physical activities in the work He assigns, He will also make it plain that what we are doing is being done through Him. (John 3:21)

Jesus displayed the "light of life" from heaven while walking as a man in a weak mortal body. His whole life was a miracle. Because He always walked in the power of the Holy Spirit, He could honestly say, "I do nothing of Myself."

Similarly, when we have stopped living by our own sufficiency and have learned to live wholly by faith in the power of God, the Lord will also enable us to display the same "light of life." (John 8:12) But, as we shall see, this is not an easy lesson for Christ's disciples to learn.





## Dying to Self-Sufficiency

For they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.  
(Mark 6:52)

As the first disciples demonstrated in their own walk with Jesus, it is not easy to learn to live by faith in God's power. This difficulty of learning to walk wholly by faith in God has prevented many from entering into the life of promise. Fallen man has lived by a self-sufficiency for too long to suddenly begin depending on God for everything. As we shall see, the first disciples had a difficult time adjusting to this walk of faith, even after being taught these same lessons many times during a close walk with Jesus.

The Kingdom-life of God, where everyone lives under the control and power of the Holy Spirit, is not easy to enter. It will therefore be necessary to explain to new converts, as Jesus did, how difficult it is to enter into the life of promise. Jesus said, "Difficult is the way which leads to life {the Kingdom-life where God's children live under the control and power of His Spirit}, and there are few who find it." (Matt. 7:14) If we do not strive to enter into this "rest" where everyone truly lives by faith in God's power, we will be unable to manifest the "light of life" from heaven.

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest *for the people of God*; for anyone who enters God's rest also *rests from his own work*... Let us, therefore, *make every effort to enter that rest*... (Heb. 4:9-11 Emphasis added)

Because of the difficulty involved, Jesus told people to consider the cost before they tried to follow Him into His Kingdom-life. A real decision had to be made. They would need to determine beforehand if they were prepared to devote themselves entirely to the task at hand.

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish." (Luke 14:28-30)

Although we seldom hear these words from preachers in this day, they are the words of Jesus. His words and His ways will never change. Men may try to change the Lord's teachings to better fit their own desires, but all they are doing is departing from the Lord.

Everyone who wants to follow Jesus will need to learn these truths. They will experience just as much difficulty following Him into His Kingdom-life today as did the people who first received this warning from Jesus. Let us therefore believe our Lord when He says, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter {the Kingdom-life} and will not be able to." (Luke 13:24)

Even after deciding to pay the price to buy the heavenly Pearl (the Lord's Kingdom-life), which will entail a real turning from the independent and self-sufficient ways of the world, it will not be easy to stay on course. In other words, finding the Pearl and deciding to buy it is not enough! We will need to surrender everything from our old independent and self-sufficient way of life before we can receive it. (Matt. 13:45-46)

So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has {from his independent and self-sufficient way of life} cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:33)

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away... How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord... (Heb. 2:1, 3)

The members of Christ's body will generally require considerable instruction and exhortation before they will be in a condition to have the Lord's Kingdom-life fully established within their hearts. We learn this lesson by the way Paul taught the true gospel message in the first century. He knew there was a need for a real dying out to the old self-sufficient way of life. We therefore find

him exhorting his pupils to press forward in their faith until they had entered into the Kingdom-life of promise:

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

Similar to the pilgrimage taken by God's people in the Old Testament, which is a spiritual type used by God to teach Christians in this age of fulfillment (1 Cor. 10:1-12), the children of faith in the New Testament will pass through a time of testing before they enter into the life of promise. And, as Jesus has stated, many of His followers will end up turning away from this walk of faith during the time when tribulations are being used to strip away their self-sufficient spirit. "For many, I say to you, will seek to enter {the Kingdom-life} and will not be able to." (Luke 13:24) "They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away." (Luke 8:13)

Instead of putting the flesh-life to death by the Spirit, many disciples actually go back to living by the flesh. This is why Christians need to be instructed in the ways of the Spirit and exhorted to press forward in their faith until God has established His Kingdom-life within their hearts. (Heb. 3:7 – 4:11)

For if you live according to the flesh {by your own sufficiency after being reconciled to God} you will die {have a spiritual life that keeps dying}; but if by the Spirit {as regenerate Christians} you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live {in the Kingdom-life}. (Rom. 8:13)

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; *for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly* into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:10-11 Emphasis added)

The Lord's Kingdom-life will be fully established within the hearts of Christ's followers when they have died to the fleshly ways of fallen man. Every disciple will therefore need to be exhorted to continue in the way of faith while God is stripping away their old self-sufficient way of life in the time of tribulation and testing.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience {and reliance on God}. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete {in faith and love}, lacking nothing... Blessed is the man who endures temptation {in the time of testing}; *for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life* {the Kingdom-life} *which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.* (James 1:2-4, 12 Emphasis added)

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, *after you have suffered a while* {while being turned from the old self-sufficient way of life in the time of testing}, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (1 Pet. 5:10 Emphasis added)

Christ has provided His church with pastors and teachers to build the members of His body up in their faith so they will begin to rely on God for all things. Both the spiritual life and the works that Jesus has planned to display through the members of His body can only take place when they are living wholly by faith in Him. They will therefore need someone who can help them understand how Jesus lived by the power of the Spirit through faith. This is why the church needs spiritual leaders who can instruct and exhort the members of Christ's body "till we all come to the *unity of the faith* and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man {complete in faith and love}, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13 Emphasis added)

Merely holding a position in the church does not make someone spiritual. All too often we find unspiritual people striving for positions in the body of Christ in the same way people "of the world" achieve their positions. The flesh has a natural appetite for position and power over others. It loves to be recognized, consulted, honored, admired and obeyed. Obviously, any "leader" who is still following the self-sufficient and self-exalting ways of this world will be incapable of leading others into the kind of faith that permits Christ to establish His Kingdom-life within the hearts of His followers. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life {the Kingdom-life}... (1 Tim. 6:11-12)

How patient Christ was with His first disciples! Having learned nothing from the feeding of the five thousand, they were given another opportunity in a different setting to learn this lesson about living by faith in God. "For they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened." (Mark 6:52)

In this next lesson they were separated from Christ's presence. They were left alone and in a difficult position to help them recognize how great was their need to have God's power working in their lives. And of course, trouble was bound to develop when they became separated from Christ's presence. They ended up "...in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, *for the wind was contrary.*" (Matt. 14:24 Emphasis added)

Jesus will often leave His disciples on their own when they are still trying to live by their own strength. He will permit them to be confounded by many "contrary" providences. It is during these *rough times* that He will be doing His work of breaking their self-sufficient spirit and teaching them to live by faith in God's power.

Do you remember how Peter considered himself to be strong before he was clothed with power from the Spirit on the day of Pentecost? He thought he was capable of standing with Jesus even until death. But Jesus knew this human "strength" would prevent Peter from entering into the kingdom of light where everyone lives by faith in God's power. Jesus therefore permitted Satan to "sift" Peter for a while. (Luke 22:31-32) Only after Peter's sense of self-sufficiency had been brought to a real death would he be able to truly live by faith in God's power.

Once Peter had become "poor in spirit" and had lost all hope in his own strength, he was in a position to enter into the kind of dependent faith that enabled God to lift him with divine power into the light of Christ's Kingdom-life. (Matt. 5:3) Once he had lost hope in his own strength, he was prepared to wait on God in prayer to be clothed with power from above.

Living by dependent faith in the power of God is the *Mystery of Godliness*. Every believer will need to learn this foundation truth: *The power of the Holy Spirit is perfected through God's children as yielded believers become weaker in self and more dependent on Him.* (2 Cor. 12:9)

Life in the kingdom of God is diametrically opposed to the way people live in this world. In the world people need to look out for themselves and strive to achieve the goals they have set for themselves. Only the strongest, or the most talented, or the most assertive, or the most educated rise to the top. In contrast, the people who are willing to become the most dependent on God become the greatest in His kingdom. It is not that they are placed in elevated seats of

prominence, but they become the most useful servants. It is those who are willing to become the most childlike in their dependence on God who will become the most valuable servants in the kingdom of God.

Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a {helpless and dependent} little child will by no means enter it. (Mark. 10:15)

...What is highly valued among men {the independent and self-exalting ways of the world} is detestable in God's sight. (Luke 16:15)

The first disciples, while they were being tossed by the storm, did all they could to escape from their situation. With their backs bent to the oars, and with perspiration pouring down their faces from their great struggle, they tried to save themselves from their situation. Eventually, however, they recognized their helpless condition. It was not until they had considered themselves "as good as dead" that we find Christ coming to them in divine power.

Paul tells us that Abraham had to reach this same state of helplessness, where he had lost all hope in human effort, before he possessed the kind of pure faith that enabled him to receive the "life of promise" through the power of God. (Rom. 4:19) The only thing he produced through his human efforts to help God was a flesh-life, which was represented by Ishmael.

In a similar sense, God will only use His power to lift His children into His Kingdom-life when they are "as good as dead." Every Christian must come to this point where they die to the ways of the flesh before they can begin living wholly by faith in God. Until they are brought to this state of helplessness, they will naturally try to produce the "life of promise" through their own human efforts. Those who lose their flesh-life will find Christ's Kingdom-life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death {Christ's death to the flesh-life}, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection {His Kingdom-life}... For he who has died has been freed from sin {the old life of self-sufficiency and self-will}. (Rom. 6:5, 7)

Again, as the Scriptures have so clearly revealed, there needs to be a real dying out to the old self-sufficient way of life before the promised Kingdom-life can be fully established within the soul. This lesson comes directly from our Lord: "Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matt. 16:25)

God takes away our self-sufficient spirit by exposing us to difficult situations. These difficulties are intended to cause us to lose hope in our own fleshly strength. And, because this lesson is so hard for self-sufficient people to learn, it typically involves a lengthy and painful process.

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God...But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, *after you have suffered a while* {in dying to your independent and self-sufficient way of life}, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (1 Pet. 5:6, 10 Emphasis added)

...We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22)

“Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.” (Matt. 14:25) *Jesus came to His helpless disciples walking in a supernatural life. He was demonstrating a simple fact: The very sea that threatened to overwhelm and destroy them had been placed under His feet! He always has everything under His control! There is nothing impossible for God!*

Have you come to that point when you have been overwhelmed by the sea? Here is good news for you! You are being prepared to meet the Lord in a new and supernatural way. When you lose hope in yourself and enter His rest, He will come to you as the One who walks over everything that threatens your spiritual life.

The Lord teaches His most profound lessons in the midst of the storms. It was when everything was contrary to His disciples that Jesus appeared and said, “I Am; stop being afraid.” And when He was in the boat with them, the wind ceased. “Then those who were in the boat worshipped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’ ” (Matt. 14:33)

If you learn nothing else from this book, remember to trust in Christ and stay close to Him! He will take you into His rest in due time. You will then be enabled to continually experience a peace that transcends all understanding and a joy that is inexpressible and full of glory. (Phil. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 1:8)

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, *that He may lift you up* {into the Kingdom-life} *in due time*. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. (1 Pet. 5:6-7 Emphasis added)

You must learn to live in complete dependence on the Lord in all your activities. Christ desires to be in your life in a way that lifts you spiritually above all the storms of this world. He is the great "I Am." Nothing is impossible for Him. Only when you realize this fact, and have begun to manifest this childlike dependence in the way you walk, will you truly be worshipping God.

Your "unbelief" can actually prevent God from working with His power in your life. Jesus said, "According to your faith will it be done to you." (Matt. 9:29) And the Hebrew writer said, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." (Heb. 11:6) In other words, we please God and receive His enabling power in our lives as we rely on Him in the same way a dependent little child relies on his parent. If we are unwilling to enter into this childlike dependence on God for everything, we cannot please Him and we cannot expect to be lifted by His power into His Kingdom-life in due time.

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

We are told that Christ could not work mighty miracles in the lives of people in His own village because they lacked faith. "Now He could do no mighty work there... And He marveled because of their unbelief." (Mark 6:5-6) It was their lack of dependent faith that prevented God from working in their lives.

Do you still lack faith in Christ's ability to turn you into a vessel of His life and works? When you "have faith in God," you will be enabled to move mountain-like obstacles from your appointed path. (Mark 11:22-23) Let us therefore, for the sake of God's glory, learn to live by faith in Him.

We do not necessarily use God's power to avoid difficult situations. We do, however, depend on His power to manifest the life of Jesus through our mortal bodies regardless of the difficulties. (2 Cor. 4:11) Our ability to reflect the glorious life of the Son is actually enhanced during periods of hardship.

Paul has described how he received a deeper revelation of this important spiritual principle during a very difficult time in one of his missionary journeys. He said, "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardship we suffered in the province of Asia... Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened {this loss of all hope in the flesh} that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead." (2 Cor. 1:8-9)



Any trial that increases our dependent faith in God is actually working for both our good and God's glory. But if we are to learn from these difficulties and tribulations, we will need to stop depending on our own strength and learn to live wholly by faith in God's power. Only in this way is Christ able to manifest His Kingdom-life through us.

Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard... The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought... You shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. (Isa. 58:8, 11)

## The Nature of the Mystery

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh... (1 Tim. 3:16)

Godliness is a mystery! Fail to grasp this fact and you will never understand the nature of godliness. It is a mystery to the human mind because human wisdom naturally thinks in terms of human effort. But true godliness is received as a gift from God through a supernatural work of His Spirit. God uses the divine power of His Spirit to provide a new nature within our eternal soul when we are living wholly by faith in Him. (2 Pet. 1:3-4)

The Galatian Christians provide an example of how even earnest believers have a tendency to rely on their own human efforts to become righteous after receiving the gift of the Spirit. Because these Christians had not learned how to walk under the control and power of the Holy Spirit by dependent faith, Paul needed to correct them.

This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by...faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit {regeneration and a past event}, are you now being made perfect {complete in self-sacrificing love} by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things {to break the self-sufficient spirit} in vain...? (Gal. 3:2-4)

For we {as God's called-out children} through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness *by faith*. (Gal. 5:5 Emphasis added)

The Galatians are not the only Christians who have been taken through many painful trials to remove their self-sufficient spirit in vain. Many trust in the Lord to be forgiven for their sins and justified before God, but then they attempt to improve their Christian life by their own human efforts. Paul would have this same question for every Christian who is still living by their own fleshly efforts: "Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect {complete in love} by the flesh?"

Someone who has seen expressions of God's divine life of love may be tempted to imitate the life by trying to reproduce similar acts of benevolence. But everyone who is still living by their own efforts will continue to find a self-centered nature corrupting their most loving acts. Until this old nature has died out and Christ has been enabled to establish His Kingdom-life of love within the heart, their identical acts of benevolence will lack the nature of divine love.

Pride may persuade you "not to be out-done" by someone who is genuinely spiritual. You may even impress the undiscerning with your acts of generosity {which includes service to God}, and thereby achieve your selfish ends, but your "generosity" will not be "godliness." When self is still in the middle of your works, your "generosity" will continue to have a selfish quality about it!

The carnal nature, even when it is trying to love as Jesus did, will expose itself when not properly rewarded. For example, when the self-centered nature still prevails, even earnest Christians will eventually lose their motivation for serving if they are not rewarded or recognized for their "loving acts." They will also become irritated whenever someone interferes with their plans. As Jesus has said, "For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth {eventually, if not immediately} speaks." (Matt. 12:34)

In contrast to these works of the flesh, godliness – or God-likeness – is the direct and exclusive consequence of God's activity in His children. When God is supernaturally displaying His life of love through His children of faith, the Lord's indwelling presence completely satisfies their inner soul. These spiritual Christians therefore have the capacity to continue loving others even when they are being treated poorly. As they continue to give of themselves to the work of the Lord, they are rewarded with a constant inward flow of God's eternal life of love. "Indeed, the water I {the Lord} give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14)

The eternal life is God's Kingdom-life of love. This life, which will naturally express a very special quality of love, is to begin welling up and overflowing from our eternal soul while we remain in this world.

Man was created to be a vessel of God's eternal life of love. The nature of this love was clearly expressed by the Son through His mortal body. (1 John 1:1-2) And when we are filled with Christ's Spirit, He will manifest the same nature of self-sacrificing love through our mortal bodies.

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him... God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this...because as He is, so are we in this world. (1 John 4:9, 16-17)

God has the power to reproduce the Son's life of divine love through the human body. It is not the consequence of your capacity to imitate God, but the result of God's capacity to reproduce Himself in you! This is the nature of the mystery. We present our bodies to Him and He uses His power to display His life of righteousness and holiness through us.

...Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes... And I will put My Spirit {of divine love} in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws... I will save you from all your uncleanness. (Ezk. 36:23, 27, 29)

Remove the mystery of God's power being the source of all true godliness and you will end up with a false imitation. Your imitation of "godliness" will be shaped by your own thought processes. In other words, you will end up trying to make God into someone who fits your mold.

This method of living by the power of the flesh according to self-will is how people "of the world" live. This fallen way of life originated when Adam first turned from his dependence on God. Fallen man's basic precept for developing his spiritual life is to go it alone. Free from the restrictive influences of God, he chooses for himself what will be right and wrong for his own life.

Even the most degenerate people are incurably religious in this sense. They naturally create a god {within their own minds} who will best represent how they desire to live. It permits them to establish their own concepts of righteousness. Even when their "religion" results in evil behavior, they will tend to believe their actions are right. Adolf Hitler's chosen way of life is an extreme example of how far fallen man can be deceived in this matter.

Satan has led man into thinking he has the right to direct his own steps as he sees fit. Fallen man naturally chooses how he will live according to his own desires. As he lives by the "pride of life," he will tend to think his ways are right.

Because he will have a desire to promote his beliefs, he will also have a tendency to reduce his ideas into a theological formula, an ethical code, or a political program he can foster on others. This is how the self-centered people of the world naturally live.

But this is not how God's children were created to live. God never intended for man to decide for himself how he would live. "I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps." (Jer. 10:23) God's spiritual children will depend on the Spirit to direct their steps. "For as many as led by the Spirit of God, these {and not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord"} are sons of God." (Rom. 8:14) And "the fruit" of living by the Spirit is a life of "self"-sacrificing love. (Gal. 5:22-23)

In explaining how He lived His life, the Son said, "I do nothing of Myself... He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." (John 8:28-29) In the same way their Master lived under the control and power of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual children of God also wait on the guidance of the Spirit and depend on Him to be with them in all they do. They walk in the "light of life" from heaven, displaying the Son's life of divine love, as God's children were created to live.

Because spiritual Christians understand how all true life and godliness needs to be received through a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by faith, they do not try to rule over others with their own will. There is only one Teacher and Leader in the kingdom of God – the Lord Jesus Christ. While we will try to draw others into this same Spirit-directed and Spirit-empowered life, we know that no real progress is made until the people we are leading have entered into their own Spirit-guided relationship with God. "Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith {in God} you stand firm." (2 Cor. 1:24)

The true "religion" of the Bible is a life of love that must be received from God through a supernatural work of His Spirit by dependent faith. The moment you begin to realize that God is the only source of eternal life {His life of divine love}, you are left with no option but to find God, and to know God, and to let God manifest His spiritual life through your mortal body as Jesus did.

We hope you have begun to realize that Christianity is not limited to having certain orthodox beliefs. "For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power."

(1 Cor. 4:20) And without this power of God working through your life, you will never experience the indwelling life of the Lord.

The most concerted efforts devoted to studying and obeying God's Word will never produce the "light of life" from heaven. Jesus explained this same lesson to some religious men in His day: "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." (John 5:39-40)

Beware, lest even as a Christian you fall into Satan's trap! You may have tried to receive Jesus as your Savior without permitting Him to take possession of you in the mystery of godliness. You may still be seeking to be godly by submitting to external rules and regulations. But, as Paul tried to explain to the Galatians, it is not possible to be made complete in love while you are still depending on human efforts to conform yourself to a religion of laws.

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect {complete in self-sacrificing love} by the flesh?  
(Gal. 3:3)

...For if there had been a law given which could have given life {the Kingdom-life of divine love}, truly righteousness would have been by the law. (Gal. 3:21)

## Life From Above

God originally created man in His own image. (Gen. 1:26-27) It was God's purpose to have human children He could use for the purpose of displaying the splendor of His life of love. Even though God's love can be seen in all of His creation, which is an expression of His glory, His spiritual children were to be the highest expression of His life of love in the world.

When the Son came into the world as the Second Adam, He displayed God's spiritual image in the same way that man was originally created to live. He was "the image of the invisible God." (Col. 1:15) We can therefore learn from the record of His life what it means to display God's spiritual image – His life of love.

*The Son of God was sent into the world to save man from his fallen state by restoring the spiritual image that was lost in the Fall. "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." (1 John 4:9) The "light of life," a life the Father shares with the Son, is intended to be displayed by the Son through each of God's children.*

Mature Christian character is therefore intended to be a form of the "brightness," "radiance," or "out-shining" of the Father's glory. (Heb. 1:3) And even though we cannot expect to display the life as flawlessly as the Son did, we can enter into a real participation with God in His divine nature and become like Him in love in this world. (2 Pet. 1:3-4; 1 John 4:17)

I {the Son} have given them {access to} the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one {in life and nature}: I in them and You in Me...in order that the love You have for Me {divine love} may be in them and that I Myself may be in them.  
(John 17:22-23, 26)

*God did not intend for His children to use their own efforts to imitate His life and nature. They were to manifest His glory – His life of love – by receiving their life from the Son by dependent faith. If they believed in Him, and were therefore willing to deny themselves and take up their own cross, they would find His spiritual life in an abundantly full measure.*

...If anyone would come after Me {into the Kingdom-life}, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me... Whoever loses his life for Me will find it. (Matt. 16:24-25)

...I have come that they may have life {the Kingdom-life}, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)

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

We know there are many people in the church who say it is impossible for the Son to display His life of perfect love through His disciples in this world. But we must say to them, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." (Rom. 3:4) "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17) It is our willingness to become like God in His life of love while we remain in this world that will enable us to have a real sense of boldness when we stand in His presence on the "day of judgment." (v. 17)

Again, God does not expect us to produce His life of love through our human efforts. The life is to be received as a gift of promise. The only limiting factor is our unwillingness to yield in faith to all that our Lord teaches.

In an attempt to illustrate how Christians are to receive the "light of life" from heaven, we will compare this principle to how electricity produces light through a light bulb. In the same sense that electricity is invisible, so is the power of God. Even though electricity cannot be seen, the power is displayed when it enters a device that has been created to display light. The light bulb, of course, is not the source of the light. When left on its own, it remains without any real intrinsic value. It cannot do what it was designed to do without the power of electricity. On its own, it can "do nothing."

Similarly, you were designed and created to be an expression of God's divine nature. (2 Pet. 1:3-4) Even though you do not have the needed power to produce this "light of life" from heaven, the Spirit can supply an invisible power that lights up your life with God's nature of love.



The whole purpose for creating human children was for God to have a means of displaying His life of love – His glory – in this world. As we begin to understand this spiritual principle, we will also see why we have little value while we remain separated from the power of God. Our value comes from fulfilling our Creator’s purpose. We are here for the purpose of displaying His “light of life” from heaven.

*All your strivings to manifest this life through human effort will only leave you hopelessly exhausted. “Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?” (Gal. 3:3)*

In the same sense that Jesus did not do anything in His own strength, He tells us, “Without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) This life from heaven, and the godly character we are to display, is dependent on God’s divine power.

*When God stopped using His power to display the “light of life” through Adam, God’s lamp in the world went out. The body was no longer able to display God’s spiritual image. There is nothing man can do through his own efforts to reproduce God’s nature of divine love. This is why carnal darkness will naturally prevail until fallen man has begun to live by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Our heavenly Father therefore sent His Son into the world to first reconcile man to God, and to then become a source of light to the world. He has promised to provide His “light of life” to everyone who will follow Him through the cross. (John 8:12; Matt. 16:24-25; 1 John 4:9) Whoever loses their flesh-life will find the Son’s abundantly full spiritual life. (John 10:10) “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:4)

The Bible declares emphatically that “without faith it is impossible to please God.” (Heb. 11:6) No matter what we try to do for Him, we cannot please Him until we are willing to walk in a moment by moment reliance on Him to supply us with His life and godliness from above. And, glory be to God, whoever earnestly seeks Him through a responsive walk of faith will be rewarded – they will find His Kingdom-life.

Christians are therefore expected to depend on God for everything. They are not to do anything that does not include a reliance on God, “for whatever is not from faith is sin.” (Rom. 14:23)

Faith involves something more than an academic nod! The children of God are expected to rely on the power of the Spirit to display the life of the Son through them. Since we were created for this very purpose, we cannot neglect this great life of faith without being morally irresponsible. The life of God is not optional! We must not remain like a light bulb without electricity!

