

The Saving Life of Christ

By Ian Thomas

Christ did not die simply that you might be saved from a bad conscience, or even to remove the stain of your past failure, but to “clear the decks” for divine action. You have been told that Jesus Christ shed His blood for your sins in order to reconcile you to God. This is gloriously true. But this vital work is not the most important part in God’s plan of salvation. In Roman’s 5: 10 we read, “ For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!” It may be hard to believe, but Christ has come to save us from the bondage of our sinful nature by manifesting His own victorious life from within our soul.

On the third morning after His crucifixion, the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples. Because He had died for their sins, He was then able to “breathe” the Spirit into them in a new way. The Spirit was able to manifest Himself as the Dove of reconciliation by providing them with a supernatural sense of “peace with God.” (John 20: 21-22; Heb.10: 22)

Christ breathes the Spirit into each believer at what the Bible would refer to as their own miraculous Red Sea crossing. (1Cor. 10: 1-2) A spiritual regeneration takes place in the heart and they receive a new desire to be like Jesus Christ. As a spiritual type of what occurred to the Egyptians at the Red Sea, their past sins {pictured as the Egyptians} are wiped out behind them. The conscience is cleansed and there is a new witness of the Spirit.

We can recognize the presence of the indwelling Spirit because He provides our soul with a new desire to become like Jesus Christ. He

enters into each new believer and drives them into the desert wilderness with a real hunger and thirst to be filled with Christ's life of true righteousness. (Matt. 5: 6) This is the inner witness of the Spirit.

Since this new desire to become like Jesus is only the beginning of our spiritual pilgrimage, we need to keep in mind that every believer has been "called out" of spiritual Egypt – the world – for the purpose of being taken into the promised land of abundant fruitfulness. We must go forward in our faith if we want to enter the promised land where Christ is able to manifest His own abundantly full life from within our soul.

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is...be filled with the Spirit. (Eph. 5: 17-18)

On the day of Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Firstfruits, Christ returned to be with His obedient disciples in a new way. Those who responded to His word by waiting in prayer for the Promise of the Father (Acts 1: 4), entered into a participation with Him in His divine nature. (1 Pet. 1: 3-4) This was truly the Feast of Firstfruits. They had entered the land of heavenly fruitfulness.

It is the Pentecostal blessing of being clothed with power from on high that purifies the heart. (Acts 15: 8-9)

Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God {as an inner manifestation, by the power of the Spirit}. (Matt. 5: 8)

This baptism with the Holy Spirit is what immerses Christ's disciples into the fullness of His life and nature and enables them to manifest the light of His life. (John 8:12)

Of course, this is not the completion of the Lord's work in our life. He provides each sanctified believer with an undivided heart for the purpose of enabling them to begin growing with "ever-increasing glory." Before being filled with the Holy Spirit, which makes the believer "one" with the Son's submissive nature, there will be periodic regressions back into the ways of the world. There is still much conflict between the Spirit and the flesh. If we want to truly grow from "glory to glory" without ever being pulled back into the prideful and self-sufficient ways of the world, we must become *filled* with the Holy Spirit.

The One who calls you to a life of righteousness is the One, who by your consent, will manifest that life of righteousness through you!

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness {in the desert testing period}, for they will be filled" {in the promised land of Sabbath-rest}. (Matt 5: 6)

Although we have received a sinful nature from Adam, "how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in {the Son's} life through the one Man, Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5: 17)

God's work of entire sanctification, which He performs with the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1: 17-20), is able to immerse the soul into a supernatural life *that saves the children of God from the futility of self-effort*. If it were not for this supernatural provision, our call to manifest the light of Christ's divine nature would be a source of utter frustration, presenting the sorry spectacle of a sincere idealist constantly thwarted by his own inadequacy.

The cutting off of the flesh-life is something *that man cannot do*. The fire must come down from heaven and consume the carcass of the

flesh before the glory of the Lord can fill the temple of our body. This is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

Circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code {of trying to obey laws by human effort}. (Rom. 2: 29)

May God Himself...sanctify you through and through...

The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it {in due time}. (1 Thess. 5: 23-24)

Humble yourselves {by learning to become entirely dependent}, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time." (1 Pet. 5: 6)

The "called out" children of God have been "predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers." (Rom. 8: 29) In this New Testament age of fulfillment, you can be restored to your true humanity – a human vehicle of Christ's life. Then your faith will open the window to the blessings of heaven, for God will fill the temple of your body with His glorious life and begin to do the impossible in you.

How much could the Father do through the Son once He had filled Jesus with the Spirit of glory? Everything!

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

Remember, "in Christ all the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given {access to} fullness in Christ." (Col. 2: 9-10)

He is limited only by the measure of our availability and our willingness to yield ourselves to live wholly under the control and power of His "Spirit of glory." (1 Pet. 4: 14)

With what magnificent confidence you may step out into the future when once you have consented to die to your self-sufficiency and self-will. Can you begin to see the glorious riches of this mystery and the benefit of giving up your own glory in order to be filled with Christ's life and glory?

We are now talking about the Pearl of Great Price. *The true seekers of God give up everything they have in self so they may be filled with the life of Jesus Christ.*

Therefore, I urge you, brothers...to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. (Rom.12: 1)

Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple...Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness...(Mal. 3: 1)

A New Principle

We have begun to see how victorious Christian living is not a method or technique to be worked out in our strength – it is an entirely different and revolutionary principle of life. It is the principle of the exchanged life. When the Spirit circumcises our heart by cutting off our old flesh-life, we can say with Paul – “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”

I would like to explore with you the true spiritual content of the Gospel – the good news! *It is not just heaven one day, but Christ right now!* “The glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you.” (Col. 1: 27) *It is the reality of Christ communicating His divine life and nature through our mortal body based on our dependent faith.*

Unfortunately, there are many who refuse to give up their old way of living by self-will. They also prefer to rely on the strength of their flesh. Many Christians are like Martha. (Luke 10: 41-42) They are dedicated Christians but they are still serving the Lord through their own human efforts. Like Martha, because they are still working in their own strength and will, they remain worried and upset about many things. And of course, this kind of service drains them of spiritual energy.

This may of course be a picture of you. Do not be shocked when I say that it is the picture of a carnal Christian. Yes, I am talking about Sunday school teachers, Sunday school superintendents, and pastors in the pulpit. I am talking about many ordinary, average, earnest Christians. They are not hypocrites. But they are tired – desperately tired! Furthermore, their old carnal nature is always rising up to

overshadow the light and beauty of Christ's life. But when you meet them, they will smile sweetly and mean it.

