

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

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A study of our spiritual pilgrimage of holiness leading to the fulfilment of Christ's kingdom in us, and our ultimate state of rest in Christ in God.

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CHAPTER 1

JESUS CHRIST -THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Matt 13:44-46

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

THE ATTRIBUTES OF JESUS CHRIST

JESUS CHRIST - REVEALED IN THE SCRIPTURES

First note that the treasure and the pearl of great price were hidden. Jesus Christ is that treasure and that pearl, hidden away in our hearts, to be sought after and found, and to be experienced personally.

In Psalm 27, David expresses the Lord's desire for us to seek Him, and then his own ready response. **"One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD... When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek." Ps 27:4, 8.**

We have His assurance that if we seek Him with all diligence, we will find Him. **"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."** Jer 29:13.

The obvious starting point of our search is the Scriptures, which provide us with a full revelation of His attributes. Here are some examples.

HIS NAME

'Jesus'

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, (salvation) for He will save His people from their sins." Matt 1:21.

He is the Saviour of mankind.

'Immanuel'

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." Matt 1:23.

'Messiah' 'The Christ'

"He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ)." John 1:41.

Messiah means 'the Anointed One.'

'The Prophet'

"The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear," Deut 18:15.

"Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." John 6:14.

Essentially the ministry of Jesus was that of a prophet, showing people their present state, and foretelling what was to come in God's plan of things.

EXPRESSING HIS DEITY

'Son of God'

"And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God." John 1:34.

This title testifies to Jesus' divinity. Before His incarnation, He was with God and equal with God. **"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God"** Phil 2:5-6.

'Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isa 9:6.

"Wonderful" His whole manifestation is a wonder.

"Counsellor"

"But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God; and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." 1 Cor 1:30. A renewed mind is one where worldly wisdom is substituted by the wisdom of Christ. Through His indwelling presence in our minds, **"we have the mind of Christ."**(1 Cor 2:16) In effect, He is our counsellor.

"Mighty God" The character He will express against His anti-Christian enemies.

"Everlasting Father" The everlasting founder and Head of His Christian family.

"Prince of Peace"

Here 'Prince' is not a royal title, but an indication that he is the chief, or Principal One of peace. He establishes our reconciliation and peace with our Father, and **"...He Himself is our peace"** Eph 2:14.

'I AM' **"Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." John 8:58.**

This was the same reply given by God to Moses in answer to the question, **"when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"** And God said to Moses, **"I AM**

WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Exod 3:13-14. "I AM" is a title exclusive to deity.

'The Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End...the Almighty.'

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." Rev 1:8.

"These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:" Rev 3:14.

"the Amen" The fulfilment of all that is spoken by God in the Scriptures.

"Beginning of the creation of God" Not the first thing created, but the originating source of creation through whom God worked.

"Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily." Isa 28:16. The titles above express the eternal nature of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

'The Prince of life' 'The Resurrection and the Life'

"But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life." Acts 3:14-15.

"the Prince of life" Again 'Prince' is not used as a royal title, but rather 'the chief,' or 'Principal One.' Jesus is the principal source of life appointed to man by God.

"For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself..." Jn 5:26.

Jesus told His disciples, "I have come that they (mankind) may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." Jn 10:10. He said "I am the way, the truth, and the life," and berated the hard of heart because they were "not willing to come to (Him) that (they) may have life." Jn 5:40.

Jesus in us is a source of divine life which is readily released to meet our needs. He explained to His disciples that just as He lived by the indwelling power of the Father, so they were to likewise live through Him. "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me (draws on My indwelling life) will live (will have a measure of My divine life to meet his needs) because of Me." John 6:57.

HIS LORDSHIP

'Lord Jesus Christ'

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil 2:9-11.

The full title of Jesus is "**the Lord Jesus Christ.**" Paul expresses His Lordship in the following blessing.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” 2 Cor 13:14.

He is Lord of all. **“The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ--He is Lord of all.” Acts 10:36.**

He is sovereign Lord of lords and king of kings. **“He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords...” 1 Tim 6:15 (NAS).**

He is destined to have an eternal government, and rule over all of God’s people. **“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.” Matt 2:6.**

God has **“put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church...” Eph 1:22.** He has **“given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.” Isa 55:4.**

ALMIGHTY CONQUEROR

‘the Mighty One of Jacob,’ ‘the Lion of the tribe of Judah’

“You shall drink the milk of the Gentiles, and milk the breast of kings; you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Saviour and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.” Isa 60:16.

“Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.” Rev 5:5.

“These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.” Rev 17:14.

“Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.” Ps 2:8-10.

HIS HUMANITY

‘the Son of Man’

“For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.” John 5:26-27.

Even though He is the Son of God, Jesus also delighted in the title ‘Son of Man.’ Because of His humanity, He was able to offer Himself as a perfect sin offering for mankind. Because of His humanity He is a High Priest capable of executing wise and sympathetic judgment. And now, at the right hand of God the Father, He holds the unique position of humanity and deity--being God the Son, and Son of Man.

HIS CHARACTER

'Love'

The very essence of Christ's character is love. **"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."** Jn 15:13.

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom 8:38-39.

Gentle Patient Victorious

"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.

"A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench;" he will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth;" Isa 42:3-4.

"He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." Phil 3:21.

'Full of Grace and Truth'

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Jn 1:14.

"You are fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed You forever." Ps 45:2.

"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace (or grace heaped upon grace). For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Jn 1:16-17.

'Faithful and True'

"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war." Rev 19:11.