Man has only two alternatives: He can either continue living by faith in his own strength {live by the flesh}, or he can turn to God and begin living by faith in *His* enabling power {live by the Spirit}. *Living by human self-sufficiency is the essence of sin. (Rom. 14:23)* Therefore, as the Scripture so clearly teaches, "if you live according to the flesh you will die." (Rom. 8:13)

Once you recognize this spiritual principle you can better understand why Satan will keep opening up reasonable alternatives to faith. He knows that if he can keep you living by the strength of your flesh {the self-sufficient ways of the fallen world}, which is diametrically opposed to the way of faith, he will cause you to defy your Creator. And everyone who lives this way will find they are continually dying in a spiritual sense. They do not experience the Living Water that continually satisfies the soul and wells up to a manifestation of God's eternal life of love. (John 4:14)

*No matter how lofty your motives or otherwise commendable your actions, if they come from your own sufficiency {the pride of life} they are sin. God expects His children to depend on Him in everything they do.*

*When Jesus walked in a mortal body as a man, He too was required to live by faith. He remained without sin simply because He always relied on His Father. He did nothing in His own strength. He did not produce a sinless life through any other means than by continually relying on the working of His Father. To have acted in His own independent strength would have resulted in sin. In essence, all sin comes from acting by self-will and self-sufficiency.*

This is why Satan's attacks on the Son were designed to lead Him into acting on His own initiative. He was tempted again and again, and in all points as we are. But He never departed from a life of living under the control and power of the Holy Spirit. He did not sin because He never once stopped relying on His Father. This is the *Mystery of Godliness*.

If Christians are to ever walk as Jesus did, which they are required to do (1 John 2:5-6), they will need to go through a complete renewing of their mind.

Everyone who is still thinking in terms of what they must do in their own strength, still needs to press forward in their walk of faith. They must die to all forms of self-sufficiency before they will be in a position to be raised by the power of God into the life of promise.

When people tend to think of the Christian walk in terms of what must be worked out by human effort, they will naturally believe that it is impossible for anyone to walk as Jesus did. Their lack of faith will prevent them from receiving the life of promise. These Christians will therefore need to be built up in their faith so they can rest from their own works and begin depending on the Lord to establish His Kingdom-life within their hearts by the resurrection power of His Spirit.

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the {regenerate} people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work... Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest... (Heb. 4:9-11)

Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it... (Ps. 127:1)

Again, the Christian life is intended to have a supernatural quality about it. "Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." (John 3:21) Only the Spirit of Christ has the needed power to manifest the "light of life" through a human body.

## The First Adam

In his innocency and before the Fall, the first man acted consistently under the gracious and exclusive influence of God's Spirit. The Spirit of God dwelled within Adam. God was working in him "both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Phil. 2:13) This inward action of God lifted Adam spiritually out of mere animal status and into the life of godliness. While animals would live by the flesh {and be without the spiritual life of God}, Adam would live by the Spirit of God in union with God's eternal life.

The thing that separated Adam from the animal kingdom was his human spirit. His spirit was the "lamp of the Lord." (Prov. 20:27) The lamp, when fueled by the oil of the Holy Spirit, enabled him to display God's "light of life" in this world. Because everything he did was motivated by the life and will of God, he was enabled to display the image and glory of God.

God gave a warning when He provided Adam with an eternal access to the Tree of Life. It was a warning that carries over to all mankind: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Gen. 2:17) *If man turned from a life of living by faith in God's power to an independent life of walking in his own will and sufficiency, he would separate himself from the spiritual life of God. And that is exactly what happened in the Fall.*

Our Creator never gave man the right to decide good and evil on his own. And if he acted like a mere animal by choosing to live by his own fleshly desires {living as he saw fit or – "right in his own eyes" (Deut 12:8)}, he would become separated from the eternal life of God and exist in spiritual death. "For if you live according to the flesh you will die." (Rom. 8:13)

Man's choice to live by an independent and self-sufficient spirit is the essence of evil and darkness. It is the source of every sinful action. This path of choosing for ourselves how we will direct our steps {sin} is what keeps fallen man separated from the life of God. We can therefore see why true repentance must include a real turning back to a dependence on God.

...Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted {turned} and become as {dependent} little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven {the Kingdom-life of God}. (Matt. 18:3)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. (Prov. 3:5-6)

Adam would not need laws to control his activities as long as he lived by the Spirit. The fruit of God's Spirit – His divine nature – would enable Adam to always have right actions. "Against such things {the fruit of God's Spirit} there is no law." (Gal. 5:23)

There was only one spiritual principle that Adam was required to remember: He would need to continue to live by the Spirit of God. In other words, eating from the Tree of Life meant that he would need to live continually by faith, under the control and power of the Holy Spirit.

When Adam turned from this walk of faith, choosing to walk in his own strength and by his own will, he fell from the "light of life." He was then cast out of the Garden into carnal darkness. Not only did he lose the fulfilling spiritual life he had received from God, but he also became deeply corrupted by a self-centered nature. This fallen nature became another source of iniquity in the world.

Adam did not die physically when he turned to "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" and began directing his own affairs. He did, however, lose the power that had enabled him to be a lamp of the Lord's "light of life." (John 8:12). When he turned from the Tree of Life {when he stopped living by the Spirit of God}, the Spirit stopped manifesting the eternal life through his spirit. He lost the spiritual life of God, and the light went out!

Redemption involves restoring the lamp to its original purpose. The Christian is a lamp of the Lord. But God cannot display the light of His glory through the lamp until it has been set apart and fully sanctified for His exclusive use.

*There must be a real presenting of the body to God and a complete turning from the independent and self-sufficient ways of the world before it is possible to display the "light of life" from heaven.* The followers of Jesus who are willing to take this

narrow path, will have an opportunity to return to the spiritual paradise of God and eat from the Tree of Life.

...For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them {a life that Adam shared with God in the Garden of Eden}..." Therefore "Come out from among them {the independent and self-sufficient ways of the world} and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you" {into the Kingdom-life}... Therefore, *having these promises*, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Cor. 6:16-17, 7:1 Emphasis added)

...To him who overcomes {the independent and self-sufficient ways of the world} I will give to eat from the tree of life {the Kingdom-life of God}, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. (Rev. 2:7)

While this spiritual Paradise of God, which can now be established within the eternal soul, is only a dim reflection of the life we will enjoy when we receive our glorified bodies, we can still enjoy an abundant fullness of the Son's spiritual life in this world. (John 10:10) We can walk in holiness with God and enjoy His life from heaven, as the Son did when He walked in a mortal body. (1 John 2:5-6)

Our Lord has made it possible to follow Him through the cross and into the firstfruits of His resurrection life. (Matt. 16:24-25) If we will enter this path and permit Him to establish His Kingdom-life within our hearts, we will be enabled to "put on the new man, which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." (Eph. 4:24) In other words, we can now be recreated into the spiritual image of God by returning to the "tree of life" through Jesus Christ. "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life." (Rev. 2:7)

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you... Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn... Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy... The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and *your God will be your glory*. (Isa. 60:1, 3, 5, 19 Emphasis added)

## Life in the Spirit

“...As the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this He meant the Spirit... (John 7:38-39)

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

The Holy Spirit produced a never-ending river of life from within the spirit of the first Adam before the Fall. The Son's Living Water welled up and overflowed from the fountain of his soul into a manifestation of God's eternal life. *The nature of this life from heaven kept his mind and emotions under the control of God.* Everything he did and every attitude he expressed was inspired by the Spirit of God.

God literally expressed Himself through Adam. In the same way that Christ {the Second Adam} displayed the Father's life and works, the first Adam was also the “radiance {or “outshining” – BBE} of God's glory.” (Heb. 1:3)

Adam's responsibility as a free moral agent was to offer himself to God in faith to be an instrument of His righteousness. The mystery of his godliness was simply a matter of a conscious choice to walk under the control and power of the Holy Spirit. As he yielded to the Spirit, God would use His power to display His life and works through Adam.

It is quite obvious that if this process had been purely mechanical, and Adam had possessed no capacity to exercise his own choice, he would have been no more than a robot. But God created man with a free will. Through an active choice of his own will, Adam would be required to live by faith in God, continually walking by the Spirit.