Story after story could be told of men and women who bravely, doggedly, out of a sense of duty and devotion, go on and on in their work for the Lord. But yet, deep down in their hearts, they are frustrated and spiritually worn out. These believers have not yet entered the Sabbath-rest of God where everyone rests from their own human effort. Like Martha, they still lack "the one thing needful." (Luke 10: 42) *They do not yet know about the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit that is able to raise their spiritual life up into the heavenly realms with Christ's spiritual blessings.* (Eph.1: 3, 17-20) And so they still find themselves with an up and down spiritual life and constantly drained of spiritual energy. They still need to enter into a participation with Christ in His divine nature. (2 Pet. 1: 3-4) We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all *His energy which so powerfully works in me.* (Col. 1: 28-29 Emphasis added)

The problem in Christianity today is that no one is telling God's people to turn from the worldly way of human effort – the old flesh-life. You must seek out the supernatural life of Jesus Christ. It is only His activity and His work clothing you and being displayed through you that will ultimately find the approval of God. You are not to be the original actor. Only what you permit Him to do in and through you by His divine power and in His nature will merit His approval.

Before Christians will truly enter into this kind of life, where they walk wholly by faith within God's Sabbath-rest, they must first recognize their own spiritual bankruptcy. But this is a hard lesson to accept when people have grown up under the influence of the "spirit of the world." (1 Cor. 2: 12) Only after their self-sufficient spirit has been completely broken will they truly begin to wholeheartedly seek

out the spiritual wealth that comes from the life of Jesus Christ, through faith.

Can we begin to see why we should be praising God when He brings us to the end of our self-life. While the soul will experience some suffering, it is a time of rejoicing. Only when we have given up all human effort and have truly begun to trust God to direct and empower our every step are we in a condition for God to use His power to take us into His Sabbath-rest. There remains then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for everyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work...Let us, therefore, make every effort {by coming out from the carnal ways of the world} to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. (Heb. 4: 9-11)

Remember the path our Lord has shown to us. We are to follow Him through the cross and into His resurrection life – “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12: 2)

The cross will bring about a death to self-will and human effort. This is why the people of the world will scorn anyone who takes this course. Are you willing to die to the ways of human wisdom in order to be raised up by God's power into the divine life of Jesus Christ?

We must give up the self-life in order to receive the Christ-life. It will be necessary to choose one or the other because we cannot serve both the flesh and the Spirit. “No one can serve two masters.” (Matt. 6: 24) Only those who are willing to live wholly under the control and power of Christ's Spirit have the promise of an inner manifestation of His divine life. (John 14: 19-21; 2 Cor. 3: 17-18) For if you live according to the flesh you will die {have a dying spiritual life}; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as

are led by the Spirit of God, these {and not everyone who says “Lord, Lord”} are sons of God. (Rom. 8: 13-14)

A Day to Be Remembered

It is truly a blessing to enter the promised land. “There, in the presence of the Lord your God, you...shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the Lord your God has blessed you.” (Deut. 12: 7) God’s continuous presence is experienced in His promised Sabbath-rest.

In the land, everyone has sacrificed their self-life to be an instrument of the Lord’s life and work. And by taking this path of the cross, these children of God are enabled to enter into the good, pleasing and perfect will of their Father. (Rom. 12: 1-2) Everything you do will be a sheer delight! The whole of your activity under the control and power of the Holy Spirit will be bathed in joy!

“You are not to do as we do here today, everyone as he sees fit...” (Deut. 12: 8) That is what they were doing in the wilderness! Every one of God’s called out people were still doing whatever was right in their own eyes. There was no sense of the absolute sovereignty of God – His absolute right to control their every step in life. Remember, man was never given the right to direct his own life as an independent god. “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)

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)

The flesh-life is still alive and active in the desert wilderness. And so the people continued to do what was right in their own eyes. Even though this conduct was controlled by their own sincere beliefs, and even though it often included a service and worship to God, this life

continued to be prompted by the carnal nature, which inevitably promotes its own plans to gain its own praise and glory.

We can easily recognize this carnal nature because it will continue to be “worried and upset about many things.” (Luke 10: 41) When we are living by human effort, according to our own will, the flesh will have much to become worried and upset about. Even God interferes with the plans of the flesh.

A man living by his own strength in the wilderness, even though prompted by sincere motives to serve God, is subject to certain patterns of conduct that rise up from the fallen flesh-life. As long as you remain a self-seeker and feed your fleshly lusts {desires} and your pride, the devil will continue to influence your life.

For example, James describes “envy” and “self-seeking” as common traits that will rise out of Satan’s work in this world. It comes from the “spirit of the world” (1 Cor. 2: 12) – “This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual{not spiritual}, demonic {of the devil}. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.” (James 3: 15-16) All self-righteous anger, bitterness and fighting flows out of this active work of the flesh, whether it’s between nations, among families or in the church.

So, if your eyes are still enviously looking at what others are doing; or if your life is still centered around your own ambitions, including how you will serve the Lord; or if you still find yourself worried and upset about things, including when someone or something interferes with *your* plans – then you can know that you are still living under the control of the flesh-life in the desert wilderness. There will be no rest for your soul while you continue to live by human effort, as you see fit, in the desert wilderness.

In contrast, a man who has entered the promised Sabbath-rest of God through a supernatural circumcision of the flesh-life by the power of the Holy Spirit, and has thereby begun to participate with Christ in His divine nature, is set free from the power of Satan. The spiritual Christian receives “the mind of Christ.” (1 Cor. 2: 16) The Lord, who becomes our life, provides us with His own humble and submissive nature.

God has the power to provide His dependent children with a supernatural rest from the spiritual enemies that normally defeat our spiritual life. While the attacks may still come from the world, their arrows cannot enter the soul of a Christian who is living in the Sabbath-rest of God.

They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord...with all their heart and soul...All Judah rejoiced about the oath because they had sworn it wholeheartedly. They sought God eagerly, and he was found by them. *So the Lord gave them rest on every side.* (2 Chron. 15: 12-15 Emphasis added)

Christ, who has already gained the victory over the flesh and the devil, fills His disciples with His divine life when they have truly given up their self-sufficiency and submitted themselves to live under His control and power. When they seek to be filled with Christ’s Spirit with all their heart and soul, in due time they will be clothed with power from on high. These Spirit-filled Christians have truly died to self and entered into a wisdom that is from another world.

The wisdom that is from above is first pure, the peaceable, gentle {considerate}, willing to yield {submissive}, full of mercy and good fruits {of the Spirit}, without partiality and without hypocrisy {sincere}. (James 3: 17)

Furthermore, *all work that is done for the Lord in the flesh will drain energy* rather than provide that sheer joy that God has planned for His redeemed people when they are walking under the control and power of His Spirit. When we have been lifted out of the carnal life and into Christ's spiritual life, the all-surpassing power of God begins to flow through our soul. (2 Cor. 4: 7)

If you are still living by the efforts of the flesh and are therefore experiencing the dryness of the arid wilderness, "you have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the Lord your God is giving you." (Deut. 12: 9)

There remains therefore a rest for the {regenerate} people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his {own fleshly} works...(Heb. 4: 9-10)

What have you been doing since your redemption began? Are you still doing what is right in your own eyes? Do you still claim the right to choose your own career? You do not have that right! Do you still claim the right to choose the wife or husband you will marry? You do not have that right! Do you still claim the right to use your time as you please? You do not have that right! Do you still claim the right to spend your money as you please? You do not have that right! Do you still claim the right to serve God as you please? You do not have that right! The only Christians who are still claiming these rights will also recognize how they are still living in a dry and arid land – the desert wilderness!

