

# **The Comfort of the Scriptures**

*brief devotional studies from God's Word*

**Volume Two**

Joseph Arthungal

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Grace for Family Life

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The Comfort of the Scriptures vol. 1

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*Brief Devotional Studies from God's Word*

**Volume Two**

Joseph Arthungal

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” Rom. 15:4

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## **The Author's Prayer for the Readers**

*May hearts be drawn to you, Lord:  
Hearts of those who are afflicted,  
Hearts of those who are brokenhearted,  
Hearts of those who are in prison,  
Hearts of those who are in hospitals,  
Hearts of those who are in nursing homes,  
Hearts of those who mourn,  
Hearts of those who are burdened,  
Hearts of those who are weary,  
Hearts of those who are depressed,  
Hearts of those who have lost loved ones,  
Hearts of those who are seeking God's will,  
Hearts of those who need the Savior -  
May hearts be comforted. Amen.*

## Author's Note

These are the words God spoke about the Lord Jesus Christ through Isaiah the prophet:

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me,  
Because the LORD has anointed Me  
To preach good tidings to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives,  
And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,  
And the day of vengeance of our God;  
To comfort all who mourn" Isa. 61:1-2.

The path to Zion lies through the valley of Baca (valley of tears), and our strength increases with each step, Ps. 84:6,7. *O Lord let me not fail to trust you as I walk through the valley of tears. Amen.*

It is hoped that these articles will comfort you. Our God is a "God of all comfort," 2 Cor. 1:3. If you find a blessing in these articles, please share with someone, and pray for me.

Joseph Arthungal

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"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." Acts 20:24

## Marred Vessels in God's Hands

Jeremiah the prophet was watching the potter make a vessel from clay, Jer. 18:1-6. The vessel was marred in the potter's hand, v. 4: "And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make." Though marred, the clay was still in the potter's hand. The potter didn't discard the clay, but made a new vessel as it pleased him.

God said Israel was like the marred vessel in God's hands, and He is able to make a new vessel from the marred one. This was God's mercy towards His people Israel whom He called to repentance, Jer. 18:8. "Can I not do with you as this potter?" the Lord asked Israel. Such is God's mercy, and such is God's sovereignty over us. We have failed, but let us remain in God's hands. As long as we commit ourselves into God's hands, we have a future. Make me a new vessel, Lord, let us pray. Satan will whisper: "You are finished." The Lord says, "I will make a new beginning. I will make a new vessel." Let us cast ourselves upon God's mercy. God has words of comfort for us.

God made Adam out of clay, and breathed His life into Him. All creation was made by God's spoken word, but Adam was formed from dust by God's hand. The clay vessel was marred by sin, but the promise of a new creation was given soon after (Gen. 3:15), and was fulfilled in the Last Adam, Jesus Christ. God ceased from the work of creation – the original creation – on the seventh day, but He is ever at work in making the new creation from marred vessels like us. Even as we fall, He lifts us up. Even as we are marred, He holds us in His hand, with the sure promise of sovereign grace that calls us to repentance. Our God never discourages us. Satan discourages us. Our own thoughts discourage us. God simply calls us to repentance, gives us grace to repent, and makes a new vessel out of the marred one. *Make me a new vessel, Lord*, let us pray.

As we repent, the Spirit of God breathes resurrection life into us, makes all things new, and makes us forget the past. When our bodies are resurrected at the coming of Christ, it will not matter whether one had died from cancer or any other painful disease. Resurrection shall erase the past, and give us a body like the risen body of Christ, Phil. 3:21. It is the same now spiritually, when we are in Christ. All things are made new, 2 Cor. 5:17: "...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Let us pray, *Lord, I am a new creation in you; let me walk in newness of life,* Rom. 6:4.

As those who live by resurrection life, may the curtain fall on all our past that belongs to the old creation, not just on a few things selectively. As we have been forgiven, let us forgive others. This one thing, forgiving others as God forgave us, is crucial if we would walk in the newness of life and "serve in the newness of the Spirit," Rom. 7:6.

**Is your life a marred vessel, dear reader?** The awareness that we are as clay in God's hand enables us to lose all confidence in ourselves, and simply trust God. Salvation is all of God, all of His mercy. What is our part? Our part is to remain in God's hands as clay in the potter's hand. As we commit ourselves into God's hands in the darkest moments, we receive grace to repent. Isaiah prayed: "But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand. Do not be furious, O LORD, nor remember iniquity forever; Indeed, please look—we all are Your people," Isa. 64:8-9. Such is God's mercy. Let us rejoice, and give thanks.

## **When Our Love Is Tried**

Jesus loved His disciples "to the last and to the highest degree," John 13:1, The Amplified Bible. Judas was one of the twelve whom Jesus loved to the last. Jesus manifested

this love by washing their feet as the time neared for Him to depart from this world. Christ's trials intensified during the closing days of His life, and during this very period He took time to demonstrate His love for His own. May God grant that our love remain steadfast as our trials intensify and we seem to be so much in need of love ourselves.

Is there a trial involving people in the Church or in the home? It is love that is being tried. Is there a misunderstanding or a difficulty between brothers? It is love that is being tried. Let us, having the Spirit of Christ, choose to wash one another's feet. Is there any misunderstanding or strife between spouses? It is love that is being tried. May the husband apply his heart to seek the Lord with the prayer that his love for his wife remain steadfast; let him seek opportunities to lay down his life for his wife. May the wife affirm her submission to her husband. When we hurt, let us remember Rom. 8:28, and confess: *Lord, this is good for me.* As we do this we experience great grace and great victory. The serpent's head is crushed in this way. We have much opportunity to be tested in this area, and therefore to receive much blessing. Grace will flow into our lives, and God will abundantly bless our labors.

In John 3:16 we read that God loved the world, and gave His Son. Giving the Son meant suffering and death for the Son. This sums up the nature of God's love, and it is this love that we have received in our hearts. We love, and we give; this loving and giving involves sufferings and loss, from which life and gain will arise for those we love. It is in this spirit of love that we may pray and intercede as Christ did. The spirit of love and the spirit of prayer abide together in our hearts.

Christ had only one thought for those who nailed him to the cross: forgiving love. Christ had only one thought for the woman caught in adultery: forgiving love. The prodigal's father had only one thought for his son: forgiving love. No questions are asked, no demands made, and no explanations desired. Christ loved us and died for us when

we were ungodly and unlovable. It is such love that now draws our hearts to the Lord and to each other.

You and I were in Jesus' heart when He died on the cross for us. He would have died for you even if you were the only human being that needed atonement. He would have died for me even if I were the only human being needing atonement. Such is the nature of God's love, and such is the value of your soul and mine. Your soul is worth the blood of the Son of God; so is mine. This knowledge beckons us to love one another as Christ did. We need the Spirit of Christ to be able to love as He loved, to forgive as He forgave, and to pray as He prayed.

Christ's prayers on the cross were the highest form of prayer. His love was tested the most when his own abandoned Him to suffer alone. There His love was revealed in its highest form, and from such love arose the prayers that flowed from His lips. Have we seen an opportunity to love as Christ loved, to forgive as Christ forgave, and to pray as Christ prayed? Let us not fail to see the opportunity, and let us not fail in the trial. Such is the grace that is ours in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The first thing spoken about love in 1 Cor. 13 is: "Love suffers long and is kind." God intended that love be wedded to suffering. This knowledge lifts us up from despair to joy when we suffer for, or because of those whom we love. When we suffer long for, or because of those whom we love, our love is purified, and we partake of God's very nature. This understanding should give us joy and a sense of anticipation when our love is being tried. We may falter, and it may take time to learn this most blessed lesson; let us persevere. We have received the Spirit of Christ and the grace that was upon Him. We are enabled to love as he loved when we are tried, and pray as he prayed when we suffer.

Love's power is most manifested in suffering; this is God's wisdom, and is beyond us to explain. We rejoice that it is so, because we see our love for our loved ones deepening and being made purer when we suffer for, or because of

them. When we meditate on the sufferings of our Lord for our sake, we sense a certain oneness with Him, and our love for Him deepens. Such is the nature of love which is poured into our hearts by the Spirit, Rom.5:5. Amen.

## **Knowing the Holy Spirit as Our Helper**

The day before He died, the Lord Jesus Christ repeatedly spoke of the Holy Spirit as the "Comforter" to come. See John 14:16, 14:26, 15:26, 16:7. Modern translations use "Helper" or "Counselor" for the word "Comforter." "Comforter" here means the Helper who advises, exhorts, comforts, strengthens, intercedes, and encourages. In John 14:16 Jesus called the Holy Spirit "another Comforter" meaning that the Spirit is a Comforter (Helper) like Christ Himself. The disciples had come to know Christ as their Comforter, but He would soon depart, and would send the Holy Spirit to continue His role. Jesus came to help us, and "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. 5:8. We have received forgiveness because Christ died for us. This is help. We have received eternal life because Christ rose from the dead for our sake. This is help. We have received the Helper Himself – the Holy Spirit – because Christ is exalted and seated with the Father. The Helper came as the result of the risen Lord's mediation, John14:26, John 7:39.

Now this Helper never departs. He is always near at hand for each of us, and He dwells in each of us. We may ask Him for help in all things. As I write this, I am asking the Spirit to help me. When you are too tired to do your chores, ask the Holy Spirit to help you. O the wisdom of God that meets all our needs small and great! Let us always turn to the Spirit in inward prayer as soon as we sense the need. And let us remember to give thanks always, not only inwardly, but also with our lips, Ps. 34:1.

In such a walk, we develop close fellowship and friendship with the Holy Spirit as our Helper and Comforter. We get

used to His ways as He leads us gently. We learn to love the truth as the Spirit of Truth teaches and guides us. We get used to His voice. The Holy Spirit created the language and speech of angels, and He may even impart a foretaste of it to us, 1 Cor. 13:1, 1 Cor. 14:2. This creates an aroma of heaven in and around us. Let us seek help from the Helper in our needs, receive His comforts in our sorrows, and walk in fellowship with Him.

The greatest help the Spirit gives us perhaps is in prayer, as we read in Rom. 8:26-29: "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." As soon as we begin to pray, let us seek the Spirit's help, otherwise we don't know how to pray as we ought. Our Spirit-led prayer and the Spirit's intercession for us preserve us in the blessed assurance that (a) all things work together for our good, and (b) we are being conformed to the image of God's Son.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Grace (Heb.10:29), and grace often means help, 2 Cor. 12:9, Heb. 4:16, 2 Cor. 8:9. In Heb. 4:16, we are invited to come and receive "help in time of need" before the Throne of Grace (Mercy Seat) where the risen Lord is interceding for us as our High Priest. Surely our salvation - all of our salvation - is of God's mercy from first to last, Ps.119:41: "Let Your mercies come also to me, O LORD —Your salvation according to Your word."

Our God is "the God of all comfort," 2 Cor. 1:3. When Jesus prayed in agony on the eve of crucifixion, He called the Father "Abba" (familiar address used by children in Aramaic), seeking the comfort that only the Father could

give. The disciples failed to watch with Jesus, but the Father sent an angel to strengthen His Son, Luke 22:43. If we offer our sorrows to the Lord in childlike trust, the Lord comforts us. It is impossible for God to fail us at such moments. He is a faithful God, a good God. Amen.

## **“More than Conquerors Through Him”**

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us,” Rom. 8:35-37. Let us note: “more than conquerors.” The Amplified Bible renders it as “We are more than conquerors and gain a surpassing victory.” Is this not God’s will for all who believe that they are loved by the Lord?

### **“Through Him Who Loved Us”**

Let us firmly hold on to these words: “through Him who loved us.” This assures us the victory. The Holy Spirit fills our hearts with the love of Jesus, and then we are willing to be “killed all day long” and “accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” When we live “as sheep for the slaughter,” God shows in and through us that death has been overcome, and we have “passed from death into life,” John 5:24. We are willing to suffer for love’s sake, not yield to temptation, endure through trials that help us learn obedience (Heb. 5:8), and live sacrificially.

Please read in the Gospels the sufferings of Christ, and meditate. Let us ask for grace to remember the sufferings of Christ when we are tried, Heb. 12:2-4. As you read this, please pray: *Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit, and with your love,* Rom. 5:5. This prayer will not be denied if your heart is wholly committed to do God’s will. It is certain that as we are filled with God’s love we will be able to hate sin, endure

in trials, and confess that, "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

Christ "loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish," Eph. 5:25-27. The ground for our being "holy and without blemish" is Christ's love for us. It is a holiness that corresponds to that of the One who loved us, 1 John 3:3. This faith for holiness causes us to long for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit empowers us to hate sin and to please God even to the point of being "accounted as sheep for the slaughter." If we believe that we are the elect of God, we shall also believe that we are chosen to be holy, Eph. 1:3-4: "...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."

**God Has Joined Love and Suffering in His Redemptive Purpose.** Christ suffered for us because He loved us. We receive the mind of Christ when we are identified with His death by faith, as we confess in baptism. This (a mind to suffer) keeps us from sinning, 1 Pet. 4:1, The Amplified Bible: "So, since Christ suffered in the flesh for us, for you, arm yourselves with the same thought and purpose [patiently to suffer rather than fail to please God]. For whoever has suffered in the flesh [having the mind of Christ] is done with [intentional] sin [has stopped pleasing himself and the world, and pleases God]." Note that while Christ's death on the cross was the highest and final point of His sufferings, He had suffered also as He was tempted and learned obedience through suffering, Heb. 5:8-9, Heb. 2:18. It is such suffering and obedience that perfected Him as our High Priest, Heb. 5:8-10. As our High Priest, the Lord is now interceding for us at the right hand of the Father so that what He purchased by His blood may now be perfected by His intercession, Heb.7: 25. Our Lord's intercession assures us that we shall "be holy and without blame before Him in love." Amen.