We need to see how man was created to be a mere instrument of God's life of righteousness. This principle for living still applies to God's children today. *Because of what Jesus Christ has done at the cross, God's called-out children can now enter into the life of promise and begin walking by the Spirit as Adam did before the Fall, and as Jesus did after the Fall. They can enter into the Holiest of All and receive divine spiritual life from God.*

...Now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed...even the righteousness of God, through faith... (Rom. 3:21-22)

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin {self-will}, but present yourselves to God...as instruments of righteousness to God. (Rom. 6:13)

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection {or completion in the life of love}... This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil. (Heb. 6:1, 19)

Man was made by God to be an instrument through which God expressed the power and authority of His Kingdom. As man received his life from God, he would also share with God in a dominion over this world. But this authority could only be expressed through man by virtue of his "faith-love" relationship with God. As man lovingly submitted to all the leadings of God's Spirit, God would supply him with the needed power to accomplish everything he was assigned to do.

God has a plan for each of His creation. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, *which God prepared in advance for us to do.*" (Eph. 2:10 Emphasis added) Man is therefore expected to enter into God's plan. And he is expected to carry out his assigned work through the power of God's Spirit.

The dominion that man received over his appointed sphere of work was derived from God. He could only exercise God's power in the world while he responded to the divine will and lived by the Spirit through dependent faith.

God intends to remain sovereign over His universe. And yet, He would accomplish the work He wanted to do in the world through the dominion given to His spiritual children. In response to His revealed will, they would depend on Him to use the power of His Spirit in all their assigned activities.

In effect, God chose to display a unique form of sovereignty. He would first reveal His will to His sons and daughters, and then depend on them to carry out



the work through their prayers of faith. This is how God has planned for all His sanctified children to live.

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

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing... And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so the Son may bring glory to the Father. (John 14:12-13)

Again, man was designed to be God's highest expression of His power and glory. God's dominion over the world would be visibly expressed through the work of His children. Without this visible expression of Himself {the "light of life" from heaven}, the world would remain lost in darkness.

When man turned from this walk of faith and ate from the forbidden fruit of self-will and self-sufficiency, God departed from his soul. This left him empty, in darkness, and on his own. He also forfeited his right to express God's dominion and power through prayer.

We can see that Adam was converted *from* the life of God. Every "conversion" occurs when there has been a change of mind. Adam changed his mind about how he wanted to live. He allowed the devil to poison his understanding. Believing the lie that he could improve his spiritual life by walking in the strength of his own flesh, he separated himself from the life of God. The Holy Spirit then withdrew from the human spirit, and man's soul was plunged into the darkness of fallen humanity.

Something else also occurred at the Fall. When the Spirit of God was no longer filling man's {mankind's} soul with the Living Water that naturally wells up to eternal life, he was left empty and unfulfilled. He then became self-centered, or egocentric in all that he did. His life-purpose then became centered around his own efforts to find a means of spiritual fulfillment.

This self-centered nature, which naturally lives for its own desires, is called "the flesh." Referred to in the Bible as "sin" in its singular form, it involves the evil principle of living by self-will and self-sufficiency. This life of "sin" is what produces a multitude of "sins." (Rom. 7:14, 20; John 16:9)

*The Bible therefore distinguishes between “sin” and “sins.” Everyone who lives according to their own personal desires is living by the “sin” nature. This flesh-life or “old man” has a self-centered nature that will naturally produce a multitude of sins. (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9)*

The depravity that every person inherits from Adam is an empty soul. As long as there is an emptiness within, the individual will naturally turn to the self-seeking ways of this world to find his spiritual fulfillment. This is the essence of sin.

“Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror,” declares the Lord. “My people have committed two sins {two all-encompassing evils}: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.” (Jer. 2:12-13)

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters... Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy. Listen, listen to Me, and eat what is good {eat from the Tree of Life}, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to e; hear Me, that your soul may live {in the Kingdom-life}. (Isa. 55:1-3)

God uses His Word of Truth to help people understand why they experience a returning sense of spiritual emptiness within their soul. He wants them to recognize the hopelessness of ever experiencing a lasting fulfillment by following the self-seeking ways of this world. “God ‘will give to each person according to what he has done.’ To those...who are self-seeking...there will be wrath and anger.” (Rom. 2:6-8) They can never expect God to manifest His divine life through them while living as “self-seekers.”

When man’s soul was left empty by the departure of the Spirit, Satan was permitted to enter in and introduce the self-elevating principle of pride. This pride naturally leads to self-will and self-sufficiency. Man will remain hopelessly lost {in this fallen state} until he turns to the Lord and permits the Son to lead him into the life of faith. The Messiah, who has come to establish the lost Kingdom-life within the hearts of His followers, is the only hope that mankind has of being saved from his fallen nature.

## The Mystery of Iniquity

Jesus once turned to Peter and said, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, *for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.*” (Matt. 16:23 Emphasis added) Jesus meant exactly what He said. There was something in Peter that was still causing him to have a man-centered thought process. There was still an “old man” in him that resulted in a self-centered and self-seeking nature. Even though Peter was in a forgiven state {credited with righteousness and reconciled to God}, he was still being influenced by a thought process that had its source in the devil.

This wisdom {which is displayed by the self-centered nature} does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For *where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.* (Jam. 3:15-16 Emphasis added)

Peter had tried to turn Jesus from the way of the cross. He was sincerely concerned about his Master. But he was still responding with a selfish motive. Peter was therefore saying something that was opposed to the light of truth. And Jesus knew that everything that is opposed to God’s way of life is a lie from the devil.

When Jesus came into this world, He both spoke and walked in a way that revealed God’s truth. He was the “living Word” or the Word made manifest. And He came to lead all of God’s called-out children into the same Kingdom-life – the life that Adam lost at the Fall.

But we find that Peter tried to turn the Son {the Second Adam} away from the truth and the light. This was when Jesus provides a clear set of instructions to help His disciples understand how they can follow Him into His Kingdom-life from heaven. “If anyone desires to come after Me {into the Kingdom-life}, *let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.* For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matt. 16:24-25 Emphasis added)

God, through His eternal word of truth, says, “Deny yourself, and take up your cross.” In contrast, Peter had effectively said to Jesus, “Save yourself, and

turn from the way of the cross." Peter's statement was diametrically opposed to the way of life being revealed by the Son. Peter was expressing a motto representing the devil's way of life. Jesus therefore said to him, "Get behind Me Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Even though Peter had been walking with Jesus in a forgiven state, he had not yet been "set free indeed" from the devil's sway over man. (John 8:36) It was not until Pentecost, when Peter was clothed with power from above, that Christ was able to establish His Kingdom-life of divine love within Peter's heart.

The Scripture says that everyone "of the world" is now in darkness and under the sway of the devil. (1 John 5:19) The reason is quite simple: They are still following the self-seeking and self-exalting ways of the devil. We can therefore say that everyone who is still living by the maxim, "Save yourself" {where self – "self-will or "self-determination," "self-seeking," and "self-sufficiency" – is still at the center of your thoughts and actions} is still under the sway of the devil.

Peter was completely ignorant of the evil that was being displayed through his selfish desires. Although his words were sincere, his sincerity did not prevent him from displaying the darkness of his fallen nature. He was speaking the devil's lies instead of God's truth.

It is not enough to simply become a follower of Jesus Christ by looking to His shed blood for forgiveness of sins. There is an old Adam-life that must die before the Kingdom-life of God can be displayed through a mortal body. Peter's decision to follow Jesus was only a preparation that eventually led to being clothed with a divine power on the day of Pentecost. Only then was his heart purified and the temple of his body filled with the glory of God – the Son's life of self-sacrificing love. (Acts 15:8-9)

If, as a Christian, you are still living for your own desires, and even trying to correct your selfish desires by human effort, you will find that you are still under a bondage to your self-centered nature. The end result, as it was for the Jews, will be "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." (Rom. 10:2)

These religious people of old wanted to save themselves and produce their own righteousness for God. But they were unwilling to die to their self-

life. They therefore rejected the Kingdom-life they could have received from Jesus Christ by taking His way of the cross.