There is only one way out of the desert. "If anyone desires to come after Me {into a union with the divine nature}, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me {through a death to the flesh-life}. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it." (Luke 9: 23-24)

The moment an individual gives the Holy Spirit the right to re-establish the sovereignty of Jesus Christ within their soul, they do not even have the right to work for the Lord according to what is right in their own eyes. The children of God must completely die to self-will and depend on the Spirit of the Lord to lead them into His life and work.

Here was a redeemed people. They had been brought out of Egypt {a type of the world} and were on their way to the “land of promise,” but their thoughts, their ambitions, their appetites, were still being fed by an old way of life in a world they were supposed to leave behind. “We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.” (Num. 11: 5) They remained enslaved to the memories of the old worldly pleasures of the flesh from which they had been redeemed!

With what does your mind busy itself? What are your ambitions? Where are your appetites? Have you been weaned from the things of the world {including its people, events, concerns, ambitions and activities} and the {self-sufficient and independent} ways of the world? Do not forget, it was Jesus Christ who said that everyone who is looking back at the fleshly ways of this world will never be fit for service in the undivided kingdom of God. (Luke 9: 62) And He also said, “Remember Lot’s wife! Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.” (Luke 17: 32)

James describes this love affair with the ways of the world as spiritual adultery – “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity {hatred or animosity} with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world *makes himself an enemy of God.*” (James 4: 4 Emphasis added)

Christians today are continually praying for God to give them the temporal things they have set their eyes on in this world. They honestly think their happiness is dependent on their temporal

circumstances. There is an assumption that if only they had the right spouse, or home, or job, or reputation, or ministry, you name it, surely they would find fulfillment. They never seem to learn how everyone who drinks of this temporal water will be thirsty again.

Only those who turn wholly to Christ and seek out the Living Waters of His divine nature will be filled with the firstfruits of His eternal life. They are the only ones who will “never thirst” again. (John 4: 13-14)

The people of the wilderness knew nothing of the absolute sovereignty of God’s will. Even though God had given them such unrelenting evidence of His willingness to provide for their basic needs with the daily manna, they never acted as though His ways mattered. And even after receiving such lavish promises of a land to be possessed, they continued to feed their mind with thoughts about the world they had left behind.

So what did this willful people have to say to the men who were attempting to lead them into the promised land of true righteousness and holiness? (Eph. 4: 22-24) “They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, ‘You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them.’” (Num. 16: 3) Even while their flesh-life was alive and active, they claimed to be living in the presence of the Lord. *In their own estimation they were holy* – “every one of them”! How holy? Holy enough!

How holy can you be when your life is still being directed by your own self-will? Holy enough? Can a carnal nature be holy? Remember, the flesh-life cannot go into the presence of the Lord. “Make every effort...to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.” (Heb. 12: 14)

Today, believers have an opportunity to participate with Christ in His divine nature, but they think they are already holy enough! God's "called out" people are still making the same serious error in judgment that Israel of old once made.

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud {of the Holy Spirit}...They all ate the same spiritual food {that every Christian receives in the desert testing period}...for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things {desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes, and the self-sufficient ways of the world} as they did...We should not test the Lord...And do not grumble, as some of them did – and were killed by the destroying angel.

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. (1 Cor. 10: 1-12)

Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you...Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from every-thing that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. (2 Cor. 6: 17; 7: 1)

While feeding on the ways of the world and grumbling about God's requirements for being holy to Him {set apart for His exclusive use}, can you honestly call yourself a Spirit-filled child of God?

Maybe you have recognized the witness of God's Spirit through His supernatural work of spiritual regeneration.

Maybe you still have some hunger and thirst to be like Jesus, yet you remain perfectly content to live out a self-directed life in the flesh – which by its very existence is a life that renounces and repudiates the lordship of Jesus Christ. *You will never be raised up into a participation with Christ in His divine nature while you continue to follow the worldly course of self-sufficiency and self-will.*

Jesus said, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to." (Luke 13: 24) The effort we must exert is directed toward putting off our heart idols and the self-willed way of life.

Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Matt. 7: 14)

The "many" have always thought it would be easy to enter into the kingdom-life of God. But the gospel describes how the old flesh-life will resist giving up its own will and its rights. The fallen nature wants to be its own god and claim its own possessions. This is why Jesus emphasized the need for pressing forward, and even doing violence to our flesh-life if we want to have the undivided kingdom of God established within our heart. (Matt. 5: 29-30; 11: 12; Luke 16: 16) "For many are called {out from the ways of the world}, but few are chosen {to enter the land [life] of abundant fruitfulness}." (Matt. 22: 14)

It may well be that as you began to read this book you were firmly convinced that you were holy enough – still ready to resist the idea of being anything other than what you have already become while still living under a bondage to the sinful {self-willed} nature. But do not

miss the purpose for which this message comes to you; for full redemption is “a day to be remembered” in a “land to be possessed.”

We will only receive the “mark” and “seal” of Christ’s divine nature after we have entered the promised land. Only after the natural flow of the flesh-life has been “cut off” at our own miraculous Jordan River crossing through a circumcision of the heart, by the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit, are we truly able to participate in the full benefits of Christ’s life.

The Lord now has the authority and the power to make each of His disciples holy by providing them with an “undivided”, (Ezk. 11: 19) or “purified” (Acts 15: 8-9) heart. This supernatural heart-purity is truly a glorious blessing: “Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God {as an indwelling nature of Christ’s self-sacrificing love}.” (Matt. 5: 8)

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us {spiritual Christians who have truly entered into a participation with Christ in His divine nature} through His Spirit. (1 Cor. 2: 9-10)

Any Old Bush Will Do

We are tutored to live under hero worship. In every walk of life we become “fans.” This generally holds true of Christians. We are sometimes able to see someone whose life is clearly marked by the Spirit of God. They are transparently genuine. The hand of God is upon them. They speak with an authority that God honors. God is manifesting the glory of His life through them, and we admire them – but we stand back as though this were to be the monopoly of the few! We say in our hearts, “There is a bush that burns with the presence of God! I would like to be a bush like that, but I am just a heap of ashes!” – and that is as far as it gets.

It is unbelief that keeps God’s people from dying to self and entering His Sabbath-rest. We seem incapable of believing that God is able to manifest a supernatural work through someone who has rested from the worldly way of human effort.