## Knowing God's Love for Us

If we love someone dearly, we desire that the loved one knows and believes that we love him or her; we also desire that the loved one love us in return. God desires that we know He loves us, and that we love Him in return. We know that love is from God (1 John 4:7), and He will help us to know His love, and to love Him.

God created Adam in His own image so that he may receive God's love, and love God in return. This surely was God's supreme purpose in creating man. God sent His Son to die for us so that we may know and believe the love God has for us. This picture is to be kept before the eyes of our heart so that we may be established in God's love, and be secure against all doubts. God's love for us is unchangeably true now and for eternity, and in this confession our souls are ever secure. "And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him," 1 John 4:16.

When we receive Jesus Christ, we are receiving God's love. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, God's love fills our hearts, Rom.5: 5. The Spirit also makes the many saints into one body – the body of Christ – where our hearts are "knit together in love," Col. 2:2. It is in the unity born of love among the members of the body of Christ that we receive revelation concerning "the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ," Col. 2:2. It is in this love that we edify each other, Eph. 4:16. It is in this love that we lay down our lives for each other, 1 John 3:16.

When our Lord died on the cross, He had us in His heart. Now He dwells in our heart as the life-giving Spirit, (1 Cor.15:45), and manifests His life through us as love. It is in this love that we choose to suffer for God in doing His will. In such sufferings, we learn a new song (Ps. 40:1-3, note verse 3), the song of the heart purified by suffering. We shall sing this new song on Mount Zion, Rev.14:3. Such is the joy that is set before us. God has willed that love and suffering be joined (1 Cor. 13:4) while we live in the flesh.

It is the Spirit who gives us this understanding so that we may endure patiently and progress toward perfection.

Let us ask: "How is it with me when I am tried? Do I remember that I must abide in love for Jesus' sake?" This is how we offer our body as a living sacrifice, and offer ourselves on the altar. Here we need the Spirit's help to pray, and to offer ourselves. The fire of God falls on the sacrifice, and consumes it, Lev. 9:24, 2 Chr. 7:1. This is a picture of our love meeting God's love; and Christ's prayer "Not my will, but Yours be done" is fulfilled in us. We are taking up our cross, and coming to the place of being crucified with Christ. Our love for Christ is sealed for eternity, and our joy is pure joy, Ja. 1:2. See Paul's testimony in Rom. 8:35-39; note the trials of love listed in verse 35.

Let us not despair of lost opportunities, nor fail now to trust God for grace to not fail when our love is tried. Let us seek to be continually filled with God's Spirit, and therefore with God's love. If we would be continually filled with God's Spirit, we should continually seek to be obedient, Acts 5:32, John 14:15,16. Here the Spirit is our Helper, and He is faithful and always near at hand to help us. Let us turn to Him constantly, and keep turning as the compass turns northward by nature. May the good Lord guide us along, and keep us for His eternal kingdom.

Please meditate on the sixteen things spoken about love in 1 Cor. 13: 4-8, and note that the first thing mentioned is, "Love suffers long and is kind." Please meditate also on 1 John 4:7-21. The former is from Paul and the latter from John. These are words of condensed wisdom concerning love.

## **"Be Faithful until Death"**

Jeremiah suffered much in his ministry and came to a place of deep discouragement, Jer.20:7-9; Elijah did also, 1 Kings 19:4. We too shall have our valley of Baca (weeping), but it

is in this valley that we gather the strength that takes us to Zion, Ps. 84:6-7. These moments of seeming failure are full of promise for the believing heart.

Recently I was encouraged by Rev. 2:10: "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer...Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

Let us remember the crown of life when we suffer. James wrote about this crown of life that awaits those who endure in temptations, James 1:2, The Amplified Bible: "Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort, or fall into various temptations." This is how James begins his letter soon after the greetings. May this teaching – rejoicing in trials – be engraved upon our hearts so it may speak to us in the time of need, and give us faith to endure.

In our time of need, the Holy Spirit helps us to hear the Word that has been written on our hearts by Him; this produces faith when we need to pray in faith and endure in faith in the time of testing. This hearing of the Word is indeed a sovereign work of grace, and is much more blessed than mere intellectual study of the Word. Do we desire to listen to the Spirit? Are we longing to hear the Spirit speak to us when we read the Word or listen to the Word being spoken? If we hear (Gal.3:2, "the hearing of faith"), we receive the Spirit. May the Spirit help us experience this: hearing the Word by "the hearing of faith."

**Temptations:** When tempted, our Lord answered: "...it is written...", Matt.4:4,7,10. The Spirit caused the Son of God to remember, to hear, and to speak the specific Word that met a particular test when He "was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil," Matt.4:1. And of us – sons of God – it is written in Rom 8:14: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." If we would learn to be led by the Spirit, the crucial time to learn is in temptation. Here we are to choose between God's will and our own will. "Not my will, but Yours be done," our Lord prayed. Is this not how we learn to be led by the Spirit?

Willingness to suffer as we learn obedience (Heb. 5:8) arises out of love for the Lord Jesus. This is implied in James 1:12 (see "to those who love Him"). Of the 16 things written about love in 1 Cor. 13: 4-8, the first is, "Love suffers long..." and the last – obviously not the least – is, "Love never fails." Love never fails; it keeps us from failing in temptations, and keeps us for the crown of life.

**Patience:** James at the very start of his letter writes that trials produce patience as we endure in faith, and the fruit of such patient endurance is perfection, Ja. 1:2-4: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." We need patience to endure "to the end," Matt. 24:13. Concerning the sufferings of the end-times our Lord said, Luke 21:19: "By your patience possess your souls." Let us humble ourselves and choose to suffer as Jesus did, and be "obedient to the point of death," Phil. 2:8. This patient endurance in daily life is the experience of being "crucified with Christ," and indeed is the seed of perfection. This seed will grow up into the likeness of Jesus, being filled with His virtues, which are the fruits of the Spirit, Gal 5:22-24. This understanding concerning patience helps us to rejoice in trials.

**Two Comforting Assurances:** (1) Heb. 4:15-16: "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (2) Heb. 2:18: "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." From the above two passages note:

- **Help to not sin:** Jesus gives grace to keep us from sinning when we are tempted, so we may win the crown of glory.
- **Help if we sin:** We receive mercy if we fail. This provision of grace should not tempt us to take sin lightly, but lead us to godly fear, Ps. 130:4: "But

there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."

In either case, we are to come boldly to the throne of grace. Remember, there is grace for victory, and the crown of glory is for those who are "faithful until death."

## **"Father, into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit."**

As He suffered on the cross, the Lord Jesus felt forsaken by the Father, and cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Matt. 27:46. There was no answer to this cry. And yet, the last words of our Lord were words of complete trust and submission to the Father: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit," Luke 23:46. Even when He thought that the Father had forsaken Him, Jesus did not forsake the Father. On the eve of the crucifixion He had prayed, "Not my will, but Yours, be done." This was the prayer that prepared Him for the cross. And the prayer that prepared Him for the resurrection was: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." These prayers show us how we may share in Christ's sufferings and Christ's resurrection.

**Sharing in Christ's Sufferings and Christ's Resurrection:** The trials of the elect of God are similar to Christ's, though to a far lesser degree, and we are exhorted to remember Him when we suffer, Heb. 12:3. In so doing, we come to know Him as One who became like us (Heb. 2:14-18; Rom. 8:3) and was tempted as we are tempted, Heb. 4:15. He met His trials as we do now, and suffered as we do now when we endure in temptations; and He "learned obedience" through sufferings (Heb. 5:8) as we may also do in our sufferings. In all this He is not only our Savior, but also our Example, our Forerunner, and therefore our Way. In our trials, therefore, we may pray as He did, and trust as He did. In so doing, we are made one with Him. Suffering with Him in trials involves yielding our will to God's will; thus we experience the cross in our trials.

When our earnest prayers seem unanswered, when we feel helpless, we may pray in complete trust and submission, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." This is the prayer of martyrs, Acts 7:59. When we pray thus we are fulfilling the exhortation, "Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator," 1 Pet. 4:19. How may we know that we are suffering according to the will of God? If we have offered ourselves on the altar of sacrifice and our bodies as instruments to do God's will, and if we have turned away from being conformed to the world, we can be assured of God's will, Rom. 12:1,2. It is such an offering that we made when we confessed our oneness with Christ's death in baptism, Rom. 6:3-5. It is this offering we remember and renew when we partake of the Lord's Table, 1 Cor. 11:26.

Here we may remember Paul's testimony in 2 Cor. 4:8-10: "We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed;... always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." Note the word "body" in this verse and see the connection with offering our bodies on the altar as noted in the preceding paragraph. The result is that Jesus' life will be manifested in our body. It is indeed in the power of Jesus' life that our bodies can do the will of God as Jesus did. See in Phil. 3:10 how Paul focused his vision on the sufferings of Christ: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

Are we suffering something evil from someone whom we love? Remember Jesus' prayer, "Father, forgive them." Here we have an opportunity to have fellowship in His sufferings in a small measure if we would choose to pray for, and bless, the person involved. This is the experience of the power of resurrection. Thus, and in other ways, the sufferings of Christ continue in His body (us) in the manifestation of redemptive love. This is our glory now, and this will be our glory in the resurrection; this is what Paul longed for in Phil. 3:11: "if, by any means, I may attain to

the resurrection from the dead," see the preceding verse quoted above. This refers to a resurrection sharing in Christ's glory, the greatest glory in eternity.

We are exhorted to focus our meditation on the sufferings of Christ, lest we become weary and discouraged, Heb. 12:3. When we fix our vision on Christ – have fellowship with Him – we partake of the grace that enabled Him to suffer, and are empowered by that grace against weariness and discouragement in adversity. There are times when it may seem hard to pray. Then we may commit our spirit into God's hand as Jesus did at the moment of death. Then it is as if we are finished. We belong entirely to God, we are in the Father's hands, and we are free. Our heart is entirely for the Lord, and we are not looking for satisfaction elsewhere. When we pray in this manner – committing our spirit into God's hands – we are identifying ourselves with Jesus' death, and the full measure of the blessings of His death on the cross opens to us. We are enabled to be joined with the Lord in the Spirit, having fellowship with Him in our trials, small or great.

**A mind to suffer is indeed the mind of Christ,** 1 Pet. 4:1, The Amplified Bible: "So, since Christ suffered in the [flesh for us, for you], arm yourselves with the same thought and purpose (patiently to suffer rather than fail to please God). For whoever has suffered in the flesh [having the mind of Christ] has done with [intentional] sin – has stopped pleasing himself and the world, and pleases God." Let us reflect on this verse, and believe it. Man-made religions or philosophies have no place for the cross. Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ reveals the cross. Jesus said plainly that He came to give His life as a ransom for many. He became man to taste death for every man, and this was God's grace for man (Heb. 2:9) and God's redemptive love for all mankind, John 3:16.

**Prayer of Martyrdom:** Just before He died on the cross Jesus prayed: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Resurrection followed in three days. This prayer is the prayer of martyrdom: a prayer of utmost helplessness and

of utmost power – the power of resurrection. Please note with care: the prayer, “Not my will, but Yours, be done” is the prayer that prepares us for the prayer of martyrdom.

Let us pray: *Lord I bless you for the grace to share in your sufferings, and to pray as you prayed in the Garden and on the cross. I thank you for my trials, knowing that these are channels of your mercies for me. Grant Lord that I abide in faith. Grant Lord that I abide in humility. Amen.*

## **Being Thankful for God’s Infinite Mercy**

God’s mercy covers our failures in such a way that He uses them as He alone can for our ultimate good, thus fulfilling Rom. 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” This truth firmly believed and confessed in prayer releases us decisively from our past, and confirms our hearts in the goodness of God. Such is God’s mercy and His loving kindness toward us. Such faith is not for comforting us in our sins, but for confirming us in the grace that keeps us from sinning. God be praised for His grace.

**God’s Mercy Compared to the Infinity of Space:** The Scriptures teach us the immeasurable nature of God’s mercy by comparing it to the infinity of space, Ps. 103:11-12: “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” The infinity of space is obvious to us, and helps us, through the above verses, to appreciate the infinite nature of God’s mercy.

**God’s Mercy Compared to the Infinity of Time:** The Scriptures also compare the mercy of God to the infinity of time, Ps. 103:17: “But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His

righteousness to children's children." How blessed it is to contemplate the mercy and forgiveness that envelop us, and keep us secure and free. Infinite mercy! Infinite forgiveness!

**God's Mercy for Those who Keep the Covenant:** The next verse (Ps. 103:18) reminds us that such infinite mercy and infinite forgiveness are for those who "keep His covenant, and ... remember His commandments to do them." This refers to our commitment to God after we have come to enjoy His mercy and forgiveness concerning past sins. A heart that is thankful for forgiveness is settled in godly fear concerning sin, Ps. 130:4: "But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." *May such be my experience of your grace, O Lord.*

**God's Mercy on the Cross:** The perfect picture of this infinite mercy is given to us on the cross: The Lamb of God suffering and dying for us, taking our sins upon Himself, making them His own, and thus freeing us completely. The moment we see this by faith, we not only receive infinite mercy and forgiveness for ourselves, but we are also enabled by grace to show mercy and forgiveness to others, including those who hurt us. As we gaze upon the cross and meditate on God's love for us, we are by faith united with the merciful and forgiving Son of God, and are made merciful and forgiving like Him. This is transformation, and the door to perfection, Matt. 5:43-48: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." *May such be my experience of your love, O Father.*

Our Lord gave Himself for us to replace our poverty with His riches, and our vices with His virtues. Receiving this goodness ushers us into the infinite realms of grace. All our God-given longings are satisfied by God's goodness.