The Jews were deceived by Satan. Not realizing that godliness is the result of God's activity in man, and "being ignorant of God's righteousness," they attempted "to establish their own righteousness." (Rom. 10:3) Their desire for independence and self-sufficiency prevented them from being able to see the light of the true Gospel. In effect, they rejected our Lord's message because they did not want to die to their flesh-life and become vessels of "the righteousness of God." (v. 3) *And, unfortunately, there are many people in the church today who are still rejecting Christ {His way of the cross} for the same reason.*

Of course, when you set out to establish your own righteousness, all you produce is "self-righteousness." Your own estimate of what righteousness really entails, even when borrowing teachings from the Bible (as other religions have done), is still your own imitation of righteousness. Since this self-produced righteousness does not come from the divine life of God, it is not the real thing. God's Kingdom-life of perfect love cannot be produced through these human efforts.

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

When God created Adam in his innocence, the Holy Spirit was a Royal Resident. He had unchallenged and exclusive access to Adam's soul. He alone had the right to sit, as it were, at the key-board where the human personality was orchestrated. As He instructed the mind, controlled the emotions, and directed the will, the Spirit of Truth struck every chord in true harmony with the heart of God in heaven. There was a matchless melody that rang out from his daily activities as an evidence that God was the source of Adam's life.

The Deceiver, however, led Adam into believing that man could play the Instrument of his own personality. He pointed out the advantages of being free from the restrictive presence of the Holy Spirit.

Supposedly, Adam would be able to enhance his spiritual life when he was free to pick and choose his own tunes. By playing his own music, the tunes would only need to be in harmony with himself. He would no longer need to be concerned about keeping in harmony with God! Indeed, he could become his own god, and what could be better than that?

What Adam did not realize is that once he had turned from the Tree of Life, and the Spirit had vacated the temple of his body, the father of lies would take control of the Music Room. In this fallen way of life, even though the Deceiver had led Adam to believe that he would have an opportunity to choose his own tunes, there would actually be a demon sitting at the key-board thumping away at the notes. It is "the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience." (Eph. 2:2) His name is The Flesh. He took control of the Instrument and began producing an awful noise.

The Instrument has not changed. It is the same Instrument that God originally used to make melodies in harmony with Himself. But having once produced harmony with the life and nature of God, the instrument now produces discord.

This is the story of how fallen man became separated from the life of God. The flesh-life, under the sway of Satan, is now at the keyboard producing iniquity in the world!

You do not need a new Instrument. The original is just fine. What you need is a new Musician. The Holy Spirit, when He is in full control of the key-board, will begin to play beautiful music within your soul. He will make your inner being like the Paradise of God. He is the One who is able to produce the Kingdom-life of God through your mortal body.

But if I {the Son of God} drive out demons {including the flesh-life} by the finger of God {by the Holy Spirit}, then the kingdom of God has come to you. (Luke 11:20)

## The Second Man – The Lord From Heaven

...The last Adam became a life-giving spirit... The second Man is the Lord from heaven. (1 Cor. 15:45, 47)

...Who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. (Heb. 7:16)

To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies {the world, the flesh and the devil}, Might serve Him without fear {of remaining bound by the carnal nature}, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. (Luke 1:74-75)

The first man was Adam, and he entered into spiritual death. The Last Adam was Christ, and He came to raise the spiritually dead and give His endless life to each of His disciples. "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." (1 John 4:9)

Had God not intervened by providing a new life from heaven, the family of Adam would have been without hope. There was no way for fallen man to escape from his sinful nature and raise himself out of spiritual death.

Right here we can see why the virgin birth was necessary. Had Jesus Christ been born as you and I were born, by natural conception through the line of Adam, He too would have been "in Adam." It would have naturally left Him in spiritual death, uninhabited by the divine life of God, and dominated by the flesh-life. This is why the doctrine of the virgin birth is not a matter of secondary importance. It is imperative!

Because the Last Adam {Jesus Christ}, the Second Man, came from the line of His own Father in heaven, and He lived without ever departing from a walk of faith {He lived without sin. "...for whatever is not from faith is sin." (Rom. 14:23)}, He now has the right to impart His spiritual life from heaven to everyone who will follow Him through the cross. (Matt. 16:24-25) As the Son of God, He was sent into the world to manifest His Kingdom-life through everyone who is

willing to die to their Adam-life. He now has both the power and the authority to make Himself known within the soul of every believer in “the power of an endless life.” (Heb. 7:16)

The Son of God came to re-inhabit your spirit and to re-conquer your soul. He has come to enable you to have His life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10) As He has said, “Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”

The Son of God came to restore to you all that makes the mystery of godliness an open secret: He came to manifest His own life through the temple of your body! This is “the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, *which is Christ in you...*” (Col. 1:26-27 Emphasis added)

In addition to giving birth to Jesus, Mary also became a spiritual type for everyone who desires to bear the life of God’s Son. What were the events that led up to the miraculous birth of Christ? How was Mary able to bear the heavenly life of the Son?

It began with God’s Word being faithfully delivered by a messenger “sent by God.” (Luke 1:26) The Word she received was both strange and startling. It was contrary to all human experience and beyond anything the mind could fully comprehend. Since the message defied human wisdom, would she believe God’s word?

Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. *He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest... And He will reign...and of His kingdom there will be no end.*” (Luke 1:30-33 Emphasis added)

The natural reaction of Mary was one of amazement. The obvious question to be asked and to be answered was “How?” And so Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” (Luke 1:34) The angel might have responded something like this, “Mary, there is no way to explain this mystery in human terms!” ‘But the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.’ (Luke 1:35) He will do a work that causes you to bear the life of the Son of God.”



Mary would be a mere instrument. The almighty power of God would perform the miracle. But was that enough? No! One condition still needed to be met! Mary had to make herself available for this gracious, life-giving ministry of the Spirit.

Maybe you have taken it for granted that Mary would make herself available to God and thereby permit Him to do this wonderful work through her. Is there any reason why you should think this way? Have you made yourself available in a way that would permit the Spirit to overshadow you? Have you given permission to God to use your body for His purposes? Have you been willing to become “nothing” in yourself so the Son would be able to “reign” over your life and show Himself “great” through you? Is there any reason why you should expect her to do something that you have not permitted God to do through you?

Mary could have said, “I do not want God to interfere in my life! I am engaged to be married and I have my own plans! This would spoil what I have planned for my own life.” Isn’t this what has kept you from surrendering your life and plans to become a vessel of the Son’s life? Remember, as the Son of the Highest, “He will reign” when He has established His Kingdom-life within your heart. And when He comes to manifest Himself through your body, He is the only one who can “be great.”

Of course, Mary was a true child of faith! She said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” (Luke 1:38) Once she yielded to God’s word, and trusted in Him to do the work, the responsibility was on God to fulfill His purposes through her. She trusted and yielded; God used His power to do the work.

We should emphasize, however, that it is never easy to bear the life of the Son. “Difficult is the way which leads to life.” (Matt. 7:14) Mary would be expected to go through some suffering before she gave birth to the life of the Son. After spiritual regeneration had taken place, when the seed of divine life was first planted within her by the Spirit, there were still many difficulties to pass through. But she continued to trust in God and wait for the life of promise to come forth.

Christians today, if they are to become vessels of the Son’s Kingdom-life, will also go through periods of suffering before the Son can display His life of divine love through their mortal bodies. It is like giving birth to a child. After being

impregnated with a “seed” from the Son’s life, there will inevitably be a number of difficult trials leading up to the painful birth of His Kingdom-life from above.

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus , *after you have suffered a while* {in dying to the self-seeking and self-sufficient ways of the world}, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (1 Pet. 5:10 Emphasis added)

Every Christian is expected to press forward in their faith until they have given birth to the Lord’s Kingdom-life from heaven. “He will reign...and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:33) His Kingdom-life, once established within the heart, becomes an everlasting life.

The law and the prophets were until John {the Baptist}. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and *everyone is pressing into it*. (Luke 16:16 Emphasis added)

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; *for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...*And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you {as Christians} do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star {Jesus Christ in His Kingdom-life} rises in your hearts. (2 Pet. 1:10-11, 19 Emphasis added)

# The Law of the Spirit of Life

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

The gift of the Spirit gives us the ability to respond to the teachings of our Lord as we pass through the time of testing and seek to enter into the life of promise. "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Rom. 8:13) in the Kingdom-life.

In other words, there is a work to be done after spiritual regeneration. We prepare God's temple by separating ourselves from the ways of the world as we are led by the Spirit. The Lord will eventually manifest His Kingdom-life within everyone who will obediently follow Him through the cross and into the heavenly realms.