The message of the Bible is that God has chosen “the weak” and those who are “nothing” in themselves to those who think they are something. (1 Cor. 1: 18-31) The only thing that God demands of a man is a recognition of his own helplessness and the offer of his body to be used exclusively as an instrument of Christ’s life and work.

Of course, this is where faith comes in. We are to give up our life to God in order to become inhabited by God – for His purposes. As a vessel of divine life, we are to show forth His spiritual image. We must manifest His glory. This is the mystery that has been hidden from the wisdom of this world – the real life of “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Human strength cannot produce anything other than the works of the flesh. This human activity is the source of all evil – “You have planted wickedness {through a life of self-sufficiency}, you have reaped evil {through a carnal nature}, you have eaten the fruit of {Satan’s} deception. Because you have depended on your own strength...” (Hosea 10: 13) And there is only one way out of this carnal life under the spirit of the world – “For it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers {heavenly} righteousness on you.” (Hosea 10: 12)

You read about the lives of men like Hudson Taylor, George Muller, Dwight Moody, A.B. Simpson – men whose lives have made spiritual history. You would like to have God working through you like He did through them, and yet, maybe you have never taken the trouble to find out why God blessed them. Instead, you mobilized your own fleshly resources to duplicate their life, and as a result you have been constantly buffeted by a sense of frustration. After all, the only thing that anyone will ever reap from human effort is a carnal nature.

What made Taylor and Muller different? Were they God’s favorites? Of course they were not! They were simply men who had recognized the weakness of the flesh-life and had qualified in the school of failure and despair. They were men who were brought to an end of themselves through the path of soul-suffering. They discovered that what they were apart from God’s divine life – was nothing!

Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. (2 Cor. 1: 9)

Did you ever make this discovery? Have you ever come to the place where you realized that all you can produce, at your best, is ashes? Did you ever come to the place where you presented yourself for what you are – nothing – to be filled with what God is – everything.

Since God has chosen to fill those who are *nothing* in self with His life, and then to perfect His divine power through the weakness that looks to Him in dependent faith, doesn't it make spiritual sense to enter into God's way of life within His Sabbath-rest? "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..." (Heb. 4: 9-10)

Remember, Jesus Christ is the only one who has the light of divine life. He is waiting to manifest His supernatural life and work through everyone who is willing to exchange their fallen nature for His divine nature. And never forget – any old bush will do!

The Church in the Wilderness

While God was feeding His people with manna in the desert wilderness – He was causing them to hunger. “Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna...” (Deut. 8: 2-3)

Throughout their time in the desert, God did not plan for His called out people to be satisfied. While the believer remains in the desert wilderness, God will cause the seeker to hunger and thirst after the heavenly fruit of Christ’s life. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled.” The filling with Christ’s “Spirit of life” occurs when we have come to the end of human effort and have entered into His promised rest. This is how we are enabled to “put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Eph. 4: 24)

The manna was given only to sustain life, never to fill and satisfy the soul. The desert is a time of removing the heart’s idols from God’s temple and separating your soul from worldliness – to be used for God’s exclusive use. While God will continue sustaining your soul with His grace while He is testing you to find out if you will permit the Spirit to strip away your flesh-life, it will be necessary to enter into a union with Christ’s divine nature before it is possible to know the firstfruits of His heavenly life.

The Lord will lead you with the convicting work of the Holy Spirit through the desert testing period “to humble you and to test you in

order to know what {is} in your hearts.” Will you respond to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit or will you rebel against God?

God must work out the very delicate matter of separating His called out people from their worldly way of life. He does it by bringing them to an end of their willful pride and self-sufficiency. This process will inevitably entail much suffering within the soul.

During this stripping away process, He will also be leading His people to wells of refreshment on occasions so they do not fall away and return to the ways of the world. But these periods of refreshing joy cannot be compared to the river of life that flows without ceasing in the promised land. Only those who enter the land and begin to drink from Christ’s Living Water of divine life will know what it means to “never thirst.” (John 4: 14) Unfortunately, only “the few” are ever willing to enter in.

My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns {by turning to the things and self-sufficient ways of this world}, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. (Jer. 2: 13)

Come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters...Why spend money...and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. (Isa. 55: 1-2)

As we are being stripped of our self-life in the desert wilderness, God must permit long dry spells between the wells of refreshment. He would like to speed up the process as much as possible because He needs Christians “filled” with Christ’s life of righteousness. He wants to manifest His divine light in this world. However, He cannot go too fast in this delicate process of separating people from the ways of the world. The Lord does not want anyone to fall away. If He were to

expose us to all the evil in our fallen nature all at once, it would be more than we could bear.

When Jesus went into the desert as our example, He fasted in the physical realm to demonstrate how we are to fast in the spiritual realm. We must stop feeding our spiritual life with the things of this world. God will not fill the temple of our body with His divine life until we are willing to accept His life as our only food and drink. Jesus said, "Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me...he who feeds on this bread will live forever." (John 6: 57-58)

By the time we have given up all of our outside sources of spiritual sustenance through this spiritual fast, we will be as weak as Jesus was at the end of His physical fast. It is in this weakness that we will be able to perfect the power of God within our inner being. (2 Cor. 12: 9) *The Spirit will manifest His divine power by clothing our soul with the life and nature of Jesus Christ.*

There will be a real change in the way we live when we come out of the desert clothed with power from on high. Once we are through with the worldly way of human effort, God is able to manifest His life and work through the temple of our body. Like Jesus, we cannot truly begin a ministry that brings all glory to the Father in heaven until this event has taken place. "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole country." (Luke 4: 15)

Where did God intend to satisfy His people? In the land {of promise}! Since God was stripping the people of their flesh-life in the desert, He refused to fill their soul with heavenly fruit while they remained there. Never forget, He has spread the table with good things in Canaan!

Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God...A certain man was preparing a great banquet and inviting many guests. At the time of the banquet {in this New Testament age of fulfillment} he sent his servant to tell those {called out people} who had been invited, "Come, for everything is now ready."

But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, "I have just bought a field {as a new property owner}, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me {because my concerns are for the property}."

Another said, "I have just bought five yoke of oxen {as a new business owner}, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me {because my business must come first}."

Still another said, "I just got married, so I can't come {because my spouse doesn't like the Lord's will}." Then the master told his servant,... "I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet." (Luke 14: 15-24)

Therefore...repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Rev. 3: 19-20)

Have you entered into the banquet feast and begun to eat from the Tree of Life in the Sabbath-rest of God? Maybe you are still feeding your flesh-life on the things of this world. If anyone or anything is more important to you than the good, pleasing and perfect will of the Father, you will not be permitted to feast on Christ's divine life and nature.