Not only mercy, not only forgiveness, but every other virtue is to be appropriated and made our own by seeing it in the Crucified One. This seeing is the reality of believing: seeing us in Christ as being made one with Him in His obedience and His sufferings. This is the door to Christ-likeness, Phil. 3:10-11: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death..."

The centerpiece of the Apostles' preaching was 1 Cor. 2:2: "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." All teachings are understood only in reference to the cross, and all virtues are appropriated only when the believer is identified with the Crucified One, praying, "Not my will, but Yours, be done." An awareness of the goodness of God - infinite mercy, infinite forgiveness - fills us as the Holy Spirit fills us, and transforms us into Christ-likeness. Merciful and forgiving, we are being made perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect.

### **Experiencing Prayer and Thanksgiving as Sacrifice:**

The spirit of repentance keeps our heart humble, and inclined to prayer and to giving thanks. Such prayer is sacrifice. Such thanksgiving is sacrifice. This is the priestly ministry in secret before God - in the Holiest - where we are kept in the fear of God, and kept from sin. Here God speaks to us, and gives to us His Word as Spirit and as life, John 6:63.

To experience prayer and thanksgiving as sacrifice, we may begin with Rom. 12: 1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service... that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." How do we offer our body as a living sacrifice? Christ came into the world with the prayer: "Sacrifice and offering You did not

desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God,'" Heb.10: 5-7. Jesus offered His body as a sacrifice to do God's will; we are exhorted to do the same, Rom. 6:19: "...For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness." Let us ask: *Lord, have I offered my eyes on the altar? Have I offered my ears on the altar? Have I offered my tongue on the altar?* Such offering brings us into godly fear concerning the use of the eyes, the ears, the tongue, and other members of our body. In such offerings we are identified with Christ who offered His body to do God's will; this is our sanctification and our perfection (Heb. 10:14) in Christ. Our prayers, prayers of the heart, arise from such identification with Christ, and are offered in the spirit of sacrifice. This is our primary ministry as priests of God. May we be found living in the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving. Knowing that love for the world hinders such a life (Rom. 12:2), let us keep ourselves in the love of God. Amen.

## **Calvary Covers It All**

If God's infinite mercy and infinite love didn't cover us, what chance would we have for eternal happiness? God's infinite mercy and infinite love do cover us. I need frequent assurance of this comfort as I go through daily life:

- Calvary covers all my sins.
- Calvary covers all my sorrows.
- Calvary covers all my losses.
- Calvary covers all my regrets.
- Calvary covers all my fears.

To hear the love of God speak in our hearts, "Calvary covers it all" comforts any aching heart and steadies any doubting mind, because it is as true as God is true. Calvary has undone all that the Fall has done. Calvary has indeed covered it all. When Jesus was breathing His last on Calvary, He said, John 19:30: "It is finished." Lord Jesus, you said it for me - you finished it for me. You have covered it all for me. This faith and this confession have answered my needs, and continue to answer. This is the experience of grace. This is God's goodness.

God has made pure religion simple for the humble, so we may be assured of His love for us, John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Our Lord also said in Mark 1:14 "...Repent, and believe in the gospel." We repent, confess our sins, and believe.

- Do you feel you are a failure? May that feeling lead you to this faith and this confession: "Calvary covers it all."
- Is a painful memory haunting you? Be assured, Calvary has covered it –commit it to God's mercy, and say, "Calvary covers it for me."
- Is a past sin grieving you? Calvary has covered it –commit it to God's mercy.
- Is there a pain in your heart that won't go away? Calvary has healing for it.
- Is there a fear that cripples you? Confess in faith: "Calvary has covered it for me."

**Unfailing Comfort**, Rom. 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." This - Rom. 8:28 - is God's own All-Purpose Vitamin for us. Let us be sure to have it in our kit, and use it often - there is no fear of overdose. With this vitamin in hand for timely use,

and with the confession "Calvary covers it all" on our hearts and lips, we can say: "...in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us," Rom. 8:37. Blessed be God.

Is a besetting sin bringing you down? We read in Heb. 7:25: "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." *Lord, this is written for me; Calvary has covered it all for me - by your intercession I am saved to the uttermost; I trust you to keep me from falling (Jude v.24), and keep me in victory.* Note the words: "those who come to God through Him" - let us come to God, and keep coming. Amen.

## **Our Sufferings in the Light of Christ's Sufferings**

How may we be equipped to comfort others?

We need the comforts of God always, the more so when we suffer, even more so when we suffer innocently. There is great comfort in seeing our sufferings in the light of Christ's sufferings. When we suffer according to God's will, we are assured that our sufferings are of the same essence as Christ's sufferings by which He learned obedience, Heb. 5:8, 1 Pet. 4:1,19. Such sufferings endured patiently open the fountains of Christ's comforts in our innermost being. This equips us to comfort others. Rivers of living waters indeed flow forth from our innermost being for others as caring prayers, kind words, and loving deeds.

Let us hear Paul's words, 2 Cor. 1:3-7: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if

we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation."

See the description of Christ's ministry in Isa. 61:1, and note the emphasis on, "He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted." And, our Lord was called "A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," Isa. 53:3.

All the elect are called to suffer, especially those who seek to comfort others as Christ did. This is necessarily so because we are members of the body of Christ, a body that fulfills the will of God as Christ's body did (Heb. 10:5,7), and in doing so suffered. We cannot comprehend this except as we are filled with the Spirit of Christ. Let us believe and be filled with the Spirit.

In addition to the many tribulations he endured, Paul had a "thorn in the flesh," 2 Cor. 12:7. This was necessary (a) for him to remain humble as a channel of God's revelation in abundance, (b) for God's strength to be made perfect in him, and (c) for the power of Christ to rest upon him. He wrote in 2 Cor. 12:7-10: "" And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. ""

How blessed it is for us to see a glimpse of God's purposes in our trials, in the perspective of eternity. If we would comprehend and experience this, we need to remain in the cleansing by Jesus' blood by walking in the light (1 John

1:7), so that our heart is preserved pure and open to the light of revelation. Let nothing hinder the ray of light from God entering our innermost being as we read His Word and look to the Holy Spirit for revelation. Here we are freed from our natural longing for the wisdom of the world. The light from God enters our hearts, and we experience such light as life, John 1:4: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." In the power of this life we endure, give thanks and are joyful in trials. The life of God in our hearts imparts the comforts of God.

Only God – God is love – could plan a mother's agonies in giving birth to children and raising them; human thought wouldn't have conceived it. Only God could plan the cross of Christ for our sake; religions of man's thought exclude it. Our eyes have been enlightened to appreciate the cross of Christ, and see our cross in the light of the cross of Christ. This brings us into God's purposes concerning us now and for eternity. Let us believe, and choose to remain in God's purpose. Let us pray accordingly, and seek to comfort others.

Let us pray: *Lord, let me lay hold of this great truth about your sufferings and your comforts, and inherit my place in your purposes here and now, this present moment. Let me learn to thank you for my trials, small or great, and by grace experience the fountains of the comforts of Christ opening up in my heart.*

## **Seeking God in Sickness or Affliction: Let Us Pray**

(1) God is calling us to pray (Jas 5:13), and learn His Word, Ps. 119:71,50; Prov. 4:20-22. Here we see God's loving hand. We have to limit other activities as necessary, ask for and receive help from others, and give ourselves to prayer. Let us devote ourselves to prayer when we are sick or afflicted.

(2) God wants us to call for the saints (especially the Elders) to come and pray for us, Ja. 5:14. This unites us closer in Christ's body. Thus we experience the love of the saints. Elders are to pray earnestly and fervently, Ja. 5:16, The Amplified Bible: "The earnest (heart-felt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available – dynamic in its working."

(3) God may be calling us to repentance (Ja. 3:15,16), and this is God's goodness, Rom. 2:4. Let us ask the Lord earnestly to show us our sin. God may be calling us to confess our faults – slips, false steps, offenses, sins – to one another, Ja. 3:16. Let us ask the Lord earnestly to show us our faults.

Sometime sickness arises from misuse of what God has given us (eating as we please, working as we please, living to please ourselves) as well as neglecting or violating health principles that form part of godly living. We may need to repent, and commit ourselves to obedience. Often we make plans to change for the better without humbling ourselves before God in repentance for our past faults. Let us repent and receive grace for obedience.

(4) God is giving us an opportunity to learn His Word. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes," Ps. 119:71. Let us devote ourselves to God's Word. As we believe and meditate on God's Word, it brings health and healing, Prov. 4:20-22.

(5) God desires that we pray for others – especially for those who misunderstand or misjudge us – and receive a double blessing for ourselves as Job did, Job 42:10. Job prayed for his friends who had said that he suffered because he had sinned.

By all these we are drawn closer to God, and established in Him. We receive faith for ourselves and for others. Let us confess Ex. 15:26: "...I am the LORD who heals you." It is important that we pray to be kept from sickness, accidents, and untimely death. [Note: In godly fear let us commit

ourselves to obey traffic & safety laws including the speed limits.] Read and pray with Psalm 91.

## **How We May Use the Word in Praying for Healing**

**The Word**, Ps. 23:4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

**Prayer:** *Lord, I believe that you are with me. O my God, comfort me. I commit myself into your hands.*

**The Word**, Ex. 15:26: "...If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you." ["I am Yahweh your Physician."]

**Prayer:** *Lord, I trust you as my healer. Be merciful to me and heal me, O Lord.*

**The Word**, Ps. 103:3: "Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases..."

**Prayer:** *Forgive my sins, O my God, and heal my diseases. Amen.*

**The Word**, Isa. 53:5: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

**Prayer:** *O Lord I believe that your sufferings were for my peace, and by your stripes I am healed. Forgive my sins, Lord. Heal my sicknesses, Lord. Amen.*

**The Word:** Rom. 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and

perfect will of God. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

**Prayer:** *Lord I offer my body to do your will. Fill my heart with your Holy Spirit, and your love. May my heart be freed from the love of the world. May my mind be renewed to know your perfect will for me. Amen.* See from Heb. 10:5-7 how Jesus offered His body to do God's will.

**Counsel:** Read the first five books of the New Testament slowly and prayerfully, meditate, and pray. Faith will arise in the heart, and grow.

**Some verses for study to receive faith for healing:** Ex. 15:26; 2 Kings 20:5; Isa. 53:4-5; Pro. 4:20-22; Ps. 103:2-3; Ps. 107:20; Matt. 8:5-13; Matt. 15:30-31; Matt. 18:19; Mark 2:3-12; Mark 11:24; Luke 8:43-48; John 14:12; John 15:7; Acts. 10:38; Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor.12:9; Heb. 11:1; Rom. 12:1; Ja. 5:14-15; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 5:14-15; 3 John 2.

**Let Us Live by Faith, and Die in Faith:** May our longing be to please God in sickness or in health. Let us trust God for healing, and keep on trusting. [Such faith is not hindered by medical care received with prayer and thankfulness.] We are called to live by faith, and to die in faith, faith in the One who loved us and died for us. Amen.

**Please meditate on:**

Ps. 116:15-18: "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints. O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows to the LORD now in the presence of all His people."

Phil. 1:21-23: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

## **God's Fullness for Us**

"Be filled with the Spirit," Eph. 5:18. It is our Heavenly Father's nature to give abundantly; this we must believe with all our heart. For whom has He prepared all blessings in heaven and on earth if not for man who is the crown of all creation? He who gave His Son for us shall freely give us all things with Christ, Rom. 8: 32. May we have the faith of the sons of God to pray: *O Father, fill me with your fullness, your love, your Spirit.* Our Father in heaven will give abundantly, because it is His nature to do so.

God's Word says with marvelous simplicity how we may share in God's fullness: "For in Him (Jesus Christ) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him," Col. 2:9,10. By grace we come to Christ in simple faith. By grace we commit ourselves to do God's will. God receives us and places us in His Son. By faith we ask for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. By faith we are filled with the Holy Spirit. The key to the power and fullness of the early Christian Church is Acts 2:4: "... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This is how God inaugurated the Church: they were "filled with the Holy Spirit." This is the beginning of God's fullness for every Christian: God fills each one with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:4 was the fulfillment of Jesus' words in John 7:37-38: "'On the last day, that great according day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Rivers of living water! This is fullness, God's

fullness! Do you thirst? Then you may come. These living waters proceed from God's throne (Rev. 22:1), and descend into humble, believing, obedient hearts. It is free, because the price was paid by God's Son when He shed His precious blood on the cross and gave His life for us. Now therefore nothing should stop us from asking for and receiving God's fullness. Ever since Acts 2:4 the living waters have been flowing; let us come and drink, and invite all who are thirsty. Let us experience God's fullness, and share God's abundance.

Please read Eph. 3:14-21 slowly. Paul had faith to pray that the saints "may be filled with all the fullness of God." This is through knowing Christ's love; this we experience in fellowship with all the saints, not excluding any. We are to "comprehend" and "know" the "love of Christ" "with all saints," Eph. 3:18,19. Rooted and grounded in love, we are urged on by the Spirit to seek fellowship with the saints. Early Christian community "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers," Acts. 2:42. Let us take note of the four things in this verse: apostles' doctrine (teaching), fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. In order to experience God's fullness in our lives, it is important that we follow the example of the early Christian community. We should teach only what the apostles taught. We should fellowship (share) both the spiritual and the earthly blessings God has given us. We must partake of the Holy Communion, remembering the Lord's death for us. We should take time for prayer when we meet. In such fellowship we will experience the Church as "His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all," Eph. 1:21.

Paul's longing was to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," Col. 1:28. This required very hard work on Paul's part, and he labored in the power of God, Col. 1:29. Those who speak God's Word faithfully to teach others may expect to receive the Spirit without measure, John 3:33. Paul preached much and taught many, and God's power was working in him mightily, Col. 1:29. In Corinth he was "in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling," but his speech

and his preaching was "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," 1 Cor. 2:3-4.