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

He who has My commandments and keeps them {with their regenerate heart}, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself {the Kingdom-life} to him. (John 14:21)

It was to bring about this change of government and introduce this new law of spiritual life from heaven that the Second Man lived, died and rose again from the dead. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." (Rom. 5:19)

Do not confuse the written Law with the law of the Spirit of Life. The Old Testament law, although righteous, could only bring about the experience of sin and death in the children of God. Paul said, "I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death." (Rom. 7:10) The law, we will learn, was given to bring about a real death to the old self-sufficient way of life that everyone has inherited from Adam. This "original sin" needs to die before the Kingdom-life of God can be fully established within the heart.

We know there had to be “an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect.” (Heb. 7:18-19) While Jesus expects His disciples to fulfill all the righteous requirements found in His teachings, including His Sermon on the Mount it can only be accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit. “It is the Spirit who gives life {the Kingdom-life of self-sacrificing love}; the flesh profits nothing.” (John 6:63)

Written laws have only a limited application in God’s dealings with man. First of all, written laws are needed to restrain people who are not living by God’s Spirit. This includes the use of laws established by governments in this temporal world. God uses them to place a restraint on the evil nature in fallen man. In a sense, we can therefore say that written laws are necessary in a fallen world. “Before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law.” (Gal. 3:23)

However, God never intended for man to live by law. The children of God were designed to participate with God in His own divine nature. And where the fruit of God’s Spirit is being manifested through fully sanctified Christians {those who have allowed God to set them apart for His exclusive use and are sharing in the divine nature}, there is no need for law.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. *Against such things there is no {need for} law.* (Gal. 5:22-23 Emphasis added)

We can therefore say that written laws will only be needed while people are still living by the strength of the flesh. Once the believer has died to the ways of the flesh and has entered into a real participation with Christ in His divine nature (2 Pet. 1:3-4), he {or she} will be moved by the Spirit in a way that naturally fulfills all the requirements found in God’s written laws.

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things {pertaining to the Kingdom-life and godliness}...The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you {through written laws}... (1 John 2:20, 27)

Christians, after being reconciled to God through Christ’s blood, will have a natural tendency to live by human effort. Because they are not yet living under the full control and power of the Holy Spirit, but still have some dependence on

their own strength, they are unable to consistently display the fruit of Christ's Spirit through their lives.

The law will therefore have a limited application in the life of every born again Christian. God has provided written laws to reveal what true righteousness is like. His laws will therefore expose the defects that continue to rise out of the heart when one is still living by the strength of the flesh. There will be something within them that "is not subject to the law of God." (Rom. 8:7) They will find that their old "Adam-life" sometimes still has an opposing nature to the sacrificial agape love as displayed by Jesus, the prototype Son.

While these earnest Christians will generally prevent sinful tendencies from breaking forth into outward displays of sin, they will still sense the presence of an evil within their hearts. For example, they will periodically find a selfish anger coming to the surface when people treat them poorly. And even though this anger never breaks forth into actual murder, the corruption that exposes itself in selfish anger is the same as murder in God's sight. God therefore expects them to submit their Adam-life to the cross so they can die to this old nature and enter into a participation with Christ in His divine nature.

The requirements that Christ established in His Sermon on the Mount are impossible to keep by human effort. But this does not mean that He does not expect His followers to fulfill all the righteous requirements found in His teachings. It simply means that every born again believer will need to learn to live by the Spirit. "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt. 19:26)

The law has a work to do in the heart of every Christian. It is designed to break the natural sense of self-sufficiency found in the fallen nature. This old spirit needs to be brought to its death. Only then are believers able to enter into the pure faith that will enable them to "put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Eph. 4:24)

The apostle Paul reveals in Romans seven how this process took place in his life. As he has described, the standards found in God's laws will eventually kill the self-sufficient spirit in everyone who has earnestly sought to be obedient to God's laws.

...Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law... *I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring*

*life actually brought death... But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful... For in my inner being I delight in God's law {a sign of spiritual regeneration and the presence of the Holy Spirit}; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members... Who will rescue me from this body of death? (Rom. 7:7, 10, 13, 22-24 Emphasis added)*

Paul did not always remain "a prisoner of the law of sin." As he later said, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom. 8:2) The Spirit of Christ was able to set him free from his old sin nature. The Kingdom-life was established within His heart once he realized that "it is the Spirit who gives life {the Kingdom-life}; the flesh {striving by human effort} profits nothing." (John 6:63)

Every Christian will need to learn how the law was designed to bring about a real death to the self-sufficient life they inherited from Adam. Once they have lost all hope in their ability to fully conform to God's ways by human effort, they will be prepared to turn to Christ with the kind of faith that will permit Him to set them "free indeed" from the "law of sin."

...Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord... (Rom. 7:24-25)

...I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin... So if the Son sets you free {from the sin nature}, you will be free indeed. (John 8:34, 36)

*True godliness will not come from our human efforts to fulfill God's law any more than it will come from our attempts to imitate God. Both are impossible! "For if a law had been given that could impart life {God's Kingdom-life of divine love}, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law." (Gal. 3:21) But law cannot impart life. The children of God need to be filled with the indwelling life of the Son before they will have the power to fulfill all the righteous requirements of the law and display true godliness.*

Therefore, the law was our tutor {serving as a harsh and unrelenting schoolmaster} to bring us to Christ {to receive His divine life by faith}... (Gal. 3:24)

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

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter {of the law} but of the Spirit; *for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* {the Kingdom-life}. (2 Cor. 3:5-6 Emphasis added)

Because the law “made nothing perfect,” it should be a great relief when you discover that God expects you to fail in your attempts to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. *It was designed to kill the pride that led you to think you had the power to conform to His laws in the first place.*

Nothing that has shocked you about yourself has ever shocked God; it grieves Him, but it never shocks Him. His laws were given to make you aware of your wretchedness.

Even as a Christian, you will resist this death to the flesh-life until you realize two things: First, that God requires His children to fulfill all the righteous requirements found in His laws, including the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. And second, that you are powerless to fulfill His requirements while living by the strength of your flesh. You will need to come to a place where your only hope of being saved from your fallen nature is by passing through this death to the flesh-life and entering into the Lord’s Kingdom-life. “Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matt. 16:25)

After being reconciled to God through Christ’s shed blood, you will find yourself being led to a place where you acknowledge that not only what you have done is wrong, but your very nature is wrong. You must come to the point where you realize that even your best human efforts are still sinful in nature. Not

only do they not come from faith {and everything “not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23)}, but they will naturally come from selfish motives.

There are many Christians who are still trying to make themselves better. They are continually frustrated with their efforts, but they still seem to think they can do something to improve themselves. And like the Pharisees of old, as long as they have some hope in this self-produced form of righteousness, they will avoid taking Christ’s way of the cross.

It is time for every Christian to recognize the “nature of the beast.” Stop being deceived into thinking your fleshly nature can be changed or fixed over time. Its roots are too deeply sunk into the life of the devil for you to change yourself on the inside. The only way to be delivered from this old Adam-life is by passing through “death” into “life.”

Compare your daily walk with Christ’s teachings in His Sermon on the Mount. Notice how selfish you are compared to the sacrificial life He requires of His followers. Even the most loving acts you perform for the Lord and your family will still have a self-centered bias, even if it’s only the desire to be recognized or acknowledged for what *you* have done. If you have been trying to be righteous through your own efforts, your mouth will be stopped and your sin exposed when you truly begin to see the high calling we are called to in Christ.

Whether you try to obey Christ’s teachings or try to imitate Him, either method will naturally bring a deep awareness of your sinful nature. And whether you truly compare your life to Christ’s teachings or compare yourself to the Word made manifest through His life, both standards will show how far you have come short of the glory of God.

A plumb-line may show how crooked something is, but it does nothing to put it straight. If the Son did nothing more than set a standard by which we are to live, we are left with nothing to do but wallow in the squalor of our own inadequacy. In fact, we could say the “good news” of the Gospel is really a message of despair. It mocks us with its words without providing the spiritual life that it requires from us.

But the Son of God offers “much more” than forgiveness for our sins and a standard to live by. Jesus came to do “much more” than reconcile us to God. He has come to save us from our fallen nature. He has both the power and the



authority to enable us to share with Him in the same victorious life that enabled Him to conquer sin {living in one's own sufficiency and willfulness}.