God cannot fully satisfy you in the wilderness because He is attempting to bring an end to your old life in the flesh. He must

weaken you to the point where you give up all hope in self, and all hope of finding fulfillment from the things of this world. *Out of love, He permits suffering to come into your life in order to bring about your willingness to die to self.*

Of course, it is not natural for the flesh-life to like what God must do. The flesh, in its natural desire to assert itself, fights against becoming nothing in itself so that God may become all in all. It has a natural enmity against Christ's selfless nature.

This is why God must bring about a weakness in the flesh. The desert is a place of soul suffering. The intent of this work of the Spirit is to make us weaker in self so we will become more dependent on the Lord. We will not perfect the power of God within our inner being until we have been driven into an absolute dependence on God to direct and empower our every step.

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body {which is intended to bring about an end to the self-life} is done with sin {or self-will}. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil {self-willed} human desires, but rather for the will of God. (1 Pet. 4: 1-2)

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

When the Spirit is breathed into a new believer as the Dove of peace and reconciliation with God, He immediately drives the new seeker into the desert to separate him from the willful ways of the world. But there is a natural tendency to look back at the worldly things and methods that we once used to sustain our old spiritual life.

However, you need to be very concerned about turning your eyes back to the world, because if you are not careful, God will give you the things that you want! The people “lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.” (Ps. 106: 14-15) The quail God gave them rotted in their mouths, and they lived in self-imposed spiritual poverty – *carnally fat and spiritually lean!*

Your soul will feel miserable if you are feeding on worldly things while the Spirit is attempting to lead you through the desert with a hunger and thirst to be like Jesus Christ. The wretched feeling that occurs when you are feeding your soul on the temporal things of this world originates from the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

Many who are in the church today have not experienced spiritual regeneration and so they have not been blessed with a hunger to be like Jesus Christ. These people have never left spiritual Egypt {the world}. They naturally sustain their spiritual life by feeding their flesh with the things of this world. They do not experience a true sense of conviction over their spiritual adultery because they remain spiritually dead.

The Spirit does not drive an individual into the desert testing period until after spiritual regeneration. They will know when this occurs because the Spirit provides them with an inner desire to become like Jesus Christ. And of course, the carnal desires that continue to flow out of their sinful nature will make them feel miserable. (See Romans 7)

Since it is a true blessing to have our independent spirit broken (Matt. 5: 3), the breaking down of our self-sufficient pride becomes an essential part in God’s plan of redemption. God must separate us from the self-life. This is why Christians all over the world will go through a period of suffering to break their self-sufficient spirit.

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of

Christ {as you die to self}, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed {within your soul}. (1 Pet. 4: 12-13)

Casting all your care upon Him...Be sober, be vigilant...steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace...after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you {in His undivided kingdom}. (1 Peter 5: 7-10)

Life in the wilderness was not a happy place to be. But what a transformation took place on the day they entered into the land {of God's Sabbath rest}! "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death...That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled {or fully met} in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8: 2, 4 KJV) There is deliverance from the bondage of the sinful nature when we enter into the promised land and receive the long awaited Promise of the Father – *an undivided heart*. The glory of the Lord is revealed within our soul so we are enabled to manifest His spiritual image.

God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them {because of the way they responded to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit} by giving the Holy Spirit to them {as an inner manifestation of Christ's divine life}...for he purified their hearts by faith. (Acts 15: 8-9)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matt.5:8)

“The manna stopped the day after they ate this {divine} food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.” (Josh. 5: 12)

Christ wants to become the food of our life – and the heavenly fruit of His Spirit flowing through our inner being will begin to satisfy our soul as with the richest of fare. (Isa. 55: 2; Eph. 1: 3)

The riches of this divine food bears witness to the Spirit-filled life. “The fruit of the Spirit is {Christ’s heavenly} love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” (Gal. 5: 22-23) *The Spirit makes Christ’s divine nature known as an experiential reality within our eternal soul.* (John 16: 14)

In the land {of promise} they enjoyed the fullness of the Spirit, not just sustained – now their soul could delight in the bountiful fruit of the land. No longer were they forced to eat the monotonous and leaning diet of the desert. They had entered the land flowing with spiritual milk and honey and had all the abundance of Canaan! It is here, in the promised Sabbath-rest, that we are enabled to participate with Christ in His heavenly blessings.

Are you bored? Are you suffering from leanness of soul? Have even the things you are doing for God become monotonous? Are you tempted to grumble about the circumstances of life rather than to constantly rejoice because of a fullness experienced within your soul? Perhaps you are still living on manna! Maybe you got out of Egypt {the world}, but you have not yet entered into the promised land. You probably still belong to the church of the wilderness!

Yes, you may know about the baptism of repentance that results in spiritual regeneration. But this was the message of a desert preacher. (Luke 3: 3) John the Baptist provided his message from the wilderness

to “prepare” the people to enter God’s undivided kingdom here on earth. (Matt. 3: 2) If this repentance is real, it will result in a Spirit-produced “hunger and thirst” to be like Jesus. But this is only a sign of life in the desert wilderness, and not yet the “life of promise.”

John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins {reconciliation}. (Mark 1: 4)

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the {undivided} kingdom of heaven is near...

I will baptize you with water for repentance {to reconcile you to God}. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit {to provide you with divine life}... (Matt. 3: 1-2, 11)

So there is still a question to be asked: Do you know about the more powerful baptism of the Holy Spirit that immerses you into the life and nature of Jesus Christ? Our Lord expects us to go forward in our faith so we may enter into His undivided kingdom through a union with His life and will.

The Messiah has come to establish His undivided kingdom in our heart. We are to become filled with His life of righteousness. “For the kingdom of God is...{Christ’s} righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 14: 17) “Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is...be filled with the Spirit.” (Eph. 5: 17-18)

Then Came Amalek!

Returning to Exodus 17, we see that no sooner had God given His people water in the desert to temporarily satisfy their spiritual thirst, “then came Amalek and fought with Israel...” Amalek here is the picture of the flesh-life.

Under the influence of Satan, the flesh will do everything it can to prevent God’s “called out” people from entering into God’s Sabbath-rest. The flesh will assert its willful nature and attempt to maintain its dominion over the body, the mind, the will, and the emotions. Truly, many are called out of Egypt, but few are chosen to be taken into the promised land.

Amalek still has its strength in the early border areas of the wilderness. Remaining close to spiritual Egypt is not a safe place to live for long periods of time. You will surely be beaten if you remain this close to those worldly influences where Amalek, as the flesh-life, has all of its strength. The carnal nature will remain alive and active as it continues to feed itself on the things of the world.

Amalek presents us with a most fascinating study and illustrates the consistency of the Holy Spirit in the language which He uses in His revelation of truth throughout the whole of the Bible. He may use several spiritual types or symbols to illustrate the same spiritual principle, but such types or symbols will be used with complete consistency throughout the whole of Scripture.

This is one of the most remarkable evidences of the miraculous inspiration of the Bible. You will discover that the Bible will come to life in a new way, and the Old Testament in particular will become much richer, a Book charged with spiritual significance, if you will

allow the Holy Spirit to teach you the meaning of His spiritual types according to the language that He uses.