Our Lord said: "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect," Matt. 5:48. These words are trustworthy because they fell from the lips of Christ. A few verses above we read: "... love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven," Matt. 5:44-45. This is a new teaching, one not found in the Old Testament. This shows us the essence of being perfect: to love as God loves, to love as sons of our heavenly Father, to love as God's Son loved us. For this we receive grace as we are filled by the Holy Spirit who is called the Spirit of grace, Heb. 10:29. We know these things are true because "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us," Rom. 5:5.

## **The Word, the Spirit, the Life: the Unity of All Saints**

In a few simple words our Lord made plain how we may receive the life of God: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life," John 6:63. From this verse we learn that as we receive God's Word we receive the Spirit of God; and the Spirit gives us God's life. God be praised for the simplicity of this precious truth.

Let us therefore be diligent to read God's Word, and wait patiently to hear God's voice speaking to our heart. God does speak to those who wait patiently for Him. When we hear God's voice, we receive faith, and by faith we receive God's Spirit. God's Spirit imparts to us God's life. Let us long for this to be our daily experience.

All who abide in God's life have fellowship with God, and therefore are one with God; they also have fellowship with

one another in God's life, and therefore are one with one another. This is the unity we experience in the Body of Christ. It is the unity of sharing in God's life. Such unity is clearly manifested as love that knits our hearts together, Col. 2:2. Such unity is therefore the sovereign work of God in the hearts of those who choose to love as Jesus loved, in spite of differences and difficulties. When we love with God's love, differences do not divide in Christ's Body. We love as Christ loved, and therefore suffer in love, and for love as Christ did. This is possible because "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit," Rom 5:5. "By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body," 1 Cor. 12:13.

The human race has a unity in the life of the flesh because we all share one flesh, the flesh of the first man, Adam. In like manner, all who are born of God have a unity in the life of God because they all share in one Spirit, the Spirit of the last Adam (Jesus Christ) who is the life-giving Spirit, 1 Cor. 15:45. The risen Christ lives in us as the life-giving Spirit. He, as the life-giving Spirit, imparts to our spirit His resurrection life.

As we are united with Christ in the life of God, our spirit receives God's life in ever-increasing measure; correspondingly, our flesh experiences the work of the cross (death, opportunities to deny our own will) in ever-increasing measure. Thus we share in Christ's death and in Christ's life.

Born of God and sharing in His very life, we have a longing for God's word, for fellowship with God, and to please God constantly. We also love all others who are also born of the same Father, 1 John 5:1. We have fellowship with all who walk in the light, 1 John 1:7. We are made one with all saints in God's Word, in God's Spirit, and in God's life. Amen.

## **We Overcome by Believing in Christ's Love for Us**

"We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us," Rom. 8:37.

When we read that God created man in His own image and in His likeness, we understand that man was to be the object of God's love, and capable of reciprocating His love as between a father and his son. See God's great purpose and love for man: He created all things for man, and man for Himself. Our eternal destiny is to be the brothers of God's own Son, to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, Rom. 8:29. This sums up God's eternal purpose concerning us: to receive God's love, and love Him in return. God's remedy for man's fall from the beginning was His love for man, for "love covers all sins," Prov. 10:12. The Savior was promised as soon as sin entered, Gen. 3:15.

The air we breathe, the food we eat, the blessings of family and friends, and the infinite possibilities of gifts bestowed upon us as human beings speak to us of the love of our heavenly Father. However, it was on the cross of Calvary that God's great love for us was demonstrated in the highest degree, Rom. 8:32, Rom. 5:38, 1 John 3:16. We begin to experience this love when we accept Christ as our Savior and He comes to dwell in our hearts, Eph. 3:17. The same verse shows that Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith is a continuing experience, causing us to be rooted and grounded in love. This love is poured into the believing heart by the Holy Spirit, Rom. 5:5. It is in our heart, therefore, that we should seek God, not in rituals or temples. There is no temple for God but the believing heart. There – in our own heart – we know God and see Him by the eyes of the heart. How zealous we need to be to keep our hearts pure for the Lord. How earnest we need to be to seek to remain filled with the Holy Spirit at all times.

It was love that enabled Jesus Christ to suffer and die on the cross for the sins of the world. Though it would seem

that we could scarcely comprehend this infinite love, Paul prayed that we might “comprehend” and “know” the love of Christ, Eph. 3:18,19. This love draws us to God as the prodigal son was drawn to the father. This love binds us to God as an infant to its parent, crying “Abba, Father.” This love imparts to us a genuine hatred for sin in spite of our fallen nature’s inclination to evil. This love sustains us against the lure of temptations, enabling us to pray, “not my will, but Yours be done,” and to accept the suffering – small or great - inherent in such self-denial. This is the way of learning obedience through suffering (Heb. 5:8, Heb. 2:18), and is a direct experience of the cross in our daily life. This is the way of the cross: we look not only to the cross of Calvary, but take up our own cross daily.

Paul confessed that no power in the universe can “separate us from the love of Christ,” Rom. 8:35-39. Let us confess the same in faith, and “gain a surpassing victory through Him who loved us,” Rom. 8:37, The Amplified Bible. Let us pray: *Lord, let me comprehend and know your great love for me, and love you and all the saints accordingly. Grant Lord that I always rest in your love for me. May your love draw me away from all that is evil, and keep me in the joy of loving you.*

This is the way of active and obedient love that makes us “more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” Please note “through Him who loved us.” This knowledge is the ground of our victory. Let us lay hold of this by faith. Let us say: *Father, I thank you for the great love with which you loved me and gave your Son to die for me. Grant, O Father, that I live in the power of this love moment by moment. You only can keep me in this love. I commit myself to your keeping.*

The power of sin cannot prevail against such a prayer. Adversity cannot prevail against such a prayer. God is love, and His eternal purposes unfold as manifestations of His love for man, whom He created for Himself to be His dwelling place. As we are drawn into His love, we are drawn into His eternal purpose concerning us, and we appreciate

the blessings of trials and adversities. The cross stands forever as the ultimate sign of God's love for us. What little we suffer now stands as the ultimate sign of our love for God and for His people. God has joined love and suffering. This understanding helps us to say, *Lord I thank you for light afflictions that you permit in my life. May my love for you increase, and remain steadfast. Let me remember Lord your obedience for my sake, your death for my sake, your blood shed for my sake; and in this awareness of your love for me, let me attain a surpassing victory. Amen.*

## **Urgency for Watchful Prayer in the End Times**

Living in the end-times, God's people – especially those who are serving the Lord actively – may expect much resistance from the devil, "because he knows that he has a short time," Rev. 12:12. Concerning the end times our Lord repeatedly said that we should watch and pray, Luke 21:34-36. "Take heed," "be ready," "watch," and "pray" are some of the words the Lord used. If we would be prayerful, we need to be watchful. Let us watch with the expectation that the Lord's coming is near.

We have a precious exhortation from Jude: "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," Jude v. 20-21. This is the exhortation for those who live in the end-times when people would "walk according to their own ungodly lusts," Jude v. 17-19. We are living in an awful generation. Darkness deepens as never before, but we are called to walk in the light – the Lord is our light – and as we walk in the light, we are cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, 1 John 1:7. This is our preparation for the coming of the Lord, 1 John 3:2-3.

Note from Jude verses 20-21: (1) build yourselves up in your most holy faith, (2) pray in the Holy Ghost, and (3) look for the coming of the Lord; these three experiences belong together. God gives us the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13, Gal. 3:2, Acts 5:32) so that we may pray in the Holy Ghost as we read in Eph. 5:18-20: "but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." May our prayers be so earnest that we know that we are being built up in our most holy faith. May our prayers be from the very depths of our heart so that as we pray we are filled with God's love that looks toward the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us keep our eyes on the coming of the Lord. This is our incentive to pray, and to keep ourselves in the love of God. This keeps us ready for the coming of the Lord.

The Lord is able to present us "faultless": "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy," Jude v. 24. See the phrase "with exceeding joy." When we are tested and tried, are we joyful or are we sorrowful? May we triumph in doing God's will.

Jude v. 24 quoted in the above paragraph gives us great assurance against all condemnation. Such assurance helps us to pray effectively. One powerful weapon of the evil spirits is condemnation from our failures, past or present. Let us be watchful to fight it. Remember Jesus' blood (Heb. 12:24) and His intercession for us, Heb. 7: 25.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit," Rom. 8:1. We have no condemnation if we are walking according to the Spirit. Are we walking according to the Spirit? What we delight in doing in the daily life shows our walk. What we delight in reading shows our walk. The music we delight in shows our walk. Let us read that which makes our faith grow. Let us read God's Word. Let us be strengthened for the spiritual

walk by fresh manna from God's Word daily. May we be freed from the love of entertainment that keeps our hearts from hungering and thirsting for God's Word and God's Spirit. Let us walk after the Spirit. Let rivers of living water spring up and flow forth from our hearts. Some enjoy fellowship at church, but then rush to television, games, worldly music and worldly literature when they are back home. Their hearts are not changed. If this is so, let us hasten to repent.

When we are free from condemnation, we have heaven open over us. Nothing is separating us from our Maker. Our hearts are open to the work of God. We rejoice that we are in Christ Jesus. We say "no" to the flesh, and say "yes" to the Spirit. From the depths of our hearts thanks and praise well up toward God, Eph. 5:18-20. Amen.

## **Finishing the Work God Has Committed to Us**

A keen awareness of the inestimable value of time - irredeemable if lost - marks the wise. This is especially true of godly people who have learned that every thought we think counts for eternity, as does every word we speak and every deed we do. The ultimate measure of our time is the measure of our thoughts, words and deeds. What we think in love, say in love, and do in love add up as our work in Christ. Our time is our life.

Before He was arrested, the Lord Jesus prayed, "I have finished the work which You have given me to do," John 17:4. The preceding sentence reads: "I have glorified You on the earth." When we devote ourselves to finishing the work God has given us - and not waste or misuse time - we are glorifying Him. The Holy Spirit guides us and empowers us so that we are indeed occupied with our God-assigned tasks. Surely our purpose on earth is to glorify God; and this happens when we are occupied with the work God has given us to finish.

**Christ's Work:** As we continue to read in John 17, we come across a few verses that show what Jesus specifically meant by "work" here.

Verse 6: "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me..."

Verse 8: "For I have given to them the words which You have given Me..."

Verse 14: "I have given them Your word..."

Verse 18: "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world."

Verse 19: "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified by the truth."

Verse 22: "And the glory which You gave me I have given them, that they may be one..."

Verse 26: "And I have declared to them Your name..."

Note carefully that all the above items of Christ's "work" – some are emphasized by repetition – had to do with the people the Father had given to the Son. His work for them finished, He now prays for them with great tenderness and earnestness.

**Our Work:** Let us learn from John 17 (verses 6,8,14,18,19,22,26). Please read slowly the prayer of Jesus in John 17, and receive the spirit of love in which the Son of God worked and prayed for others. May this be our motto: others! The story has been told that William Booth – the founder of Salvation Army – was on his deathbed and could not attend a conference. He sent a telegram for the conference, just one word: "others."

Let us pray earnestly for understanding concerning our work. And let us seek the power of God to complete the work. *Lord, let me not put off today's work to tomorrow, or leave my work to others. Let me receive from you the ministry you have called me to, and devote myself to it with singleness of heart. Let me not miss the opportunities the*

*Spirit gives. Guide me and empower me by your Spirit. Amen.*

"Today if you will hear His voice," we read in Heb. 3:15 and Heb. 4:7. "Today" is the time for those who are Spirit-led; and they are led in the footsteps of the One who said, "I have finished..." before He went to the cross (John 17:4), and "It is finished" just before He breathed His last, John 19:30. He finished His work for me, and now He bids me to finish the work He has committed to me.

If we would enter into this work, we should cease from our own work and enter into God's rest, Heb. 4:9-11. God gives us His Word to speak and leads us to the "work" He has called us to. When we see this glory, we put aside our own will, and embrace the cross; we are one with the Crucified One. We are drawn to prayer, such prayer as would fulfill our Lord's petitions in John 17:20-26: "...that they may be one..." It is our glory to be made one with the brethren God has given us, as Jesus and the Father are one; for this our Lord gave His life, and to this we commit ourselves. The cross makes this possible. Grace makes this possible. Amen.

## **The Word in Our Hearts Transforms Us**

The elect love God, and although they are already predestined, called, justified, and glorified, yet they are actively in the process of being conformed to the image of the Son of God, Rom. 8:28-30: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." Note that the glory of being transformed into the image of the Son of God lies beyond having been called, justified, and glorified. Do we believe that we are among the elect? Do we have a

longing to be conformed to the image of the Son of God? May the Spirit of God stir us up.

Our transformation into the image of Christ is an intensely personal and mostly private experience in prayer, in the Word, and in trials. Here we eat the hidden manna (Christ) and receive the hidden name (what we become in Christ), as we read in Rev. 2:17.

**Preparation in Prayer:** This takes place as we offer ourselves daily to the Lord, our heart entirely committed to seek His will and our body offered as a living sacrifice do His will: His will for the present moment, and for the duty that awaits us today. We thus have the witness of the Spirit that our hearts are perfect toward God, 2 Chr. 16:9. We prepare to receive the Word with meekness, Ja. 1:21.