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." 2 Tim 2:13.

The Glory of His Beauty

"You are fairer (Lit: 'beautifulness beautiful' or perfectly beautiful with spiritual or inward beauty) than the sons of men; grace (from the Holy Spirit) is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed You forever (with a supreme worldwide everlasting kingdom). Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One (to take unto Yourself your kingdom), with Your glory and Your majesty (His destroying sword is the instrument through which His glory and majesty are manifested and vindicated). And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; (He will prosper because of truth, humility, and righteousness) and Your right hand shall teach You awesome things. (He needs no other instructor) Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies (as in: "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart." Acts 2:37); the peoples fall under You. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of

righteousness (the eternal nature of His kingdom arises from its righteousness) **is the sceptre of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness** (the anointing of joy) **more than Your companions. All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia** (as the garments of a bridegroom), **out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad.”** Ps 45:2-8.

“Unchangeable” **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”** Heb 13:8.

NAMES ASSOCIATED WITH HIS CROSS

‘The Spotless Lamb of God’ ‘Saviour’ ‘Our Passover’ ‘Redeemer’

“...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” 1 Pet 1:18-19.

“For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.” 1 Cor 5:7.

“All flesh shall know that I, the LORD, am your Saviour, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.” Isa 49:26.

HIS PRESENT OFFICE

‘The Great High Priest’

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.” Heb 4:14.

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,” Heb 3:1.

Jesus, our High Priest, presents our confessions or testimonies to His atoning blood on our behalf before the throne of God.

‘Mediator’ and ‘Advocate’

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,” 1 Tim 2:5.

“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” 1 Jn 2:1.

A mediator is a ‘go-between,’ and an advocate is one who stands with us or alongside of us. Notice that it is as ‘the Son of Man’ that Jesus acts as our mediator and advocate, and that He is the only mediator between God and man.

‘Judge of Israel’ Judge of the Whole World

“Now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops; he has laid siege against us; they will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek.” Mic 5:1.

“For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth.” Ps 96:13.

“In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.” Isa 16:5.

HIS PRESENT MINISTRY

‘The Good Shepherd’

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” John 10:11.

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Ps 23:1.

“Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock; you who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth!” Ps 80:1.

“He will feed His flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.” Isa 40:11.

“As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.” Ezek 34:12.

“And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God; and they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth;” Mic 5:4.

“For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” 1 Pet 2:25.

‘Author and Perfecter of Our Faith’

“let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith..” Heb 12:1-2 (NAS).

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word (rhema, or word spoken in our hearts) of God.” Rom 10:17. We hear the word of the Lord, we respond in obedience, He releases His faith in our hearts.

‘The Word’

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Jn 1:1.

“He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.” Rev 19:13.

Not only was Jesus the living word, or the full living expression of God’s word (logos), He is the almighty power of God invested in the word. In the reading above, He faces His enemies in His name **“The Word of God.”** His spiritual foes are slain by the word of truth.

'The Light of the World' 'The Light of Life'

"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." Jn 8:12.

"Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Lk 1:78-79.

"A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." Lk 2:32.

Jesus is still **"the light of the world,"** and **"the light of life."** He still brings the light of revelation and truth through the Holy Spirit to a world plunged in darkness. He first came as **"the light of the world,"** and **"the Messenger of the covenant."** (Mal 3:1). In the latter days He will **"come into His temple"** in a world steeped in darkness as **"the Sun of Righteousness...with healing in His wings,"** Mal 4:2. Although **"darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people, the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you."** (Isa 60:1-2) **"The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but the LORD will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no longer go down, nor shall your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended."** Isa 60:19-20.

Reflecting God's Glory

He is **"the brightness of (God's) glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power."** Heb 1:1-3.

"And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell," Col 1:17-19.

"the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious" Isa 4:2.

"For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you." Isa 60:2.

Intimacy of the Lord's Presence in "The Song of Songs"

'The Song of Songs' is an allegory that paints a picture of the search of the earnest Christian when entering into a personal relationship with the Lord. It reveals His love for us, and His desire to be found by us.

"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." Song 2:4.

"I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me." Song 7:10.

The seeking heart becomes His exclusive property.

"My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies (in a climate of purity). Song 2:16.

“A garden enclosed (His exclusive property) is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed (for His personal use).” Song 4:12.

CHAPTER 2

THE STATE OF OUR HEARTS

FINDING THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Although our search of the Scriptures provides us with a foundation of intellectual knowledge and spiritual insights into the nature of Jesus, it still lacks the element of the personal experience of His presence. The rest of this study will be directed towards finding and personally experiencing the Lord as the pearl of great price hidden away in our hearts.

The Lord Dwells in Our Hearts

The Scriptures tell us that the Lord dwells in our hearts. **“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell (settle down and abide) in your hearts (your inner man or true self) through faith (your faith in receiving Him); that you, being rooted and grounded in love (the love that comes through Christ’s indwelling), may be able to comprehend (to understand and apprehend) with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height (the vastness or infinitude of God)--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge (i.e. all intelligent knowledge without experience); that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (through Jesus Christ in us).”** Eph 3:14-19.

In Spiritual Terms, What is the Heart?

Firstly, let us make a brief analysis of the nature of man from the aspect of his tripartite being--spirit, soul, and body.

The spirit is that part through which man communicates with God. It has the functions of conscience, intuition, and communion.