We have already seen that just as soon as the Holy Spirit is breathed into your human spirit (John 20: 22) as a forgiven sinner who has agreed to stop directing your own life, His office is to re-invade your soul and to reestablish the temple of God. It must be properly prepared before the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ can fill the temple of your body with the glory of His divine nature and then rule in the areas of your mind, your emotions and your will.

The undivided kingdom of God is not established in the heart when we first believe in Jesus. Desert preaching, which teaches repentance, is intended to prepare God's "called out" people to enter His undivided kingdom. (Matt. 3: 1-12) " From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.'" (Matt. 4: 17) Only after the temple is wholly consecrated for Christ's exclusive use is the Lord able to re-inhabit your redeemed humanity with His divine life and glory from heaven.

There is, however, immediate resistance on the part of the flesh, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh." (Gal. 5: 17) The flesh-life, while it remains alive and active, will naturally resist giving up its control over you. It will continue to resist until God is able to establish His undivided kingdom in your heart.

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

The flesh will fight against your attempts to enter the promised land. Since everyone who has entered into God's undivided kingdom has died to the independent and self-sufficient ways of the world, a great battle will first have to take place within the soul. Let us simply say – *the flesh-life does not die easily*. Standing across your pathway from the very outset of your Christian life is Amalek!

The flesh does not have the power to overcome the flesh. When Joshua went out to fight Amalek, the outcome of the battle did not rest with his own might: "...when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed." (Ex. 17: 11) The principle is plain. Victory over Amalek will be given to us when we are looking to God in faith; it cannot be won by human strength {with all of its resolutions}.

Not by {human} might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts. (Zech. 4: 6)

For if you live according to the flesh {the self-willed and self-centered nature} you will die {have a dying spiritual life}; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Rom. 8: 13-14)

There is nothing quite so nauseating or pathetic as the flesh trying to be holy! The flesh has a perverted bent for being righteous. But all it can produce is a pride that is innately looking for praise. This way of self-produced righteousness needs to be noticed, recognized, consulted, and applauded. It also has an evil inclination to make judgmental comparisons and then look down on those who have not yet achieved the kind of righteousness and holiness that it has achieved through its own efforts.

It is easy to determine when people are still attempting to be holy and righteous through the works of human effort. Self remains the primary focus of their actions. They will have a natural tendency to talk about their own life and what they have been accomplishing through their own works. And it is from this self-elevated position that they make their judgmental opinions about others.

God says of you that in your flesh dwells no good thing. (Rom. 7: 18) He also says that no flesh will ever glory in His presence. (1 Cor. 1: 29) This inwardly focused life found its first expression at the fall of Satan when he said in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the Most High." (Isa. 14: 13-14)

Satan wanted to *have* something, to *do* something, and to *be* something through his own works {and resources} so that he might receive the glory. It is this satanic ambition that the flesh seeks to perpetuate in you. The flesh is all that you become by seeking to *have* and to *do* and to *be* through your own human strength. And therefore, it will naturally seek to have its own recognition and glory, even in its service to God.

The flesh wars against becoming like Jesus Christ because He became "nothing" in Himself in order to walk as God had originally planned for man. (Phil. 2: 5-8) After laying down His own glory, He was sent into this world with only a mortal body and faith, to demonstrate how believers in this New Testament age of fulfillment are to live. (1 John 2: 6; 3: 16) He did nothing through the works of human effort. Jesus lived by dependent faith and waited for the Father to work out the divine life and will through Him.

The desire to exalt self is what separates you from the heavenly life of Jesus Christ. No flesh can be permitted to glory in His presence.

And so God is at war from generation to generation with this satanic principle which makes you want to elevate yourself.

Given the opportunity, God can take the most evil element of humanity and make a prince out of this fallen life. Did you ever get down on your knees and tell God what you know yourself to be? “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!...For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. (Rom. 7: 24-25; 8: 2)

Compromise with the flesh and you make an unholy alliance with that which is, and always will be, at enmity with God. Never forget, this flesh-life has already been condemned to perish. *And this, God says, is something to remember!*

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around {all those inward enemies that rise up and afflict your spiritual life}, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek {the flesh-life} from under heaven. You shall not forget. (Deut. 25: 17-19)

The Man Who Forgot to Remember

God was at war with Amalek from generation to generation. There was no good thing in Amalek! In effect, there is absolutely no salvageable content in the flesh! That was God's mind, God's will, and God's all-knowing judgment concerning Amalek. But Saul forgot to remember!

Even though Saul agreed to destroy every gross thing of the Amalekites, he "...took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive." Saul spared the king – "self" – that ruled Amalek, and the best things that belonged to the self-life. He spared what he thought was good, even though God had totally condemned everything that comes from Amalek as bad.

This was the sin of Saul. He kept what God hated – the basic nature that wanted to rule the body, and the best of its heart idols. Since he was unwilling to give up the flesh-life, he was unable to enter the promised Sabbath-rest where "the Lord your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you" who can afflict the spiritual life. The people of this world, even the ones who claim to be following Christ, but instead are following Saul's example, would rather keep self alive than to be set free from the spiritual bondage they naturally experience while clinging to their flesh-life.

This is the subtle temptation with which you will be confronted. For the devil will come to you again and again and whisper in your ear that you are not as bad as the Bible makes you out to be. There is surely something good to salvage from your flesh-life.

It seemed to Saul that God was taking things too far. God's judgment on Amalek seemed to be unwarranted, a fanatical exaggeration of the issues; and so, in defiance of God's word, God's mind, God's will, and

God's perfect judgment, Saul made up his own mind about right and wrong. Like Adam and Eve, Saul ate of the tree of "good and evil" – the personal opinion tree – thus making himself into his own god. (Gen. 3: 4-5)

It was this life of self-will that caused the Spirit to depart from both Adam and Saul. Are you still living by your own opinions and deciding what is right and wrong in your life? If you are, you are living by the flesh. God will not permit this evil to enter into His presence within His undivided kingdom. "So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. 8: 8)

It is comparatively easy to be sorry for our sinful past, and even to recognize and dislike some of the sinful things we may still stumble into {such as selfish anger, some other temper, or saying some unkind words}, but we are by nature loathe to concede the natural depravity and wickedness of our willful nature. We think there is something good in ourselves, and so we want to keep Agag alive in order to control our own life and have our own glory.

Like Saul, we even plan to use the "good things" of Amalek in our worship to God. Many people save their self-life so they are able to build themselves up in the eyes of the people through their worship services. However, it is easy to recognize "the pride of life" in man, even when it claims to be worshipping God.

In other words, the fact that you are a preacher, the fact that you are a missionary, the fact that you are a minister of music, the fact that you are a Christian educator, the fact that you are a Christian worker, the fact that you are a witnessing Christian, does not make you spiritual, nor your activity a righteous work coming from the life of Jesus Christ – no matter how deep your sense of dedication or the sacrifices involved.