**Being Transformed by the Word:** As we draw near to the Throne of Grace by the blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit gives us a longing for the Word. The Spirit may bring a scripture to our remembrance, or we may open the Bible and read, and we then meditate, looking to Christ. For example, we read how Jesus spoke of Himself as being meek and lowly of heart, Matt. 11:29. We read how the Lord humbled Himself before His accusers, and opened not His mouth, Isa. 53:7. This meditation helps us unite ourselves in the Spirit with the humble Christ, and we see by the eyes of faith the meekness of Christ. The Spirit draws us into this oneness with Christ, and we partake of Christ's meekness by faith. This is true humility (meekness), the humility of Christ received by faith by being joined with Him in the Spirit, 1 Cor. 6:17. The virtue of meekness is Christ's kingly glory (Matt. 21:5) and makes Him exceedingly lovable to the eyes of faith. Thus we see Christ by revelation, we are drawn to Him and are identified with Him in His meekness.

This is a foretaste of what we read in 1 John 3:2: "... we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Just as we saw Christ's meekness, we may see Christ's love as we meditate on the Word, and be identified with Him in His love; so in His joy, His peace, His longsuffering, His gentleness, His goodness, His faith (faithfulness), and His

temperance (self-control). Thus we partake of all the virtues listed as fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22-23. As we meditate upon these virtues of Christ, "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. 3:18.

It is helpful to frequently read passages such as: John chapters 12-21, Isa. 53, Heb. chapters 1-13, Phil. 2:5-8, Matt. chapters 5-7, Matt. 11:28-30, Rom. chapters 6-8, Eph. 3:1-21, Gal. 5:22-23, Gal. 2:20, Col. 1:15-23, and Col. 3:1-4,16,17. These passages help us meditate on Christ.

*Lord, grant that my thoughts be drawn to you constantly and my heart be occupied with your Word day and night (Ps.1:2). Let me thus partake of your meekness, your love, your joy, your peace, and the fullness of all your virtues as the fruit of the Spirit. Enlighten the eyes of my heart, O Lord, and give me the spirit of wisdom and revelation as written in Eph. 1:17. Amen.*

### **Now Comes the Crowning Experience – Testing:**

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him," Jas. 1:12. The crowning experience comes when we are tested; our meekness is tested, for example. God permits trials to test the meekness we saw in Christ by revelation and partook of by faith. Testing! Silver must stay in the purifying fire until the silversmith sees his own image reflected in it. Now is the time to look to the One who was tempted in all points like us, but did not sin (Heb. 4:15), and by looking to him we affirm our identification with Him. Look to Him. This "look" shall sustain us in the purifying fire. As we look to Jesus we pray, "Not my will, but Yours be done." Here we suffer for love's sake by saying "no" to our own will, and experience the power of the cross. This is sharing in Christ's death. This is the fellowship of His sufferings, Phil. 3:10. In such moments we receive the crown of life: we are confirmed and firmly grounded in meekness. This crown of

life though now invisible, shall shine forth as Christ's meekness in our trials, and shall adorn us in the resurrection. Amen.

### **Questions for Self-Examination and Correction**

**Am I among the elect?** Yes, if I love God (Rom. 8:28), love God's Word, love to pray, and see God's hand in my trials. If I give only a secondary place to God's Word and prayer, I should seek God with all my heart for God to grant me repentance. I should not rest in a confidence about salvation that leaves me lost in worldliness without having a hunger for God's Word. [If anyone sins willfully and so continues, there is no assurance that he is among the elect of God.]

**Am I being transformed into the image of Christ?** Yes, if I meditate on Christ as I read the Word, and by faith commit myself to be identified with Him in obedience. If I do not read the Word and meditate on Christ, my mind cannot be renewed. Or, if I read the Word only ritually (my heart not touched by the Spirit), my mind cannot be renewed and I am in darkness. *Lord, let me open my heart to your Word.*

**Am I benefiting from my trials?** Yes, if I remember Jesus Christ when I am being tested, and I give thanks. If I complain when I cannot have my way, or react emotionally when corrected, or spend my time wastefully as I please, I lose ground. I grieve the Holy Spirit. I need help. I must repent, and seek God in all humility of heart. If in my trials I remember how Jesus Christ was tempted, but endured in meekness, accepting suffering and denying His own will, I receive grace to follow Him in His footsteps: enduring in meekness, accepting suffering, and denying my own will. Thus I share in Christ's death, and therefore in the power of His resurrection.

## Knowing the Power of Christ's Resurrection

When Paul was thinking of his own resurrection, he thought about Christ's resurrection, Phil. 3:10,11. He desired to:

- Know the power of Christ's resurrection,
- Know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings,
- Be made conformable to Christ's death.

Such was Paul's longing for Christ. Toward this goal he pressed on, Phil. 3:14.

Suffering and death preceded Christ's resurrection. Resurrection is in the realm where death and decay can no more be. If we would know the power of Christ's resurrection, we should know the death of Christ. If we would know the death of Christ, we should know the sufferings of Christ. Accordingly we hear Christ calling us to deny ourselves first; then we follow him in a journey – bearing the cross – that shares in a death like Christ's death from first to last. This is our confession at baptism, and this is our confession every step of the way as we follow the crucified One. This death opens to us a resurrection like Christ's. This death is now experienced in the flesh (in denying our own will and submitting to God's will); and the resurrection is now experienced in the spirit, but it will be experienced for the body, soul, and spirit at the coming of the Lord.

If we seek earnestly to abide in Christ's death and thus to know the power of Christ's resurrection, we should consider trials as opportunities, and see the joy set before us. It is written of Jesus: "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross..." Heb. 12:2. The next verse exhorts us to consider Jesus when we are in trials. What is the joy set before us when we suffer in sharing the death of Christ? First, we learn to be patient (Ja. 1:3-4; what a great blessing! See Luke 21:19), and this leads to perfection. See from Heb. 5:8-9 how Jesus Christ was perfected through

obedience and suffering. Let us follow Him. Also, we are blessed even now while we are enduring in trials, and we have the "crown of life" awaiting us, Ja. 1:12. The crown of life! May the eyes of our hearts be enlightened to see by faith the crown of life. This will give us joy. Paul endured so he might "win Christ," Phil. 3:8. Thus we see the blessings for those who endure: we gain patience, we receive the crown of life, and we win Christ.

So we are exhorted in Ja. 1:2-4,12 to consider trials as opportunities for "all joy" (pure joy). A heavenly perspective indeed! A most blessed revelation indeed! *May my eyes be opened to see this, Lord. When I think I am left all alone and helpless, may my eyes be opened to see the nearness of the Lord, and be able to rejoice. May the patience of the Lord Jesus well up in my heart. May I be enabled to give thanks for my trials, for my cross, for the opportunity to share in the death of Christ.*

Note "to those who love Him" in Ja. 1:12. When we are tempted, our love for Jesus is being tested; we endure for love's sake, remembering how Jesus loved us and suffered for us. This is the practical experience of taking up our cross in daily life, Luke 9:23,24. Let us be willing to pray even when we are tired, remembering how Jesus asked the tired disciples to pray in the Garden, Matt. 26:41. Let us forgive others even when we are hurting from an offense. Let us be thankful for an opportunity to go the second mile. Let us be cheerful and thankful even in the midst of tiring work. May our prayer be: not my will, but Yours, be done.

## **Meekness and Lowliness Adorn Christ's Bride**

In the first book of the Bible we have the story of the first bridegroom and the first bride in the Garden of Eden. The heavens and the earth were created before Adam was created; and then at the very last, as if to crown all creation, God created the woman and united our first

parents in a life-long covenant of love. We cannot imagine how gloriously adorned Eve was in that original state of purity, or how rapturous the love between the first man and his wife was. Adam's eyes had seen only one woman, and he could imagine no other. Eve's eyes had seen only one man, and she could think of no one else. Such was the glory of the first marriage, which was to be the model for all marriages ever since.

In the last book of the Bible we read about a marriage even more glorious, beyond comparison: the marriage between Jesus Christ and His bride, the Church. The Church is described as "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," Rev. 22:2. Here the husband is Christ. The Church is to be Christ's bride, adorned for Him. What are we to understand by this "adorning"?

First of all, Jesus Christ loved us and died for us on the cross. His precious blood washes us from all sin and uncleanness. We read that Christ "loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. 1:5. See also Eph. 5:25-27, 1 John 1:7. This cleansing happens when we acknowledge our sin in heart-felt repentance, believe and confess that Jesus Christ died for us and rose from the dead for us, accepting Him as our Lord and Savior. This is the beginning of the adorning.

When we are thus washed in the blood of Christ, we also receive a new heart and a new nature. Our old heart and our old nature did not love righteousness. The new nature loves righteousness. This love for righteousness is like a new, glittering white dress in which we are clothed. This new dress reflects the glory of our heavenly Bridegroom. The old nature loved to sin. The new nature hates sin. This hatred for sin keeps our new dress from being spoiled by sin. If it happens to be spoiled, we cannot rest until we come to Christ and are washed clean, renewed in the purity of our first love for Him.

How may we describe the glory of Christ that we now reflect? Jesus described Himself as being "gentle and lowly in heart," Matt. 11:29. This is Christ's glory: He was meek

and humble. The same is the glory of His bride. The great apostle Peter wrote to the Christian wives of his time that their adorning is "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price," 1 Pet. 3:4. This is the ornament our heavenly Bridegroom is looking for in His bride: "a meek and quiet spirit."

If we offer ourselves as the bride of Christ, may our hearts love meekness and lowliness. The bride is to be adorned with the same inward virtues as her heavenly Bridegroom. Christ will wed only a bride of like nature as Himself: meek and lowly in heart. This transformation is effected in us when we look to the cross, offering ourselves in love to Him who loved and died for us (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29), thus uniting with Him in Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17) and continuing in pure devotion to Christ, 2 Cor. 11:3. Such a bride shall rise to meet the bridegroom when He comes in the clouds. She is called "the Lamb's wife," Rev. 21:9; she has the lamb-nature: meekness, Isa. 53:7. She will follow the Lamb in all eternity, and stand with Him on Mount Zion in the perfection of beauty, Rev. 14:1,4, Ps. 50:2. May our hearts be devoted to loving Him and serving Him now.

The risen Christ is now at the right hand of the Father interceding for us so that this faith we confess on earth is secured for us as our experience, Heb. 7:25.

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints," Rev. 19:7-8. Every act we do in the Spirit of Christ is woven into our bridal garment. Amen.

## The New and the Living Way Christ Opened for Us

It is because of Jesus' offering of Himself as our high priest that we may draw near to the Throne of Grace, Heb. 4:15-16. It is by His blood that we may enter into the Holy of Holies, the very presence of God, Heb. 10:19. The blood of Christ becomes precious to us when we see the path Jesus walked (for our sake) till He came to the cross, and the suffering He endured (for our sake) on the cross, where He shed His blood for us. This path that Jesus walked in the days of His flesh, ending with His sufferings and death on the cross, opened the "new and living way" into the holiest, Heb. 10:20. He is our "Forerunner" in this way (Heb. 6:20), and He bids us follow Him.

Where did this "new and living way" begin for Christ? How did it continue for Christ? How did it end? It began with the prayer in Heb. 10:7: "...I have come...to do Your will, O God," and with learning obedience through suffering (denying His own will) though He was the Son of God, Heb. 5:8. The "way" continued in the spirit of the prayer "not My will, but Yours, be done" all the way to His perfection as our High Priest, Heb. 5:9. It ended with His suffering on the cross where He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do," Luke 23:34. His very last words were: "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit," Luke 23:46. The rending of the veil in the temple when Jesus breathed His last on the cross showed that the new and living way led into the heavenly Holy of Holies (Holiness of Holiness, as it is written in Hebrew). This is the new and living way we walk, following in Jesus' steps.

**Christ's Footsteps:** Note the two parts of Christ's prayer, "Not My will, but Yours, be done": (a) "Not my will," (b) "but Yours." Picture (a) and (b) in your mind as the two feet on which we walk in the footsteps of Christ, footsteps that ended on Calvary. Let us remember "not My will" when we are tempted to speak unkindly about others, and add "but Yours" by speaking in the fear of God and interceding in

prayer. Thus we walk the new and living way: the way of the cross. Let us remember "not My will" when we are tempted to please ourselves in eating, and say, "but Yours." *Lord, let me eat to please You.* Thus we walk the new and living way, the way of the cross. These may seem like small steps, but they plant our feet in the new and living way that leads into the Holiest, into the very presence of our High Priest who helps us. Nearness to Him perfects us. The sufferings that we endure in denying our own will as we walk the new and living way identify us with Christ in His sufferings; thus Christ is the way for us. The blood gives us boldness to draw near. This is the state of perfection to which we have come by grace: nearness to and oneness with our High Priest.

In the new and living way we follow the Lord in the "power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:16) that consecrates us as priests. He calls us to follow, so He gives us power to follow. Only by walking in this new and living way can we draw near to Him and enter the Most Holy Place, where He ministers to us as High Priest. Let us trust Him, and follow Him in this way.

## **"Let Us Go on to Perfection"**

There is a perfection that is already ours by faith, Heb. 10:14: "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." And yet, we are exhorted to "go on to perfection," Heb. 6:1. "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection." The first perfection is as an unripe apple, perfect in its early stage, free from blemish; the latter perfection is as a mature, ripe apple.

The writer of Hebrews compares the slothful Christian who is not diligent to go on to perfection, to the ground that has received rain, but produces thorns and thistles. "For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated,

receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned," Heb. 6:7-8. What do the thorns and briers represent? The cares, riches, and pleasures of this life are the thorns and briers that "choke" our spiritual life and make it impossible to bring forth fruit unto perfection, Luke 8:14. These 'good' things (riches and pleasures) can choke the life of a Christian. They cut off our life-breath, our prayer to God, and our fellowship with Him. It was the good things of life (eating and drinking and marrying) that stopped the people from heeding Noah's warnings about the flood, Matt. 24:38. It was the good things of life (great possessions) that stopped the rich young man from going on to perfection, Matt. 19:20,21,22. Let us take heed. If we would love our Creator with all our hearts, we must be freed from all created things. See how great our need is for God's grace here. So we read in Heb. 6:3: "And this (going on to perfection) we shall do, if God permits."