Here is the "much more" of your salvation! "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, MUCH MORE, *having been reconciled* {a past event}, *we shall be saved by His life.*" (Rom. 5:10 Emphasis added) You need something much more than being reconciled to God. And glory be to God, you now have an opportunity to receive an abundantly full measure of Christ's spiritual life. (John 10:10) His indwelling life is even more powerful than the fallen nature that was first received from Adam. (Rom. 5:17) The Son of God has come to establish His Kingdom-life of love within your heart so you may walk in true holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of your life. (Luke 1:74-75)

Again, godliness is not the result of your capacity to obey laws or imitate God. It is the result of Christ's capacity to reproduce Himself in you; not self-righteousness, but Christ-righteousness. It is not inactivity, but the activity of Christ working within your inner being by the power of His Spirit "according to the power of an endless life." (Heb. 7:15-16)

If your faith in God was complete, and you had come to that place where you had truly died to the ways of the flesh, Christ's life of divine love could be revealed through you. (1 John 4:17) But the "wrong man" still clings to his seat at the key-board, and this man of the flesh still resists your will to do right.

This is the problem with every Christian who is still trying to live by human effort. Even though they have received the gift of the Spirit, and the Spirit has come to do away with the life of the flesh, there is still a great warfare going on. And the flesh is still winning some of these battles. These struggling Christians have not yet learned how to perfect the Spirit's power in their lives through a weakness in self and a dependence on God. (2 Cor. 12:9)

Most Christians today seem to think that Paul was unable to find an answer to the dilemma he described in Romans seven. They presume because he spoke in the present tense, that he remained "a captive" to "the law of sin and death." They therefore think he remained under a real bondage to his old sinful nature while he remained in his mortal body. *But Paul was simply trying to describe the experience that everyone will go through when they are still trying to live righteously before God by using human efforts to conform to written laws.*

Once the law had brought Paul's self-sufficient spirit to its death, he was ready to be raised into the Kingdom-life of God by the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit. Christ came to destroy the flesh-life {the "old man"} that Satan had fostered on the world and Paul had inherited through Adam's family.

...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, *that He might destroy the works of the devil.* (1 John 3:8 Emphasis added)

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

Once Paul had finally come to the end of himself and had died to the ways of human effort {the old Adam-life}, the risen Lord was able to manifest Himself through his mortal body. Paul was enabled to experience a complete victory over the old Adam-life by entering into an experiential relationship with Christ in His crucified life. It was by passing through this real death to the old self-life that he was able to begin sharing with Christ in His risen life. It was then that he could honestly say, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20) And it was then that he could become "more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Rom. 8:37)

Paul received what he referred to as "the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness." This abundant measure of grace enabled him to "reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." He discovered that Christ's risen life was "much more" powerful than the flesh-life he had originally inherited from Adam.

For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one {Adam}, MUCH MORE those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will *reign in life* through the One, Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:17 Emphasis added)

## How Much Are You Worth

We must never permit anyone to deceive us into believing that God has placed some set limitation on what Jesus Christ can do through us in this world. Through our dependent faith in God, we can put His divine power to work within our inner being to conquer everything that prevents the Son from displaying His Kingdom-life of love through our mortal bodies. He “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, *according to His power that is at work within us.*” (Eph. 3:20 Emphasis added)

Since God can do more than we can imagine, let us not let carnal minds – minds that are still under the sway of the devil’s lies – limit our understanding of what He can do. “What is impossible with men is possible with God.” (Luke 18:27)

Yes, there will be a physical resurrection of the body “when the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.” (1 Cor. 15:53) And this resurrected body will completely free us from the sufferings we have experienced in this cursed world. But we can still enter into a real participation with Christ in His divine nature while we remain in this world. And even if it is only a dim likeness when contrasted to His glorified life, God does have the power to manifest the same victorious life, through us, that Jesus displayed by the power of the Holy Spirit through His mortal body. We are therefore expected to buy the heavenly Pearl – His Kingdom-life – by following Him through the cross. (Matt. 16:24-25)

There are two ways for someone to live. The first is to live “to and for self,” and thereby “walk after the flesh.” The second is to live “to and for Christ,” and thereby “walk after the Spirit.” It is not just a matter of *degree*, it is a matter of *kind*. Your life will either have self at the center {even when serving Christ} or God at the center.

*There are some who think they can serve both self and God. But Jesus Himself said, “No one can serve two masters.” (Matt. 6:24) You will either live by human effort according to “the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Eph. 2:2-3), or you will live by faith under the control and power of the Holy Spirit. The choice, according to the Scriptures, is yours! And you will need to be very careful about your decision if you are to avoid being deceived like Adam and Eve.*

If you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live {in the Kingdom-life}. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these are sons of God.* (Rom. 8:13-14 Emphasis added)

Which of these principles governs your behavior? Remember, there is a “form of godliness” that does not come from the “power” of God. (2 Tim. 3:5) Therefore, we are not asking you about the degree of righteousness you have developed. The principle from which your behavior springs is what matters. *Are you living by human effort, or are you living by the Spirit?*

*To help you answer this question, you should remember that the essence of sin is independence and self-sufficiency: “Everything that does not come from faith is sin.” (Rom. 14:23) Are you totally surrendered to the will of God and are you continually depending on Him to manifest His life and works through you? Or, in your service to God, are you still independently directing your activities and living by your own human wisdom and efforts?*

Every area of your life in which you have not learned to be wholly dependent on God is an area that still requires repentance. Are you still trying to become righteous through your own concerted efforts? You need to repent. Are there people you are still trying to change by ruling over them as the Gentiles do? You need to repent? As long as you are depending on human methods, human efforts and human wisdom to correct the world, you are not living by faith in God’s power.

Perhaps you are a businessman and you imagine that once *you* have entered your office *you* have become the boss. Everything *you* say now becomes law! You had better repent by giving this business over to God. The resources are not yours anyway. Everything belongs to Him. And, if you are someone who works in an environment where the Spirit cannot remain in control of your life, then you need to get out of that business before it becomes too late to enter into the Kingdom-life of God. (Matt. 22:1-14)

*In what part of your life do you seem to get by without depending on God {not God as a “come along helper” to your plans and desires, as so many ask Him to do, but God as the “originator” and “source” of your plans, activities and*

desires}? *That is the place that needs to change! Right there! You had better repent. You cannot find the Kingdom-life until you have stopped walking in the strength of the flesh.*

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it... *For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works...* Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest... (Heb. 4:1, 10-11 Emphasis added)

You have been “made alive” in Christ to be exclusively at His disposal. You now need to fully present yourself to Him to be an instrument of His righteousness, so He may control your activities and display the light of His life through your character. Can you honestly say in your own experience, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh {in a mortal body} *I live by faith in the Son of God*”? (Gal. 2:20 Emphasis added)

The Capital “I” needs to be crucified with Christ so that God may have complete possession of your body. The degree to which a deliberate, voluntary attitude of faith has permitted you to reckon yourself to be dead “with Christ,” and the degree to which you have stopped living by “the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Eph. 2:3), will be the degree to which the redemptive plan of God has taken place within your life.

Your worth is directly related to how much you have permitted the Spirit of God to reveal the Son’s life through you. Everything else is a dead loss. In the end, everything of the flesh must be burned in the testing fires on the Day of Judgment.

*When you are willing to fully surrender your body to become a vessel of Christ’s Kingdom-life, then the Son of God will fill what you are – nothing, with what He is – everything. Only then will you be something!*

**With the old flesh-life out, and the Kingdom-life of Christ in, how wealthy God will have made you! This is the Pearl of Great Price! Good friend, before you lay this book aside, embrace this life of faith. Great and precious are the promises to those who live by childlike dependence on God for everything. (2 Pet. 1:3-4) Submit yourself to Christ so that He may give you all that He has**

**prepared for you in the heavenly realms. (Eph. 1:3) He waits to share this wonderful *Mystery of Godliness* with you!**

{We therefore} present to you the word of God in its fullness – the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. (Col. 1:25-28)

But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing... Blessed is the man who endures temptation {in the time of testing}; *for when he has been approved* {to come out of the wilderness of human sufficiency}, he will receive the crown of life {the Kingdom-life} which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (Jam. 1:4, 12 Emphasis added)