Are you still doing your Christian work with some hope of receiving honor and recognition? (John 5: 44) If you are, Agag is still alive and active. You are still acting like “mere men.” (1 Cor. 3: 3) This is why you become worried and upset when things don’t go the way you have planned them to. You have not yet sacrificed your fallen nature so that your body may become the temple of Christ’s life. This is the “one thing needful.” (Luke 10: 42)

The flesh does not take kindly to an exposure of the unholy nature of its own self-righteousness. It will be hurt, offended, indignant, and resentful. Like Saul, it will even try to justify itself by claiming to be obedient to the word of God. But the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen did little to vindicate Saul’s claim that he had performed as God had commanded. The noise that flows out of a carnal nature, such as boasting, quarreling, bickering, fretting and irritability, is the bad fruit that will demonstrate how an individual is still living under the power of the flesh like a “mere man” of the world. (1 Cor. 3: 3)

Of course, Saul assumed an air of offended innocence and insisted that he had not only performed the commandment of the Lord, but had done so with superior human judgment. After all, he had spared the best part of Amalek to be offered to the Lord in his worship to God. In effect, he planned to serve the Lord with his very best efforts! Saul said in so many words, “Don’t get me wrong! Don’t do the injustice of misjudging my heart or my motives! The good that I have found in Amalek, I have kept to dedicate to God.”

Saul was saying the same thing that we hear from so many people in the church today. Even though they refuse to die to self so they may live under the control and power of the Holy Spirit and manifest the life and nature of Jesus Christ, they say their motives are right, even when they are still serving God in the power of the flesh. This heart deception is a stroke of satanic genius and one of Satan’s most ancient

devices, to persuade us to piously dedicate our fleshly human works to God.

We think that the works we are doing for the Lord with our “right heart” will make our proud and willful way of life acceptable to God. And so we presume to find good in the flesh-life – a life that God has condemned. But it is nothing more than an attempt to build the Tower of Babel up to God through human works.

This is the curse of Christendom! This is what paralyzes the Spirit’s work in the church today! In defiance of God’s word, men everywhere are prepared to dedicate to God the human plans that God condemns – the works of the flesh. No wonder God’s life and glory are not being seen from the lives of Christians today.

God had effectively said, “Do not forget the innate evil in Amalek.” But Saul forgot to remember. Saul, in his own willfulness, had rejected God’s verdict on Amalek. He therefore had to learn in a bitter way how God’s verdict is always right and unchangeable. Though you may show mercy to Agag, this self-life will never show mercy to you! “I am in great distress,” said Saul. “The Philistines {who represent the sins of a carnal nature} are fighting against me, and God has turned away from me. He no longer answers me either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what to do.” Samuel said, “Why do you consult me, now that the Lord has turned away from you and has become your enemy? The Lord has done what he predicted through me...Because you did not obey the Lord or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the Lord has done this to you today. The Lord will hand over both Israel and you to the Philistines {which is a life of suffering under the bondage of a carnal nature}...

(1 Sam. 28: 15-19)

You compromise with Amalek at your peril. No good thing dwells in your self-life, nor can anything good come out of the wisdom of this world. Spare it if you will, but it will never spare you! Presume to find something good in it to offer to the Lord, when God has wholly condemned it, and the day will come when it will destroy you and rob you of your crown.

God says that no flesh will ever glory in His presence. It can only make your body the devil's plaything so that his evil pride and self-seeking desires will become incarnate in all that you say and do.

Are you still offering to God the best of what God has condemned? Are you still living under law by human effort while offering tokens to the Lord from your treasures? Be careful; God cannot be mocked. You need to come out from the ways of the flesh and stop touching the unclean things of this world before you can enter into the divine life and nature of the Lord. (2 Cor. 6: 17) "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world {with its self-sufficient, self-willed and self-seeking ways}..." (Rom. 12: 1-2)

Think about this: With an entrance into the Promised Land only a twelve day journey from spiritual regeneration at the Red Sea, "then came Amalek." Because they would not destroy Amalek, for forty years the called out people of God wandered around the wilderness, grieving God in their self-imposed poverty, robbed of all the blessings for which they had been redeemed!

The Man with the Sword in His Hand

So Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, “Pass through the camp and command the people, ‘Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess.’” (Josh. 1: 10-11)

Moses was a spiritual type of John the Baptist who took the people through a baptism of repentance. *When repentance is real, as observed by the all-knowing eyes of God, it will result in spiritual regeneration and a thirst to become like Jesus Christ.* Moses then gave these called out people the law of God to teach them how God’s people are to act. But the law will only serve to make people aware of their own insufficiency. It is here, in the desert testing period, that God will use His law to tear His children away from the self-sufficient ways of this world. (Rom. 7: 13)

God makes use of desert preachers. But, like John the Baptist, they must learn to decrease while God’s children turn from the old way of law {trying to serve God by human effort in the strength of the flesh} to the supernatural life of living under the control and power of the Holy Spirit.

Joshua was a spiritual type of Jesus Christ who led the people through a baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is what cuts off the natural flow of the flesh-life. He then gave them the land where they would be enabled to participate with Christ in His divine nature and live out God’s will here on earth, as it is done in heaven. And on the third day after arriving at the Jordan River, early in the morning, they were taken into the land by God’s power!

Does this remind you of anything? What happened on the third day early in the morning? Jesus Christ rose from the dead! The number three in Scripture is associated with a new fullness of life – resurrection life! And this is the promised land {life}, the Promise of the Father (Acts 1: 4) – to know Christ in the power of His heavenly life and nature. “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death {to the flesh-life}, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection {life}, knowing this that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin {self-will} might be done away

with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died {to self-will} has been freed from sin.” (Rom. 6: 5-7)

Yes, as we have seen again and again, the promised land of Canaan is nothing less than the believer’s enjoyment, here on earth, of the firstfruits of Christ’s resurrection life.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation {and trials, in the wilderness time of testing}; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (Jam. 1: 12) To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life {and sustain himself on the divine nature of Jesus Christ} which is in the paradise of God... Be faithful, even to the point of death {to self}, and I will give you the crown of life. (Rev. 2: 7, 10)

He does not come to give strength to your flesh – He comes to become your life. When you are eating from the tree of divine life in the Sabbath-rest of God, you will taste of the firstfruits of Christ’s eternal life.

The Lord you are seeking comes in the power of His resurrection life. (Mal. 3: 1-3, Heb. 7: 16) He says, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” (John 14: 6) He is the only one who has a victorious life. Therefore, we must enter into the Sabbath-rest of God and permit Him to take control of every aspect of our life.