**Faith for Perfection:** God (1) has promised, and (2) has confirmed by an oath that we may follow Christ into the Holiest (Heb. 6:19,20), within the veil. Here, within the veil, at the Throne of Grace (the Mercy Seat with the sprinkled blood), Christ as our High Priest intercedes for our perfection (Heb. 7:25), and ministers to us grace for perfection, Heb.4: 15,16.

**Perfection through Drawing Near to Our High Priest:** See Heb. 7:19,25. How may we draw near? By constantly turning to the Lord (especially in trials), and contemplating the goodness of the Lord, Rom. 8:28, 29, (note verse 29). As we do this, we are transformed, 2 Cor. 3:7-18. Our inward transformation consists of partaking the fruit of the Spirit ("love, joy...") described in Gal. 5:22-23. This transformation is by far more important than our performance of good intentions and resolutions. It is also not hindered by seeming failures as long as we keep turning to the Lord. Whatever we are doing or wherever we are, we may turn our hearts in humility to God in deep interior reflection, as if looking up to the Lord ("beholding...the glory of the Lord," 2 Cor. 3:18), offering ourselves to Him in love.

A few precious moments of silent adoration or of earnest expression of thankfulness, praise, or petitions, is a pleasing offering to God. I may do this as I write this. This, done as frequently as we are able, keeps us within the veil, in the realm of perfection. In this realm we walk in the light where repentance is never delayed, and cleansing by the blood of Jesus is always assured, 1 John 1:7-9.

In such constant turning to the Lord, we learn to pray often, and the Holy Spirit helps us to pray, giving us the prayers. See Jude verses 20-21, 1 Cor. 14:4,14,15, and Rom. 8:26. This discipline has its foundation in an established commitment to seek the Lord earnestly first thing in the morning, opening our heart to the Giver of life, opening and reading the Word with reverential attention, and praying with the word that is imparted to our heart. An inward quietness settles in, and our thoughts are established in God's goodness.

**Perfection Through Walking with God:** See Gen. 6:8,9: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord...Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God." Grace strengthens us in this walk with God. What does it mean to walk with God? Please read again the two paragraphs above. See Amos 3:3: "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" This implies a life of constant prayer, seeking God's will in things small and great, and saying 'yes' to God our Creator. Is there any greater good for us than doing this, or a greater loss than not doing so? *May this awareness compel me, Lord!*

**Perfection Through Learning Obedience in Suffering:** It is written of Jesus in Heb. 5:8-9, "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." If we would say 'yes' to the Spirit, we must say 'no' to the flesh; this is the suffering through which Jesus learned obedience, and this is our calling too if we would follow His footsteps (1 Pet. 2:21-23) and enter the Holiest within the veil, Heb. 6:20. This is the realm of perfection.

### **Perfection of the Saints Through the Body of Christ:**

Receiving ministry in the Body and being in unity with the Body is necessary for the perfecting of the saints, Col. 1:28-29: "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." Is my heart submitted to and united with the overseers God has given me (Heb. 13:17), and the brethren who love me and minister in the church? This is part of God's provision for our perfection. We need the earnest prayers of the brethren, Col. 4:12. We need to receive exhortations daily, Heb. 3:12,13,14. Do our hearts long for fellowship and for exhortation? Let us then go on to perfection, not being "slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," Heb. 6:10.

### **Perfection Through Giving to the Poor,** Matt. 19:21:

"Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor... and come, follow Me.'" The apostles also emphasized giving to the poor, Gal. 2:9,10: "...James, Cephas, and John... gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship... They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do." Let us be eager to share all we can with the poor. Job had great compassion for the poor, Job 30:20: "Have I not wept for him who was in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor?" It is written that Job was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God," Job 1:1, KJV.

### **Perfection Through Patience:**

James writes that trials produce patience as we endure in faith, and the fruit of such patient endurance is perfection, Ja. 1:2-4: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." We need patience to endure "to the end," Matt. 24:13. Concerning the sufferings of the end-times our Lord said, Luke 21:19: "By your patience possess your souls." Let us humble ourselves and receive grace to be "obedient to the point of death," Phil. 2:8. This

patient endurance in daily life is the experience of being "crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20), and indeed is the seed of perfection. This seed will grow up into the likeness of Jesus, being filled with His virtues, which are the fruits of the Spirit, Gal 5:22-24. This understanding concerning patience helps us to rejoice in trials.

**Perfection Through Forgiving Love**, Matt. 5:44-48: "...love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,.. Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." If we forgive and love others as God forgives and loves us, we may "go on to perfection." Amen.

## **Grace to Overcome as Jesus Overcame**

Trials in the end-times are intense for the saints of God, both in personal life and in the Church. Does the Lord expect us to overcome as He did? Yes, that is what is written repeatedly in the end-time message in Rev. 2 & 3. See Rev. 3:21: "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." This being the Lord's will concerning us, we may be assured that He is able and willing to aid us when we are tried, Heb. 2:18, Heb. 4:16. Without His help, we fail; but with His assured help, we can be confident of victory. Once we believe that Jesus helps us to overcome as He did, we have the faith for victory. The eyes of faith see the unseen, guiding us to its realization.

**First**, we are enabled to see by the eyes of faith that Jesus as a man was tempted, tried, and tested just as any one of us is tempted, tried, and tested, Heb. 4:15. God is above temptation (Ja. 1:13), but Christ was tempted because the Son of God clothed Himself with a flesh (human nature) that was subject to temptation like ours is. In a flesh as real as ours He faced temptations as real as ours. As we look to Him we receive grace to overcome as He did.

**Second**, we know that the risen Christ as our High Priest intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father. When we are tempted, tried, or tested in any way, His eyes are upon us. Are our eyes upon our High Priest? He "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them," Heb. 7:25. The Lord grant that we both look to and come to Him, trusting that His prayer to the Father for us and the power of the Holy Spirit will bring us to a full triumph in due time.

**Third**, we know how the Lord prayed earnestly when tried, Heb. 5:7-9. The heart of His earnest prayer was: "Father, ... not My will, but Yours, be done," Luke 22:42. Such a prayer implies a total denial of self-will, and such denial of self-will requires a mind to suffer in yielding to God's will, 1 Pet. 4:1. Through such suffering Jesus learned obedience and was perfected as a man to be our High Priest, Heb. 5:8-10. Step by step He learned obedience, step by step He won the battle against Satan, until the final victory was won by the perfect sacrifice on the cross.

Let us look for His footsteps, and receive grace to overcome as He did. Let us pray like He did: "Not my will, but yours be done." In such prayer we are on the same battle-ground as Christ was in the days of His flesh, the ground of victory. This prayer opens for us the way to partake in the sufferings of Christ. "For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps," 1 Pet. 2:21. What sufferings are meant here? Those of self-denial, setting aside our own will, humbling ourselves, and learning obedience. Are not these indeed the foot-steps of Jesus?

Such is the way of the cross. We often start with small, or perhaps not so small things, such as:

- Obedience in forgiving offenses.
- Obedience to God's will in how we use our time or money.

- Obedience in turning away our thoughts and eyes from lust.
- Obedience in seeking the Lord in prayer and in the Word.
- Obedience in suffering injustice and loss.

Suppose we turn away from the discipline of the cross in small things. The journey would then become harder – like a double cross – and we would be wise at this point to go the second mile in repentance, not sparing the flesh. God is faithful and merciful, and will help us.

Step by step Christ is crushing the Serpent's head in us, and the Son of God reigns in us. The path is uphill; we are led to deeper faith and through greater trials for God's glory, so that it can be said of us that we overcame even as our Lord did. All is by faith, and therefore all is of grace. Amen.

## **Jesus Simplified and Summarized Perfection**

Forgiving love is the seed of perfection. It grows until there is a perfect expression of God's nature through the disciple who walks in forgiving love. Jesus simplified and summarized the doctrine of perfection in just five short verses, Matt. 5:44-48, concluding with: "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." The heart of this teaching on perfection is verse 44, "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you..." This is a new teaching, beyond the Old Testament. If we set our hearts to obey this, the Spirit will guide us to perfection. Such love – loving your enemies, blessing them, doing good to them, and praying for them - is a fire that consumes all evil in our nature. It is a virtue that enfolds all other virtues. How

blessed are these words of our Lord. Let us set our hearts on loving.

See how complete the Lord's teaching is: if we have grace to love those who hate us, and pray for them, such love can embrace all, and thus fulfill all of God's requirements, Rom. 13:8-10.

Are we able to pray for those who have hurt us as Jesus prayed on the cross, "Father, forgive them"? Let us pray for the Spirit of Christ to fill our hearts so that we may pray as He prayed. If the Spirit is giving us this understanding, and this desire, He is leading us in the way of perfection.

Imagine the changes that take place in our hearts as we seek to think about others like this, and pray as Jesus prayed. We will have a deeper assurance that we are indeed the children of our Heavenly Father (Matt. 5:45) and, as children, we share our Father's nature.

It is common for us to love and greet affectionately those who agree with us on doctrines and opinions. But how do we think about those who disagree with us? Let us judge ourselves in light of Jesus' words in Matt. 5:46,47, lest we miss the great blessing of the next verse: "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Didn't Jesus indeed make this teaching on perfection simple for us ? Let us set our heart to love those who make things difficult for us, intentionally or innocently, and pray for them. As we do so, the breath of heaven will blow upon our hearts; this breath of heaven imparts to us the aroma of perfection. Living waters will flow forth from our innermost beings and these living waters will impart life to others. Please remember: Forgiving love is the seed of perfection.

Jacob had seen the face of God in the Heavenly Wrestler's face in the night (Gen. 32:30), and the next day the face of his feared brother seemed to him like the face of God, Gen. 33:10. It was the former experience that prepared him for the latter.

The Apostles had faith for perfection not only for themselves (Phil 3:12-14), but also for those to whom they

ministered (Col.1: 28), and to this end they labored hard, Col. 1:29. If by faith we confess that by grace we are called to the perfection that the Apostles and Prophets believed in, we are then being built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets.

If we have communion with the Lord Jesus who prayed for those who spat on Him and nailed him to the cross, we may be filled with His Spirit and thus find grace to love and pray for those who mistreat us, misunderstand us, hate us, or hurt us. This is the light in which we may safely walk to perfection. Grace will carry us along, and we shall reach what God has prepared for those who love Him. Amen.

## **“To Speak Evil of No One”**

“...to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.” Tit. 3:2.

**To Speak Evil of No One:** This discipline will bring great peace of mind and happiness of heart. Our happiness is the fruit of the Spirit, and increases as we seek the good of others, and speak only good of others. Greater still would our happiness be if we were trained by the Spirit to think only good of others, and pray accordingly. If we examine ourselves, we may find that we have to repent for having spoken unkindly about others. As we repent, we will taste the goodness of God, and our happiness will increase.

We may pray: *Lord, grant that my heart and soul be inclined to do only good and no evil to others, and to speak only good and no evil of others. Above all, O Lord, let me think only good and no evil of others.* Once we pray this prayer, it is certain that Satan will tempt us, but we may by faith reckon ourselves as dead to all evil judgments concerning others. I believe we will then experience happiness too deep for words.

A kind word proceeding from our lips is sure to leave its fragrance upon our hearts and make us happy. Consider

how sad it is for us, and for others, when an unkind word falls from our lips. Consider the blessing that we may continually enjoy if kind thoughts and loving prayers about others occupy our hearts. This will transform the inward realms of our being, helping us pray in the Spirit and walk in love towards all. Fresh springs of happiness and peace will flow forth from our inner being.

**To Be Peaceable (“avoid being contentious”):** Our Lord kept quiet when He was accused. It is written that our Lord, “when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously,” 1 Pet. 2:23. Let us believe and confess that this verse is personally for us. If we follow this example of our Lord, we may avoid much sin, enjoy much peace and happiness, and give much peace and happiness to others. When we choose not to contend, Satan loses power. Silence, if used in love, helps make peace. A soft answer quenches anger, Prov. 14:1. *Lord let me learn to be silent, or to speak softly in contentious situations. Let me follow your example, O Lord.* Again, once we pray this prayer from the heart, we may expect provocations. May we find grace to be silent or speak softly according to the situation. Let us be willing to be trained by the Spirit.

**To Be Gentle:** Think of someone gentle you know. It is pleasant to be with that person. His or her words help and comfort. Our Lord said, “I am gentle and lowly in heart,” Matt. 11:29. We may come to Him and receive from Him this virtue of virtues. *O Lord, let me partake of your nature of being gentle and lowly of heart,* let us pray. When we pray in this manner, the Lord may show us the sins of our hearts, and lead us to repentance.

**Showing All Humility to All Men:** Let us take note of the expressions, “all humility” and “to all men.” How blessed are those words! Only the Spirit can teach us, and He will, if we pray with all our heart. If we desire that our words should bear the tone of humility, our thoughts about ourselves should be lowly. Again, only the Spirit can teach us, and He will, if we pray with all our heart. Let us pray: O

*Lord, train me to have lowly thoughts about myself. Open my eyes to see my pride, and repent. As we think lowly thoughts about ourselves, we receive grace to learn obedience through suffering (self-denial, Heb. 5:8), and to go on to perfection (Heb. 5:8-9), in the footsteps of our Forerunner, Heb.6:20. Amen.*

**Questions:** How can we speak gentle, kind, and uplifting words without condoning someone's sin? Are we to turn a blind eye, see only the good, and refrain from correcting? How may we distinguish 'correction' from 'speaking evil'? When and how should we correct someone?