The soul comprises the intellect, and the emotions which proceed from the senses. It is the seat of man’s personality--the organ of volition and natural life. Compared with the spirit, which is the higher God-centred part of man, the soul is the baser part of man--the seat of carnal desire.

The body is the external, visible part of man, through which he makes contact with the world.

The Heart

By contrast, the heart of man is not as easily defined. It is not the spirit, because it has so many capacities that may proceed from the soul.

For example, drawing from the intellect, the heart may ‘think,’ ‘perceive,’ ‘understand,’ ‘imagine,’ or ‘debate.’

Emotionally, it can be ‘merry,’ ‘glad,’ ‘joyful,’ ‘anxious,’ ‘bitter,’ ‘despairing,’ ‘sorrowful,’ or full of hatred.

Volitionally, the heart can purpose or will, ‘be steadfast,’ ‘gentle’ and ‘humble,’ ‘single-minded, or hardened and insensitive.

It is not entirely the soul, because it derives some of its nature from the spirit. A true heart draws near to God to love Him, with all the intellect feeling and will brought under the control of the spirit. A true heart (controlled by the spirit) is God-centred, receiving and holding fast His word.

The heart signifies the true inner self--the settled nature of the inner man which has been formed out of the intermingling influences of the soul and spirit as they react with one another. The heart is what the man is in truth--the genuine self apart from physical looks or superficial reactions.

Christ's spirit dwells within our spirits. However, when we say that Christ is abiding in our hearts, we mean that He is actively working at the coal face of the intermingled soul and spirit where our true self is being forged. When we invite the Lord into our hearts, we are giving Him leave to operate in the realms of our souls and spirits to create the inner man in the image of Himself. With our co-operation, by degrees the Lord establishes His kingdom in our hearts.

To change for the better, i.e. to become more Christ-like, the influence of the soul on man's heart must diminish, and be replaced by the higher influences of the spirit. The destructive nature of soulish desires and self-interest impede our progress in discovering the Lord as "the pearl of great price."

SOULISH DESIRES A BARRIER TO KNOWING THE LORD

Peter warned the young church of the destructive nature of fleshly lusts to the soul. **"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."** 1 Pet 2:11.

The apostle James issued a similar warning when he stated that the soul that sets its affections on the things of the world is at enmity with God. **"Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with (hostility towards) God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."** James 4:4.

John also warned the church, **"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."** I Jn 2:15-17.

Soulsh affection and attachment to the things of the world renders the soul like unto the world. A mind governed by desire becomes blind to the things of God and loses its capacity to be enlightened by the spiritual light of God. Jesus said, **"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."** Matt 6:24.

When the soul has a covetous attachment to things, the end is torment and bitterness. This is because the eye is never satisfied, and the heat of desire grows in the soul. The result is an insatiable craving for more and more things. Such people are ever demanding, restless and discontented. Even when attaining, they are never satisfied, and the soul becomes wearied, weakened, and defiled. There can be no relief until a person repents and casts off his affection for the world and turns to the Lord.

Even the best things of the world are a poor substitute for the things of God. For instance, the wisdom of the world is folly compared to the wisdom of God. Therefore to come into union with the wisdom of God, the soul has to go through the process of unknowing or discarding the wisdom of the world in order to experience the liberty of wisdom from God through the Spirit.

In Isaiah, God pleads with His people: **“Why do you spend money for what is not bread (the Lord--the bread of life), and your wages for what does not satisfy (the things of the world)? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance (of the goodness of the Lord).”** Isa 55:2-3.

OUR HEARTS ARE CORRUPT AND NEED CHANGING

The true nature of our hearts is only known by Christ and God. **“For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”** 1 Sam 16:7.

Jesus pointed out to the Pharisees that it is the state of our hearts that governs our behaviour. **“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”** Mark 7:21-23.

Some Christians may be surprised that the bible consistently condemns the corrupt state of man’s heart. For instance, Jeremiah wrote, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.”** Jer 17:9-10.

Jesus’ observation was not confined to the Pharisees. He said that it was **“out of the heart of men (mankind in general--not just non-Christians),”** that **“proceed evil thoughts, adulteries etc, etc.”** We would like to think that this condition changed when our spirits were regenerated, and that now we have pure and undefiled hearts.

In fact our hearts have changed in a general sense. Before regeneration we **“were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near (to God) by the blood of Christ.”** Eph 2:12-13. Now in general our hearts have been turned towards God, and towards good rather than evil.

However, the fact is that the heart of the regenerated person is still corrupt--still generating **“evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, (and) foolishness.”** The hidden motives of our hearts are often manipulative and self seeking, and at complete variance to the outward show of our behaviour. At best we can say that we have divided hearts, sometimes seeking to satisfy the demands of the flesh, and sometimes the will of the Lord.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN US

Despite our impurity, the Lord makes the surprise statement that the kingdom of God is within us. **“The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”** Lk 17:20-21. The place where Jesus has chosen to reign, or establish His kingdom is in our hearts. He is able to do this after He has done a refining work in us that enables Him to reign.

We see this in its right perspective when we relate it to the parable of the leaven. **“Another parable He spoke to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”** Matt 13:33.

His kingdom in our hearts begins like a small quantity of leaven, which grows until it fills or captivates our whole being. With our co-operation, the Lord undertakes the work of establishing

His kingdom in our hearts. This is a profound and extensive work that fills and extends beyond this lifetime.

It is important to understand that our hearts are a battleground, where Christ and Satan contest each other to gain control of every facet of our lives. The degree to which each one succeeds is determined by the degree to which our hearts are turned either to the Lord, or towards satisfying the demands of the flesh.