Joshua went out to make a reconnaissance of the walled city of Jericho and determine how to attack the first major task that confronted him in the land of divine provision. But as he did so, he became strangely aware of the presence of a Man – a Man with a sword in His hand. In so many words, he said to the Man, “Whose side are you on? Are you on our side or are you on their side?”

“Neither,” the Man replied, “But as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” The Man with the sword in His hand said, in effect, “I am not on anyone’s side. I have come as the Captain who has control of every situation. I have not come to take sides – *I have come to take over!*” This is the supernatural work of Christ’s Spirit.

The One who now possesses all power and authority in heaven and on earth has promised to live within His obedient disciples. He comes to direct their every step and to fight their every battle in this world. He has control over every situation; and He will work out everything for our eternal good as long

as we are walking under the control and power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 8: 28, 31)

The Lord gave this promise to Joshua as He prepared to take His called out people into the land of Sabbath-rest: “I will give you every place where you set your foot...No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life.” (Josh. 1: 3, 5) This promise goes out to everyone who will give up their self-life and permit the Spirit to lead them into the Sabbath-rest of God, where everyone lives by faith under His control and power.

The path of the righteous is level; O upright One, you make the way of the righteous smooth. (Isa. 26: 7)

In the land, you do not make your own plans in the flesh, hoping and praying that God will be on your side. You seek only to walk in union with the Lord’s plans. This is the one life of faith that everyone enjoys when they are living in the undivided kingdom of God. “For the kingdom of God is... {Christ’s} righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 14: 17)

The Lord is the only one with true power and authority. Jericho is no longer your problem. The Sovereign Lord will reign over every circumstance with His victorious life within your soul. When you live by faith, under the control and power of the Holy Spirit, you come under the supreme jurisdiction of the Man with the sword in His hand. *This is the life of holiness.* We are wholly devoted to serving the Lord according to His “good, and acceptable {pleasing} and perfect will.” (Rom. 12: 2) *His will is always accomplished through His providential control when He finds someone who is willing to be a holy instrument of His life and glory.* {The Man, who is the Spirit of Christ, said}, “...as commander of the army of the Lord I have come.” Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence {displaying a submissive nature}, and asked him, “What message does my Lord have for his servant?” The commander of the Lord’s army replied, “Take off your sandals {which represents our contact with the self-directed ways of the world}, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so. (Josh. 5: 14-15)

Victory and Vocation

Jesus Christ and eternal life are one and the same term. (1 John 1: 1-2)
Eternal life is none other than Jesus Christ Himself, of whom it is written in – “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:4) We have been called out by God for the purpose of becoming an instrument {or vessel} of Christ’s life – the firstfruits of His eternal life.

Jesus walked as a man, indwelt by the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Of Himself He said, “I can of mine own self do nothing.” (John 5: 30 KJV) And then He says the same of you: “Without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15: 5)

How much can you do without Him? *Nothing!* So what is all that work you are trying to accomplish through fleshly human effort and wisdom? *Nothing!* This is why Jesus told His first disciples to wait. They were not to begin their ministry for the Lord until He had come back to manifest Himself from within their inner being. They needed to have a personal knowledge of the firstfruits of His eternal life. And like those first obedient disciples, we too need to wait for our own Pentecost – the “Feast of Firstfruits.”

Even after the first disciples had given up everything to follow Jesus, had received personal instruction by Him for three years, had the Spirit breathed into them, and had visibly witnessed His resurrected life, they still had to wait to be clothed with power from on high. *With all of their intellectual knowledge, they still were not yet qualified to be true witnesses of His resurrection life.* If they had not waited to enter into a union with Christ’s divine nature through the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit, the first-century church would have looked like the modern church of the flesh. And so they waited, because Jesus had promised to come back for the purpose of manifesting His life and nature from within their inner being.

...He {Jesus} commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father {the gift the Father had promised throughout the Old Testament which would establish God's undivided kingdom-life in the hearts of New Testament believers}...for John truly baptized with water {for repentance}, but you shall be baptized {or immersed into the divine nature} with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. (Acts 1: 4-5)

I will not leave you orphans {to work out the life and glory of God through human effort}; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see me {as an inner manifestation of divine life}. Because I live, you will live also {by following Me through the cross and into resurrection-life}. At that day, you will know {in conscious reality} that I am...in you. (John 14: 18-20)

Many Christians profess to be "filled" with the Spirit of divine life simply because they live after Pentecost. Although we know there are people in the church who have experienced spiritual regeneration because they do have a hunger to be like Jesus Christ, we can also see the clear marks of a carnal nature. They are still worried and upset about many things as they continue to live by fleshly human effort like "mere men." They still live by the worldly ways of self-sufficiency and independence and have a natural tendency to elevate themselves in the pride of life. These conditions just naturally flow out of a nature that has never been "crucified with Christ." They are signs of life in the desert testing period.

You must not worship the Lord your God in their way {through the strength of the flesh}. But you are to seek the place the Lord your God will choose...To that place you must go...There, in the presence of the Lord your God, you...shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you put your hand to, because the Lord your God has blessed you.

You are not to do as we do here today {in the desert wilderness}, everyone as he sees fit, since you have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the Lord your God is giving you. But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you {your sinful [self-willed] nature that keeps you “under the sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5: 19) and bound to the thought processes of this fallen world} so that you will live in safety. (Deut. 12: 4-10)

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it...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...(Heb. 4: 1, 9-10)

It is amazing how busy you can be working in the flesh while still doing nothing! Did you ever find that out? “The flesh” – everything that you do apart from His divine life – “profits nothing.” (John 6: 63)

And there is always the awful possibility, if you do not discover this principle now, that you may spend a lifetime in the service of Jesus Christ living through the power of the flesh – doing nothing! You would not be the first, and you will not be the last.

Each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is {whether it was done by human effort in the strength of the flesh, or whether we yielded ourselves to be vessels of the life and works that God wanted to manifest through our weak mortal bodies through the power of His Spirit}. (1Cor. 3: 13)

The Lord Jesus Christ has a claim on the use of your body. He expects to use your whole being, your complete you. As you give

yourself to Him by living under the control and power of the Holy Spirit, He will give Himself to you through His eternal "Spirit of life." (Rom. 8: 2) In this way, all your activity as a human being on earth may be His activity in and through you. If you will follow this Spirit-controlled way of life, every step you take, every word you speak, everything you do, everything you are, may be an expression of the life of Jesus Christ through your mortal body.

If it is of Him and through Him and to Him, where do you come in? You do not! That is just where you go out! That is what Paul meant when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2: 20) "For to me, to live is Christ." (Phil. 1: 21)

I pray that God will open up your heart to an understanding of the urgent need for having a church body filled with disciples who have given up the carnal works of the flesh. Until this transformation has taken place, the light of Christ's divine life and work will not be displayed in this world. Truly, in this day, Christ has an extreme need for disciples who will "become blameless and pure, {Spirit-controlled} children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life..." (Phil. 2: 15-16)

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