**Response:** Kind or uplifting words should go hand in hand with gentle correction. This is implied in (a) Eph. 6:4: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (b) "Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father," 1 Tim. 5:1. (c) Paul desired Timothy to "reprove, rebuke, exhort;" but this was to be done, "with all longsuffering," 2 Tim. 4:2. (d) Paul warned the brethren with tears, Acts 20:19,31. The spirit of tenderness needs to permeate even our firmest rebukes. (e) Leaders must be "gentle...in humility correcting those who are in opposition," 2 Tim. 2:24-25.

How may we distinguish "correction" from "speaking evil"? One may ask himself: "what is happening in my own heart while speaking? Is my heart tender and caring?" We may need to repent. Also, "am I speaking directly to the person who needs correction, or to someone who can help him?" These questions are implied in the exhortation to "speak the truth in love," Eph. 4:15. If there is a bond of love, it is easier to give or receive correction, and evil speaking is not likely to occur.

When should we correct someone? When the Spirit moves us, and we can speak in peace. How? Try to pray together first, and start by saying, "The Lord has put this care on my heart for you. Please consider if this would be helpful." Then proceed prayerfully, use one or two scriptures if you can remember the appropriate passages, and listen to the other

person. Pray together at the end if possible. May God's peace reign in all situations. Afterwards, please reflect how the dialog went. Repent as necessary, give thanks, and commit all to God.

## **O God, Fill My Heart with Your Love**

The Lord has put this prayer in my heart: *O God, fill my heart with your love.* Having been awakened by the Spirit to the truth that loving God is the one supreme goal of life here and in the hereafter, it is my longing to open my heart to God's love, and be filled continually with His love. I believe that this prayer – *O God, fill my heart with your love* – is well pleasing to God, and will not be denied. This is our birthright as children of God, 1 John 3:1.

When we pray to be filled with God's love, we are praying to be filled with the Holy Spirit, Rom. 5:5: "because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." The more we are filled with the Spirit, the more we are filled with God's love, and the more we are freed from the love of the world. Concerning the love for the world, we have this warning in 1 John 2:15,16: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world." The word "world" here signifies all that draws us away from the love of the Father, appealing to the "lust" in us as may be seen from verse 16. Do we delight in God's Word, Ps. 1:2? Do we delight in prayer, Isa. 56:7? Or, do we delight mostly in temporal things instead? Some of these temporal things [such as work, education, houses, cars] have their proper use, but we are not to "love" them. Are these things keeping us from God, from His Word, and from prayer? Then we have reason to believe that we love them. We need to repent. How else may God's love dwell in us?

We can love God only after receiving His love first, 1 John 4:19: "We love him, because he first loved us." We receive God's love when we look to the cross and see the Son of God dying for our sin, 1 John 4:10. This causes love for God to arise in our hearts. May God's grace draw us to love Him. We read in 1 Cor. 8:3, The Amplified Bible, "...if one loves God truly – with affectionate reverence, prompt obedience and grateful recognition of His blessing – he is known by God [that is, recognized as worthy of His intimacy and love, and he is owned by Him.]" May the desire to love God with all our hearts possess us so entirely that we will be worthy of His intimacy and be owned by Him.

God created Adam in His own image for love and fellowship. Only two beings having the same image – inner nature – are capable of having intimate fellowship with each other. This fellowship was lost by sin, but is restored in Christ, and keeps us from sinning. "Whoever abides in Him does not sin," 1 John 3:6.

How may we continue to seek to be filled with love for God? Again, we see God's love for us in the death of His Son, Rom. 5:8: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus earnestly desired that we remember His sufferings and His death, Luke 22:19. We remember the Lord's death when we partake of the Lord's Table. We may remember His sacrifice when we draw close to Him in prayer, and offer our body as a living sacrifice, Rom. 12:1. We are to remember His sufferings when we are tried, and when we are exposed to suffering ourselves, Heb. 12:2-4. As we thus remember His sufferings for us, we are united to Him in love, receiving more and more of His Spirit, and learning obedience through sufferings as He did in the days of His flesh, Heb. 5:8.

As we thus love God, we love also all who are in need of our love, 1 John 1:21: "...he who loves God must love his brother also." See how this fulfills the two greatest commandments, Mark 12:29-31. Let us pray: *O Lord, fill me with your love, the love with which you loved me when*

*you died for me on the cross. Let me love the brethren as you loved me. Amen.*

## **Serving the Lord in Small Things**

It takes great faith and great commitment to be faithful in small things. Small things are mostly things known only to us and God. Small things belong to our secret life. It is in small things we win or lose the battle of life. It is in small things that we grieve the Spirit or please Him.

- Our Lord said in Luke 19:17: "And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'"
- Luke 16:10: "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much."

People can point out our open sins, but only the Holy Spirit can prick our heart concerning our small and sometimes hidden sins of the heart and mind. People appreciate the more visible acts of charity we do; only God sees the things done in secret. When we are led by the Spirit in the way of faithfulness in small things, especially secret things (as Enoch, who walked with God) we experience a personal and special relationship with God. The poor widow put two copper coins in the offering, and Jesus took note of it and praised it, Mark 12:41-44; and the record of it has come down through centuries.

Our God is a God of very small things, of very small people, of the very poor, of the forgotten.

Blessed be our God for His goodness! Consider how great a blessing we enjoy in such knowledge of God's nature. Small things fill our days:

- Small, quiet prayers of love for others.
- A kind word spoken to comfort someone.

- A smile, a look, a touch, a small gift.
- An offense overlooked for love's sake.
- A small note or letter, a brief telephone call, a shared meal.

These things are all small, but the love behind them is not small, nor the blessing for us and for others. It is blessed for us to be able to minister in such small things and be in close fellowship with God.

The vast ocean is made up of tiny droplets of water. So is our life: moments add up to make up our life. May God grant that we value these moments and invest them for eternity in small prayers, small acts and words of kindness, and in all things turning our hearts to God – even for a few moments in a busy hour – as often as we are reminded. This is faithfulness in small things, faithfulness in the hidden life. Such incessant fellowship with God will keep us from sinning against love, keep us in a spirit of prayer, and keep us from yielding to temptation.

The true story is told of a Christian who in his early youth received a vision from the Lord in which he was told, "Be faithful in the small things of daily life. Such preparation is necessary for the future work I have for you." This helped him in his walk with God. Enoch walked with God in a wicked generation. How could he have walked with God but by being faithful in the multitude of small things that filled his life? May God grant that we discover this experience as one of fellowship with God, as is implied in 1 Thess. 5:16-18: "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." How blessed it is to learn to give thanks for the small benefits and blessings that fill our day! This truly is the nature of a Spirit-filled life: a life of thankfulness and praise for small things, including our small trials. This keeps our heart tender and able to be taught by the Spirit. See how wonderfully simple a provision of God this is, and how great the blessing is that it brings.

**Practical Help:** To be consecrated to serve God in the small things of life, we need to turn our heart to Him frequently in the midst of all our routine activities. The Holy Spirit is our Helper, and He helps us indeed. As we turn our heart frequently to God, our innermost being is kept in fellowship with Him, and kept safe from the distracting, deceiving, and wasteful thoughts that hinder our life in the Spirit. This is how we may turn to God:

- A moment of silent prayer.
- A brief prayer or a song of thankfulness.
- Confession of a scripture verse in faith.
- Meditation on a verse impressed upon us by the Spirit.
- Remembering someone in need, and interceding for him or her.

In choosing to live like this, we learn to walk with God, and join the company of saints like Enoch of old. Let us pray: *Lord, I come to you to be consecrated to serve you in the small things of life, and be faithful in the small things of life. Give me, O Lord, the great faith that is needed to live in constant fellowship with you, and to be free from distractions. Teach me Lord to rejoice always, to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in everything. Amen.*

Opportunities to serve God in small things are ever present. How we use the present moment, the words we speak, how we guard the thoughts of our heart, how quickly and earnestly we repent for small trespasses, how we pray, how we help with the chores in the home and our duties in the work place, how we use the money we have; these and other small thoughts, decisions, and actions fill our days. It is a continuous walk of faith. We may look forward to a great reward in eternity. Amen.

## God's Testing Purifies Our Hearts

The heart (spirit) of man is the hidden man (1 Pet. 3:4), and is therefore the innermost part of our entire being, which was created in God's image. It is there – in the heart – that the Spirit of God meets us and communes with us. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," our Lord said. Just as God's glory was visible in the innermost room of the Tabernacle, so the unseen God is seen by the inner man, the hidden man of the heart. The innermost room of the Tabernacle was called the Most Holy Place, and God desires that our heart be Most Holy for God, wholly devoted to Him in love, Mark 12:30.

When we see God, we shall be like Him, 1 John 3:2. This is the blessing for the pure in heart who shall see God: they shall be like Him ("resemble and be like Him," The Amplified Bible). The next verse (1 John 3:3) tells us that such hope – the hope of seeing God – has this effect on us: "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." Seeing God was the ultimate blessing for Philip (John 14:8), and for Job, Job 19:26,27.

**Initial Experience of Purification of the Heart by Faith:** When we first came to Christ in sincere repentance and trust in God's love, our heart was purified by faith in Jesus' blood (Acts 15:9; Rom. 3:25), and made fit to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Such purification of the heart is God's gracious gift to us and His sovereign work in us. A pure heart is one that trusts God in all situations. Such a heart abides in God's peace, and desires to say "yes" to God in all trials.

**Continuing Experience of Purification by the Word and by Obedience:** Our Lord said in John 15:3: "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you." Prayerful reading of God's Word cleanses us; and keeping God's Word in our hearts imparts to us the power that keeps us from sinning. Consider what a great blessing this is. As we read (or hear) God's Word, it washes us, Eph. 5:26. The same Word, hidden in our heart, keeps us from

sinning, Ps. 119:11. Such a life of obedience (“walking in the light,” 1 John 1:7) results in more purification – the purification of the soul, 1 Pet.1:22. This process requires denying our own will to please God, and therefore involves learning obedience through suffering, Heb. 5:8. This is the experience of taking up one’s cross daily, Luke 9:23. [Note: Our behavior often could seem far from perfect, but our heart can always be in a perfect state toward God, and our mind willing to do God’s will, 1 Chr. 28:9; 2 Chr.16:9.]

**God’s Care Concerning My Heart During Trials:** Prov. 17:3 is a blessing: “The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but LORD tests the hearts.” If God should so test us – like silver and gold in the fire – the purpose is to purify, not to hurt. How thankful we ought to be! This testing for purification of the heart is for the righteous, not for the wicked: “ The LORD tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates,” Ps. 11:5. The Lord tests the righteous! This knowledge draws us close to God in thankfulness.

The purity of heart that comes from testing is the result of our faith in God’s love for us in and through the trial. That tried faith is the pure gold (1 Pet. 1:7), and it helps us endure as if seeing the invisible God, Heb. 11: 27. God, though invisible, is seen by the eyes of faith. Job saw God at the end of his trials, Job. 42: 5. As we see the Lord by the eyes of faith, we are transformed into His image, 2 Cor. 3:18. Let us give thanks for our trials.

**Our Great Need:** The first reference in the Bible concerning the condition of man’s heart is in Gen. 6:5: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” This is what brought on the global flood. How earnest we should be to pray as the Psalmist prayed in Ps. 139:23-24: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” We can be assured that this prayer will be answered, and our heart kept pure before God. The heart is

the area where God begins to deal with us and show us His love. The heart is the area we have to pay the most attention to in our life with God.

**A Heart Taught By Christ:** Jesus said, "I am gentle and lowly in heart." By coming to Christ we may partake of His meekness and lowliness of heart. Such a heart shall have Christ Himself for its teacher who says, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls," Matt. 11:29. When Jesus teaches us, He starts with our hearts (spirits), and teaches us from His heart of love, showing us first and foremost that He is "gentle and lowly in heart." If we begin here, and remain thankful for God's testing, we shall see God's face eternally, Rev. 22:4. May such be our longing! Amen.

## **The Spirit Is Calling Us to Pray and to Intercede**

The central focus of end-time ministry is personal intercessory prayer, Luke 18:7-8. The Holy Spirit helps us in this blessed ministry, Rom. 8:26. We read in Acts 2:17, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy..." Note that the first thing mentioned about those upon whom the Holy Spirit is poured out is that they "shall prophesy." The original meaning of "prophet" is: "...an intercessor who, because of his nearness to God, would obtain the mind of God, hence be able to speak for God..." [Adam Clark, quoted in Systematic Theology, Vol. III, Earnest S. Williams.] We infer therefore that the baptism of the Holy Spirit imparts a desire and an ability to pray and intercede. These gifts and operations are especially for the "last days," we read. Since we know that the last days began when Jesus came (Heb. 1:2) and when the Holy Ghost was poured out (Acts 2:17), how keen we should be to remember that we are living in the last stages

of the "last days." Is the Spirit not calling each one of us personally to pray and intercede, and "obtain the mind of God, [and] hence be able to speak for God...?"

The Lord Jesus when He spoke of the last days emphasized: "Watch therefore, and pray always," Luke 21:36. Spirit-filled, Spirit-led people living in these end-times will be drawn to the place of personal prayer "day and night" (Luke 18:7, 1 Tim. 5:5, 1 Thess. 3:10), and this will enable their words to be prophetic (speak "edification and exhortation and comfort to men," 1 Cor. 14:3). Is the Spirit calling you to pray and intercede? Blessed are your ears if you can hear. This is my prayer toward God for myself, that my ears will be open to the Spirit's call.

If there is even a gentle urge in your heart towards personal prayer even for a few moments, and you respond, your obedience may have enormous impact for God's kingdom. In such moments seek shelter behind closed doors if possible (Matt. 6:6), or in a solitary place (Mark 1:35), or wherever you are; take that spot to be sacred ground. The Apostle desired "that men pray everywhere," 1 Tim. 2:8. There is no time or place that is not appropriate for quiet prayer – prayer of the heart, Luke 18:7, 1 Thess. 5:17, Ps. 63:6.