CHAPTER 3

THE PATH OF THE CROSS

WALKING IN THE VICTORY OF THE CROSS

Even though our hearts are to some degree divided, it is still possible, even for a young Christian, to experience Christ's victory over sin and the flesh. This is achieved by walking in the light of what Jesus acquired for us through His cross.

As well as procuring our salvation, the cross of Christ achieved all that is necessary to destroy the power of carnal flesh, and break Satan's power over us. This is made known to us through the Scriptures, which repeatedly point out that our 'old man' was incorporated in Christ's death on the cross.

WHAT CONSTITUTES THE 'OLD MAN'?

The "old man," is what we were before salvation and regeneration. Characteristics associated with the old man were:

(1) We had a spirit that was virtually dead to the spiritual things of God. Part of the salvation process is the regeneration of our spirits.

(2) We had a carnal nature with fleshly desires that enticed us to commit sins. In Colossians, Paul describes the old man plagued by this carnal nature in the terms of the "**body** (the whole person) **of** (under the sway of) **the sins of the flesh.**"

(3) Associated with the 'old man' was a power, or law of sin, which imposed further pressure on our carnal natures, compelling them to commit sins. In Romans, Paul describes the old man held captive by the power of sin in the terms of "**the body** (the whole person) **of** (held in the power of) **sin.**"

(4) The old man was held captive by the spirit of the world. It is through the operation of the power of sin over fallen mankind that Satan has become "**the ruler of this world.**"

(5) The 'old man' was under the curse of the broken law, the end result of which is condemnation and eternal damnation.

UNION WITH CHRIST IN HIS DEATH

God's solution to our 'old man,' held captive by the appetites of the flesh and the power of sin, was to incorporate it in Christ's death on the cross. Every characteristic of the old man was included in Christ's death on the cross

The Flesh We, including our carnal nature, were crucified with Christ. Paul writes, "**I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.**" (Gal 2:20 KJV).

The Power of Sin And Paul declares that we are dead to the power of sin. "**For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you**

also, reckon (as an accomplished fact) yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom 6:10-11.

Dead to the World We are crucified to the world “**But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**” (Gal 6:14).

Dead to the Law Paul points out that we, in Christ, died to the law, “**But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.**” (Rom 7:6).

In this study, in dealing with the death of our ‘old man,’ our primary emphasis will be on (1) the power or law of sin, and (2) the carnal nature of flesh.

However, before proceeding further, it is necessary to establish the difference between ‘sin,’ and ‘sins.’ In the context of this study SIN is the nature or character of sin. In general terms it is that which opposes God. It is out of the nature of sin that individual SINS are precipitated.

1. We Are Dead to the Power of Sin

In his letter to the Romans, Paul describes how the law of sin associated with fallen man frustrates our ability to walk on the pathway of obedience. He writes, “**I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it--I have the intention and urge to do what is right, but no power to carry that out; For I fail to practice the good deeds I desire to do, but the evil deeds that I do not desire to do are what I am [ever] doing.**” [Romans 7:15] (Amplified Bible).

Paul concludes, “**...with the mind (with my reasoning and determination) I myself (in my heart) serve (choose to honour) the (whole moral) law of God, but (the reality is) with the flesh (I honour) the law of sin.**” Rom 7:25.

Concerning this dilemma, Paul makes an unexpected statement. “**Now if I do what I will not to do, IT IS NO LONGER I WHO DO IT, BUT SIN THAT DWELLS IN ME.**” He explains further, “**I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.**” [Romans 7:19-23].

Paul attributes our constant failure to a power or law of sin which acts on our carnal natures, compelling us to commit sins. Because this power of sin operates against his self will and the desire of his heart or true self, Paul says “**it is no longer I who do it, BUT SIN THAT DWELLS IN ME.**” He was disclaiming it as being part of his own nature.

The Origin of the Law of Sin

This power or law of sin is an implantation of Satan imposed on man as a result of the Fall.

The prophet Jeremiah tells us that God “**search(es) the heart, (and) test(s) the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.**” Jer 17:10.

When tested in the Garden of Eden, man chose to obey Satan rather than God. Since sin is that which opposes God, and man chose sin rather than obedience, he received “**according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.**” Satan, the epitome of sin or opposition to God, was

granted the authority to implant a law of sin in fallen mankind. Although it was not part of the original creation, it is now an inherent part of the old man.

Satan's Claims Against Us Are Nailed to the Cross

Paul's commission to the Gentiles was **“to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power (Lit: authority) of Satan to God.”** Acts 26:18. He did this by teaching how Jesus removed Satan's authority over man through His cross, **“having wiped out the handwriting of requirements (as in a bill of debt) that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”** Col 2:14.

Even though Jesus has taken away Satan's legal authority to inflict us with a power of sin, he does not voluntarily remove it. What Paul expresses in Romans 7, is that the law of sin remains with us until it is refuted and rejected. Like every other benefit of the cross, we have to claim Christ's victory over sin by faith. To a Christian, this nature of sin from Satan is illegal, and must be rejected on the grounds of Christ's finished work on the cross.

Since we were not created to live a life of continual failures, God has ordained a method, or path, by which we may overcome our carnal natures, and the law of sin in our members, and thereby live a victorious life. This pathway, generally referred to as ‘the path of the cross,’ is outlined in the Sixth Chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans.

The first ten verses describe how we have been brought into a vital union with Jesus Christ and His experience on the cross. When Jesus submitted to the penalty of the cross, He was more than the representative of mankind. In God's eyes He was corporate man, incorporating within Himself and His experience, the whole of mankind. That is why Paul was able to say that in being baptised into Jesus Christ, we were made one with Him in His whole experience--His death, His burial, and His resurrection.

“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death.” Logically it follows that **“if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”** (Rom 6:3-5).

Paul says further, that in being united with Jesus in the likeness of His death, **“our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin (captivated by the power of sin) **might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin** (i.e. to that power of sin).”** Rom 6:5-6.

We Are to Reckon Ourselves Dead to Sin

Because of what Christ did to deal with sin, Paul says that we are to testify and walk in the light of the word. **“For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon (as an accomplished fact) yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** Rom 6:10-11. In the light of what the word says, we are to reckon ourselves now dead to sin and its power to compel us to commit sins. The Holy Spirit can then signify His agreement with our testimony by removing the power of sin in practice.

Jesus Was Made Sin

We receive additional light on Christ dealing with sin by studying a key verse in 2 Corinthians: **“He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”** [2 Cor 5:21 NAS]

This verse begins by emphasising Christ’s sinless nature. He **“who knew no sin.”** This is followed by the statement that God made Jesus **“to be sin.”** In *“Vincent’s Word Studies of the New Testament,”* the words *‘to be sin,’* are explained as, *‘not a sin offering, nor a sinner, but THE REPRESENTATIVE OF SIN.’*

The fact that Jesus **“became sin”** does not imply that His own nature undertook a dramatic reversal. Sin was laid on Him as a burden, but not incorporated into His sinless nature. Whilst He Himself remained perfectly sinless, as the representative of sin He bore the label and responsibility for the power of sin that was laid on fallen mankind. And having taken upon Himself the identification with sin, He was required to bear all of its evil consequences. This involved all the curses of the broken law--the sickness, pain, infirmity, poverty, rejection, separation from God, and finally death. And having borne God’s judgment and the penalty of sin on behalf of mankind, we are no longer required to bear it.

The Paradox of Our Death to Sin

In his letter to the Romans, Paul stated that **“our old man was crucified with (Christ).”** When He died, our **“old man,”** or **“body of sin,”** was taken to death in Him. But then later, Paul urged Christians to **“do not let sin reign in your mortal body.”** [Rom 6:12).

Here we have a paradox. Firstly we are told that God destroyed our body of sin by the power of the cross, but then we are commanded to not let it reign in us. This means that in effect, it is still in us. The fact is that both the law of sin from fallen man, and the nature of flesh, remain active in us until they are conquered by the application of the cross of Jesus.

Before our conversion, we were held captive by the power of sin. Acting on our carnal nature, it compelled us to sin. The law of sin in our members constrained us to sin over and over again, and we were powerless to overcome its insistent demands. But when Christ accepted upon Himself the full weight of God’s punishment for the sin of mankind, Satan’s legal right to imprison us under the power of sin was removed. It is now our responsibility to acquire the freedom from the power of sin that Christ procured for us through His cross.

2. Dead to the Power of Carnal Flesh

Since Jesus was the representative of all mankind on the cross, Paul testified to his (and therefore our) union with Jesus in His death. This union is so all embracing that it includes our carnal nature with all of its fleshly appetites. He writes, **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”** Gal 2:20 KJV.

The two statements that stand out are **“it is no longer I who live,”** and **“Christ lives in me.”**

To actively claim our crucifixion with Christ is to agree with what the word says; that we, including our carnal nature, were crucified with Christ. It is to walk in the light of the word, in reckoning the flesh crucified, and our self life replaced by the life of Christ.

Paul writes, “**In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ...**” Col 2:11. The “**body of the sins of the flesh**” is the body that is under the power of the demands of the flesh. To put off the body of the sins of the flesh is to declare the whole package, i.e. the whole person bound in fleshly demands, to be crucified with Christ.

When we testify (i.e. when we agree with the word and state it as applying to us personally) to the word of the cross, the Holy Spirit signifies His agreement by silencing the deeds or desires of the flesh. This is what Paul means when he says that “**...if you live according to the flesh you will die (spiritually); but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (experience the life of Jesus).**” Rom 8:13.

Walking According to the Flesh--Or the Spirit

Paul acknowledged the hopeless state of the old man when he says, “**O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?**” (Rom 7:24). But immediately this is followed by a triumphant cry, “**I thank God (my deliverance comes)—through Jesus Christ our Lord!**” (Rom 7:25). In the following verse (the first verse of Chapter 8), Paul explains the foundation for our victory. “**There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (who have received unto themselves the blessings of His cross), who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**” (Rom 8:1).

To walk according to the flesh is to endeavour to overcome the legacy of sin from fallen man by our own will power and effort; by trying to earn our salvation; by trying to tame our sin controlled fleshly natures, and so on. To walk according to the Spirit, is to receive and walk in the light of the victory of Christ’s cross.

Trying to overcome in the strength of the flesh ends in failure and spiritual death. To testify to what the word says, and walk in the light of the word is to gain victory over sin through the power of the Holy Spirit. “**For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**” Rom 8:13.

In summarising this section dealing with our deliverance from the “**body of the sins of the flesh,**” or whole being controlled by our fleshly nature, and the “**body of sin,**” or whole being under the power of sin, our victory lies in claiming the word is true and applies to us personally, and then walking in what the word says Jesus did for us in these areas.