**As we pray, if we are in normal health, it is important to keep our body in a reverential posture:**

- Bowing the head, Gen. 24:26-27, Ex. 34:8-9.
- Kneeling, Dan. 6:10, Luke 22:39-44, Matt. 15:25; 2 Chr. 6:12-14.
- Lifting the hands, Ex. 9:29, Ex. 17:10-13, 1 Kings 8:54,55, Ps. 63:4, 1 Tim. 2:8.
- Standing, 1 Chr. 23:28-31, 2 Chr. 20:2-9, Luke 18:9-14.
- Looking up toward heaven, Mark 6:39-44.
- Lying prostrate, Deut. 9:18-20, 25-27, 1 Chr. 21:16-17, Matt. 26:39.

**Satan opposes those who would pray earnestly.** Here we depend on the help from the Helper, the Holy Spirit. Our Lord said: "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint," Luke 18:1. We are likely to faint, as the disciples did when the Lord agonized in the garden; hence the Lord's exhortation that we should not faint. May the Lord find us willing, seeking, humble, and watching.

**Please consider the following simple discipline:** "The first thing that you are to do, when you are upon your knees, is to shut your eyes, and with a short silence let your soul place itself in the presence of God; that is, you are to use this, or some other better method, to separate yourself from all common thoughts, and make your heart as sensible as you can of the Divine Presence." [William Law, *Wholly For God*, edited by Andrew Murray]

**Two important points to remember in Prayer:** (1) Pray: *Lord Jesus, let me desire in prayer only what you would have me desire.* (2) Pray: *Lord, when I pray for a person, grant that there be no feelings of condemnation in my heart about that person; let me pray as you would.* In this consecration, we have identified ourselves with the Righteous One, even Christ, and our prayers will ascend to God as the prayer of a "righteous man," Ja. 5:16.

**Abraham's Example of Humility in Prayer:** God spoke of Abraham to Abimelech in Genesis 20:7: "he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live." The same Abraham called himself "dust and ashes" when interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 18:27. May God help us to draw close to Him in all humility as we intercede in prayer.

**When we pray let us expect:** (1) Something to happen in our heart: "a broken and a contrite heart," Ps. 51:17. (2) The Spirit to come upon us and to work in us, Luke 3:21, 22. (3) A transforming work to take place in us, Luke 9:29. (4) The Spirit to help us know how to pray, Rom. 8:26,27. (5) To have the assurance that we are among the elect who cry day and night, Luke 18:7.

These instructions have been helpful to me. I often sense God is at work in me through joy, brokenness, expectancy, correction, or the hearing of His voice as I pray. *O Lord speak to my heart, cause me to hear your voice*, let us pray. We need to hear His voice so that we may pray as we ought, pray effectively, and pray in faith to fulfill God's purposes for us and for others. Amen.

## **Thirsting for and Praying for the Holy Spirit**

Our Lord said in a loud voice, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water," John 7:37-38. "...If anyone thirsts..." This experience of thirsting precedes coming to Christ, which precedes drinking the living water (the Holy Spirit). These three experiences (thirsting, coming to Christ, drinking) are summed up in the words: "He who believes in Me." All of this begins with thirsting. The living water has a heavenly origin, "proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev.22:1), and therefore the thirst ought to be imparted by God. May God grant us such sense of need, such thirst, and help us to pray accordingly. The thirst shows the reality of the sense of need, and results in prayer on our part.

As we drink, living water will flow forth from our "innermost being," The Amplified Bible. "...Out of his heart" implies the reality of the experience in the very depths of our being: how life-transforming this experience is, how real, how unmistakable! One who is filled with the Spirit becomes one in the Spirit with the Lord, and with all who are His, 1 Cor.12:13. We have His Spirit, and our nature inside is changed to one like His, to one of love, Rom. 5:5. This is a love that longs to please the One with whom it is joined. We are enabled to think as He thinks about sin, and think as He thinks about holiness. We have a new nature inside that is

animated by resurrection life, and sustained by God's breath and God's Word. This new nature resists the carnal nature in the power of the Spirit, saying 'no' to evil lusts in temptations, and 'yes' to the Spirit's leading; this is the good fight of faith that involves suffering in the flesh, and learning obedience, Heb. 5:8, Heb. 2:18. Thus we begin to actually experience the workings of the Spirit in us, and learn to be led by the Spirit in the way of the cross. The light "shines ever brighter unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18) in this walk as we follow the Crucified One.

"Rivers of living water" flowing forth is for the blessing of others. This shows how communicable this experience is, and how abundant, refreshing, and satisfying the resulting blessings are for others. We are empowered to be witnesses.

We read in Acts chapters 1-4 how the disciples received power to speak the gospel with boldness. They healed the sick, and faced persecution without fear. Acts 8, 10, and 19 give more accounts of people receiving the fullness of the Spirit. When we receive the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. chapters 12-14) and experience the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25), we understand the abundance of the blessings of being filled with the Spirit. The thirsting, coming to Christ, and drinking are continuing experiences because rivers of living water are to flow "continuously," John 7:38, The Amplified Bible. *O Lord, may I always be found thirsty for the Holy Spirit, always coming to you, and always drinking. Amen.*

Note again in Rev. 22:1 the heavenly origin of the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb." The "throne of God" signifies God's power (Jesus said "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you," Acts 1:8). It also is the throne of "the Lamb," and this signifies the Lamb-nature we are to partake of. The "pure" river, "clear as crystal" signifies the purity and the longing for purity this experience imparts. The more we drink of the Spirit, the more we desire to come to Christ, and continue drinking, so

the rivers may keep flowing unceasingly to bless others. So we read in Eph.5:18-21: "...be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God." Please note from this verse the blessings included in being "filled with the Spirit," and note especially the last one: "submitting to one another in the fear of God."

In Luke 11:1-13 Jesus is encouraging us to seek the Spirit untiringly, because we need power in order to minister to others. In verse 6 we read, "I have nothing to set before him." This corresponds to the "thirst" in John 7:37. It is this sense of need that brings forth the prayer of importunity (persistence) in the middle of the night, verse 8. We have nothing to serve others with unless we "ask," "seek," and "knock" with persistence, receive the Holy Spirit, and remain continuously filled. Jesus used this parable to teach how to pray for the Holy Spirit, verse 13: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" Let us receive faith from these words spoken by the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, even Jesus Christ. May we be found asking, seeking and knocking, and be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **The Normal State of Our Souls Should be Rest**

"Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you," Ps. 116:7. The word "return" in this verse shows that "rest" ought to be the normal state of our soul. Adam was created on the sixth day, and the next day was the Sabbath, which was the day of God's rest. The first full day of Adam's life therefore was a day of rest! By faith

we may enter into God's rest, and there abide, Heb. 4:9-11. If we sense any unrest, we are to remind ourselves of God's loving care, and say with the Psalmist, "Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." Note the simplicity in this prayer: "... for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." This prayer reflects a thankful heart. A thankful heart is good soil for faith to take roots, and by faith we abide in the rest that God gives.

**Rest and Unrest:** Because sin has wrought much ruin, the normal state of the soul now is unrest for most people. This unrest sends its ripples far and wide, and across centuries of time. Individuals, families, communities, and nations all over the world have suffered much, and continue to suffer. In the midst of all this, our Lord calls us: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. 11: 28. We have heard this call, and have come to Christ. Still, don't we have need to keep coming to Him always? Yes, because we have trials, and we live among people who have not come to rest. Yes, because we need to enter into rest when we are tried. And, we can experience deeper depths in God's rest, just as those who are baptized in the Spirit may experience greater fullness of the Spirit, Eph. 5:18-19.

Every situation brings with it an opportunity for us to humble ourselves and learn obedience. "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience," Heb. 4:11. Is it not clear from this verse that if we work in unrest, we are in disobedience? Don't we have reason to repent? Let us repent, and be restored to faith, and to the rest of faith.

Let us heed the exhortation to be "diligent." If we are diligent, we will be sensitive to the situations that are likely to disturb our rest. This will help us pray, and keep coming to the One who is able to give us rest and keep us in rest.

**Being Watchful Against Unrest:** When we have much work to do, our soul may tend to move out of its place of rest. Cares could overwhelm a mother or a father with many responsibilities, or a student with a busy schedule.

What shall we do? The simplicity of the Lord's call remains: "Come to Me." First thing in the morning, let us come to the Lord, and then often as we go through the day. Look to Him for grace for each task to be done in the rest that He gives. Remember His goodness, and keep thanking Him. Then, our soul will remain in rest, or "return" to its rest. The Holy Spirit will guide us as we learn to work in rest, and such work is the work of faith.

It is easily seen that such a life is a life of prayer, a life of constant dependence on God. We are able to live such a life only by grace, only as led by the Spirit. The Comforter - the Holy Spirit - comforts us in this walk of faith. We do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Holy Spirit helps us to pray, Rom. 8:26.

During trials our soul tends to move from its place of rest. When we are under stress, we may receive grace if we would remember to pray: Lord, is my soul abiding in rest? The Holy Spirit is helping me to pray in this manner, and it is a blessing.

People around us are constantly in unrest because of sin. We are in the world with them, and we are affected by their unrest, unless we watch and pray. By abiding in God's rest that comes by faith, we may work the works of God, and such works are the works of faith. What we do in unrest is not the work of faith. Let us set our heart to enter into rest by faith and abide in rest by faith. Let us keep thanking the Lord for His goodness, and this will help the soul to return to its rest. This simplicity is precious.

When we are in trying situations, the confession of faith is: *Father, I see by faith your hand in this situation. You are allowing all things so that I may be conformed to the image of Your Son. Help me abide in the rest that you give to those who believe. Father I praise You, I thank You, for Jesus sake. Amen.* This confession keeps us in rest and in victory. We are being conformed to the image of His Son, Rom. 8:28-29.

**When We Are Tried to the Limit:** What if the sufferings increase, and it all seems like too much? See 1 Peter 4:19: "... let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator." Jesus was forsaken by the Father as He suffered on the cross (Matt.27:46); then He died saying, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit," Luke 23:46. Even in the most extreme situation we may commit ourselves to the Faithful One. God has made provision for us to be comforted.

**We Are God's Resting Place:** Not only do we enter God's rest, but we ourselves are God's resting place! "For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation: This is my rest for ever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it," Ps. 132: 13-14. How can we fathom, how can we put in words, the blessing that is ours as given to us in this passage? Let us meditate on it, and be thankful. Our faith will increase, and so will our rest in God. We are, and shall ever be, God's habitation through eternal ages. So great is the salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **"Amen. Even So, Come, Lord Jesus!"**

Our Lord desired that we should discern the times, Matt. 16:3. Paul assumed that the believers knew how to discern the times and the seasons, 1 Thess. 5:1. And yet we read that the ten virgins slept, Matt. 25:5. The ten included the five wise virgins, but they had extra oil for their lamps.

If there is one clear message for us, it is that we should, in this dark hour, have our lights burning. Many will let down their guard, become casual, and let themselves be distracted, assuming that the coming of the Lord is not near. This is the spirit of slumber. For this reason we need to be exhorted daily, lest we come under the deceiving power of sin: "...exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Heb. 3:13. This is why we come together often in the local church. Our Lord has also warned

us that faith will fail in the end times (Luke 18:8), and taught us how we may pray, Luke 18:1-8. Let us therefore emphasize prayer and exhortations.

In the end-time messages to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, the emphasis for five Churches is to repent. How blessed it is not to be in the dark concerning our sin. "He that has an ear let him hear" is the refrain of the messages. When the Spirit speaks to us, we need to have ears to hear. The Lord will wake us up and open our ears if we ask Him, Isa. 50:4-5. Let us pray: *Lord, open my ears to hear your voice. Awake me from sleep, Lord, and save me from the spirit of slumber. Give me the desire to pray unceasingly, and be occupied in the work you have committed to me.*

Being ever conscious of our need to repent keeps us near God's heart. Of equal significance is a heart thankful for forgiveness. Thus we are kept from corruption (sin), and are preserved in a spirit of prayer, ready for the battles (temptations and trials). This state is maintained by the support we receive from daily exhortations.

Our Lord spoke of "the beginning of sorrows," Matt. 24:8. There are more natural calamities like earthquakes now than ever before. There is much persecution of Christians. There is more unrest among nations, religions, peoples, and families than ever before. At the beginning of this century a third of the world's nations were embroiled in conflict, nearly twice the Cold War level. The conflict has spread more since then, and is increasing still. The nation of Israel is very much in the picture, as the Scriptures say. How near is the coming of the Lord? Do we have a witness in our hearts? Do we hear the voice of the bridegroom, "Surely I am coming quickly"? Rev. 22:20. Is there an urge in our hearts to pray, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" Rev.22:20. This prayer will keep us from the spirit of slumber, and keep our lamps burning.

Let us remember the persecuted Church and suffering humanity, Heb. 13:3: "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you

yourselves are in the body also.” Christians are suffering persecution in many parts of the world. Many missionaries are working among the poor and the sick. We have the opportunity to help them now: (1) Pray for the suffering Church. (2) Send help to persecuted Christians, the brethren who are suffering in other ways, and those who are working to alleviate their sufferings. If we do these things in obedience to Heb. 13:3, God will bless us.

In Christ’s love, let us also pray for all who suffer from wars, conflicts, poverty, sickness, divorce, abortion, and abuse. Let us also pray for those who have not heard the Gospel. The Holy Spirit will help us pray as we ought to, and not faint (Luke 18:1), and He will lead us daily as we look for the Lord’s coming. Amen.