(i) We, with our fleshly natures, were “**crucified with Christ.**” The result is **that we, having died to sins** (i.e. the power of the sins of our flesh), **might live for righteousness.**” 1 Pet 2:24. We may now walk in righteousness through the life of Jesus being manifested in us.

(ii) Jesus, who “**became sin for us,**” put Satan’s power of sin to death on the cross. The result is that we may “**reckon (ourselves) to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**” Rom 6:11. We are no longer subject to a power of sin in our members that compels us to commit sins.

A DEEPER WORK OF THE CROSS

The path of the cross we have described should be the normal walk of all Christians. However there is another dimension to the path of the cross which is more penetrating and profound. To put our carnal nature to death permanently requires a much deeper work by the Holy Spirit. This takes place on a pathway of suffering and refinement, and involves the Holy Spirit progressively purging out the old nature, and replacing it with the nature of Christ.

Suffering is the necessary catalyst required to break down the stronghold of flesh. The apostle Peter wrote, **“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God”**. [1 Peter 4:1-2].

Drinking Christ’s cup of suffering is not a popular teaching, and in fact few Christians embark on this deeper path of the cross by submitting themselves to the Spirit’s cleansing and purifying work. To do so means being prepared to have the old nature stripped away by the purging of suffering, so that it can be replaced by the nature of Christ.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul described his own willingness to suffer the death of his own sinful nature, in order to receive in its place the divine nature of Christ. He began by discounting the reliability of his own nature. **“For we are the [true spiritual] circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”** [Phil 3:3]. He then listed his natural attributes, **“circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”** [Phil 3:5-6].

Even though these attributes were to be admired by a traditional Jew, Paul willingly laid them aside. He had come to a settled conviction that anything that stood in the way of him being one with the Lord was to be counted as a loss, or as rubbish to be discarded. **“I also count all things loss for the excellence of the [intimate] knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him.”** [Phil 3:8].

Paul then declared his willingness to identify with Christ’s sufferings, so that he might attain a new nature, resurrected out of the death of his ‘old man.’ **“...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”** [Phil 3:10-11]. When Paul said that he wanted to know **“the power of His resurrection,”** he meant that he wanted to experience the same power that raised Jesus from the dead filling his whole being, overcoming his sin nature, and producing in its stead the divine nature of the Lord.

In declaring that he wished to be **“conformed to (Christ’s) death,”** Paul made it clear that he was not talking about his physical death, but rather the death of his old nature. This is made clear in his next statement: **“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”** [Phil 3:12-14].

Who shall tread on this deeper path of the cross? Paul says that only the spiritually mature have the state of mind and heart to submit to this deeper work by the Holy Spirit. **“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.”** [Phil 3:15].

THE PURPOSE OF THE DEEPER PATH OF THE CROSS

The basis of all fruitfulness in ministry is resurrection life. This resurrection life must by definition be preceded by death. Jesus said, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless an ear of wheat**

falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.” [John 12:24]. The old nature is destroyed through suffering, so that it can be replaced by the life of Jesus. The deeper work of the cross releases the new nature of Christ, which then ministers spiritual life to the rest of the church.

When the “old man” has been dealt with to such a degree that it has lost its power and ‘dies’, the life of Jesus may flow freely in ministry without the interference of fleshly intrusion. The Lord is able to use such a person to minister His life to the church, producing “much fruit.” Paul relates this process to the Corinthians.

“We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12).

Vessels of Honour

Paul uses the analogy of vessels in a great house to describe the usefulness to Christ of the ministries of members of the body of Christ. **“But in a great house (as in the body of Christ) there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour. Therefore if anyone cleanses (KJV-to purge) himself from the latter (the corruption of fleshly works), he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”** 2 Tim 2:20-21.

To those who would be a vessel of honour, the challenge of the deeper work of the cross in purging out the flesh is inescapable. It was to this end that Paul advised Timothy: **“This is a faithful saying: for if we (the carnal self) died with Him, we shall also live (in union) with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign (as vessels of honour) with Him.”** 2 Tim 2:11-12.

CHAPTER 4

ABIDING IN JESUS CHRIST IN GOD

WHO WE ARE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

To experience the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ it is first necessary for our hearts to be set in a state of detachment to the desires of the flesh and the world. But first it is helpful for us to understand how we are related to the Lord.

In describing our relationship to the Lord, the bible uses terms such as temples, earthen vessels, and branches. None of these types has the capacity to perform or bear fruit of itself. They are containers for the life of Jesus Christ, who dwells in us, and bears fruit through us.

Unfortunately much of our Christian lives have been spent on futile efforts to improve ourselves in order to be more like the Lord, so that we can do His work and bear fruit for Him. And this restless soulish activity will continue until we finally understand who we are in Him, and He is in us.

Jesus is Our All in All

Paul says that we are “**earthen vessels**” which contains the treasure of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 4:7). Before we can experience Jesus as the “**pearl of great price,**” we must discover our own deficiency, and the glorious adequacy of His life in us.

For instance, we discover our total inadequacy in love. Our natural response is to pray that God will give us more love. But the bible says that “**He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.**” I Jn 4:8. It says that if we have not love, we do not personally know the presence of God dwelling in us. The reality is that we, as earthenware vessels, were not made to contain the divine attributes of the Lord as a personal possession. We were made to contain the presence of the Lord who manifests His love through us.

We pray for more power to do the Lord’s work. But the bible says, “**Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**” 1 Cor 1:24. Again, our need is not an influx of power, or wisdom. We are earthenware vessels created to contain the presence of Christ. Our need is to allow Jesus Christ to manifest His power and wisdom in us and through us.

Similarly, we see our need to have life and strength above our normal capacity. Jesus said, “**I am the way, the truth, and the life,**” (Jn 14:6), “**I am the resurrection and the life,**” (Jn 11:25), and, “**My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.**” 2 Cor 12:9.

We need faith--the bible says, “**...the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.**” Gal 2:20. KJV.

In a world of stress and pressure, we long for peace in our hearts. The apostle Paul wrote, “**Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**” Phil 4:6-7. “**For He (Jesus) Himself is our peace.**” Eph 2:14.

Furthermore, we read in Corinthians, “**But of Him (God) you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption--that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.’” 1 Cor 30-31.**

Paul outlines his own experience in knowing the power of Christ’s indwelling life. “**I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Phil 4:11-13.**

The end of the matter is this. “**Christ is (our) all and in all**” (Col 3:11), “**And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace (or grace heaped upon grace).**” (John 1:16).

Where does that leave us? We in ourselves will never attain the attributes of Jesus Christ or BE the life. We will never be gods, for God has said, “**I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another.**” Isa 42:8. We will never be more than earthen vessels containing the life and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Vine and the Branches

Despite being containers, Christ’s illustration of the vine and the branches opens the door to our participation in fruit bearing by our union with the life of Jesus. “**I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides (settles and remains) in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” “**Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.**” John 15:5&4.**

We were not only created to receive the life, but be channels for the life to flow out to others. But we must understand that it is the life from the vine flowing through the branches that produces fruit. Without that life the branch withers and dies. Nevertheless it is through the branch that the vine produces fruit. Without the vine there is no life, without the branches there is no fruit.

Almighty God has chosen to manifest His eternal power through human vessels. But where does that leave our humanity? God does not violate our personalities, and consequently His work through us has the imprint of our uniqueness. We are involved in the fruit bearing. Even our natural abilities may be used by the Lord once they have been placed on the cross and brought under Christ’s control. On the other hand, the self-centred soulish power of our humanity is a hindrance. That is why Jesus said, “**without Me you can do nothing.**” John 15:5. It is only as we become detached from our self-will and the desires of the flesh, and abandoned to the Lord, that He is able to manifest the purity of His life in us to bear lasting fruit.

THE POSITIVE SIDE OF THE CROSS

Clothing Ourselves With the Presence of the Lord

Paul adds more light on our walk on the path of the cross by using the illustration of putting on and taking off clothing. Reckoning ourselves dead to sin requires us to “**put off the old man with his deeds.**” (Col 3:9) This means that we are to make a conscious decision to reject the demands of sinful flesh, and testify and walk in the light of our ‘old man’ being crucified in Christ Jesus.

The positive side of the path of the cross is that we are to “**...put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts.**” Rom 13:14.

The Greek word 'enduo' which is translated "**put on**," has the extended meaning, 'to clothe - in the sense of sinking into a garment.' We are put off all attachments to the flesh and the world, and to sink down or submerge ourselves into the presence of the Lord and feed on Him. To 'sink down into,' is to surrender the reins of our lives to the Lord, and to release every burden of our lives, including our carnal natures, into His hands. Particularly when we are faced with temptations of the flesh or the world, or the stresses of spiritual warfare, it is important that we retreat into the presence of Christ. We are to let go of all burdens, and be submerged and hidden in Him--in His peace and rest.

Our voluntarily emptying ourselves of all self-interest and soulish desires is a key factor in overcoming Satan. "**And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their (self) lives to the death.**" Rev 12:11. Satan is overcome because he has only got power over the soul when it has a covetous attachment to things, or entertains the desires of the flesh.

The Hidden State of the Lord

The question is asked, 'Since He whom I love dwells in my heart, why don't I find Him or experience Him'? The reason is that He remains hidden away as the treasure in the field or the pearl of great price, and we too must enter into a state of being hidden in order to encounter and experience Him.

The presence of the Lord in our hearts is not obtrusive, nor does it gatecrash our senses.

"**He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.**" Isa 42:2.

"**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** (as we are released from all self-striving)." Matt 11:29.

He continually seeks to enter our hearts and live in union with us, but the initiative must be ours. "**Behold, I stand at the door (of our hearts) and knock (seeking entry). If anyone hears My voice and opens the door (of our wills), I will come in to him and dine (fellowship) with him, and he with Me.**" Rev 3:20. In keeping with His lowly and gentle nature, He is waiting to be desired and sought after, and acknowledged as being the Lord of our lives.

Hidden with Christ in God

Paul added a further aspect to our death in Christ when he told the Colossians, "**For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.**" Col 3:2-3. But what does this mean in practice? He starts by saying, "**For you died.**" This is a spiritual reality. Grammatically it speaks of an event that has already taken place. We were united with Jesus in His death. Our carnal self with its body of the sins of the flesh, can be reckoned as having been crucified with Christ. However, to be really hidden away in Christ, our self-life must have been put to death by the Spirit. Otherwise it will continually manifest itself and prevent Christ from manifesting Himself in us, because He will never violate our free will. By the working of Christ's death in us, our new life in union with Christ is now hidden away or submerged in His life.

Christ was uncompromising in His command to us to completely surrender our lives into His hands. "**For whoever desires to save (protect or preserve) his (self) life will lose it (render it useless), but whoever loses (to put out of the way entirely) his life for My sake will find it (discover and experience his true life in Christ).**" Matt 16:25.

This state of being hidden away and replaced by Christ is highlighted again in Verse 4. **“When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”** Col 3:4. In this mature state, our own self-lives are so hidden and unobtrusive, that Paul declares that to all intents and purposes, Christ has become our life. It is in this hidden away state that we find and experience Jesus Christ, the pearl of great price. **“...the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had (his self-life) and bought it,”**

ABIDING IN GOD THROUGH CHRIST’S SACRIFICED FLESH AND SHED BLOOD

Abiding in Christ

To walk on the path of the cross is to receive and walk in the blessings the cross has procured for us. Another aspect of these blessings is contained in Christ’s statement, ***“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in [union with] Me, and I in him.”*** [John 6:56]. In this context, ‘eating’ and ‘drinking’ describe the fullest appropriation of the benefits of the sacrificed flesh and the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Drinking Christ’s Blood

We read that Jesus Christ **“through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God,”** and that **“with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”** [Heb 9:12].

The blood of Jesus was not deposited on the heavenly altar as a dead decaying thing. The writer of Hebrews declares, **“...the blood of sprinkling...speaks better things than that of Abel.”** Heb 12:24. How does the blood of Jesus on the heavenly altar speak? It was by the **“eternal Spirit”** that the blood of Jesus was raised in living active power to the temple in heaven. It is by the witness of the Holy Spirit that it is now able to ‘speak.’ The apostle John wrote, **“...there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.”** I Jn 5:8. The Holy Spirit will always witness in power to our testimony to the blood of the cross. It is now on the altar in heaven, **“having obtained eternal redemption.”** Heb 9:12. Now, through the power of the Holy Spirit, it is actively waging eternal warfare against the sin in our natures.

We tend to limit the meaning of the word ‘eternal’ to a measureless distance into the future. But eternal means ever the same, never increasing, and never decreasing. In this case the blood of Jesus, through the Spirit, is an ever-active power in us, warring against sin through its eternal redemptive power to sanctify every part of our being to the Lord. With our understanding and co-operation, it is continually opposing every stronghold of sin, purging, cleansing, purifying, covering and protecting, and bringing us into union with God our Father through righteousness.

The Spirit and the blood are working to the end of establishing us in a vital union with Jesus Christ. **“He who...drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.”** In ‘drinking’ Christ’s blood, we are receiving by faith its spiritual power flooding through every part of body soul and spirit, cleansing away the defilement of sin, and sanctifying every part of our Again, our testimonies to the blood are a vital part of activating the responsive power of the Holy Spirit. [Rev 12:11]. A sample testimony may be: “I declare my spiritual pride is of the old man, crucified in Christ and buried in the waters of baptism. I reject it, laying it on the altar of the cross, and receive the redemptive power of the blood of Jesus purging it out of my nature by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”

Eating Christ's Flesh

Jesus was “**the spotless Lamb of God.**” His flesh was pure and undefiled, without the “**law of sin**” which is associated with our fallen natures. In the divine exchange that took place on the cross, the corruption of sin that made our bodies, bodies of death, was laid upon Him, so that we might have undefiled bodies of life. Our bodies are now “**a temple of the Holy Spirit,**” freed from the curse of the law of sin and death and any legal claim Satan had to lay sickness on them. They are now united to Jesus in life. In this respect they are healed by the stripes of Jesus. To eat the Lord’s flesh is to appropriate the blessings of a body freed from the curse of sin, and united with “**the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.**”

Feeding On the Lord Jesus Christ

Jesus says that we may ‘feed’ on Him. “**He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As (in the same manner) the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so (similarly) he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.**” John 6:56-57.

How do we feed on the Lord? Feeding describes a continual drawing sustenance from the life of Jesus to meet each need. It was with this in mind that Paul advises us to “**pray without ceasing...**” 1Thes 5:16-17.

Paul is not suggesting that we spend our whole time directing formal prayers to God. To feed upon the Lord is to spontaneously, moment by moment, turn inwardly, drawing upon His total adequacy to meet every need.

Hidden in God

The last aspect of fully appropriating the benefits of the cross, is that we may enter through the veil of flesh that separates us from God. “**Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh...**” Heb 10:19-20.

In this picture, the veil before the Holy of Holies that separates man from the presence of God, is likened to Christ’s flesh. When Christ’s flesh was rent, the veil in the temple was rent, and the way was opened for man to enter into, and abide in God’s presence. Jesus was our forerunner, and He showed us that the way to enter the Holy of Holies is through the rent flesh. But this is not speaking about physical rending. Christ’s physical rent flesh is but a symbol of His total self sacrifice--of giving up His self-life, even to death.

Christ is our example. If we wish to ‘enter the Holy of Holies’ and abide in God’s presence, we must of our own will declare our flesh (carnal self and fleshly desire) put on the cross. We must submit to the work of the Holy Spirit in putting to death our fleshly natures, and forming Christ in us. Our flesh cannot abide in the presence of God.

Life Within the Veil

Life within the veil is one of relinquishment and rest. On the one hand we have received Jesus Christ as our life, and we now do all things in Him and through Him.

On the other hand, we begin to know ourselves and all of our circumstances enveloped in God’s abiding presence. Due to Christ’s life and faith in us, we are “**persuaded that neither death**

nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom 8:38-39.

We also begin to know the rest of faith as we believe in our hearts, “**that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**” Rom 8:28. Because we know that He is working in every circumstance for our good, we are able to relinquish all things--our spiritual path, our provision, our protection, our health, into His hands, and trust in His faithfulness. In Him our soul finds rest.

Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation.

He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.” Ps 62:1-2.