

The Character of God In You

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

The Gospel of the Kingdom

The message of the gospel of the Kingdom of God has been veiled to most of creation for over two thousand years. These are the days when God is taking the cover off, and the light of the revelation of the Kingdom of God is being revealed in its completeness. The scripture is being fulfilled, "Arise and shine, for your light is come" (Is. 60:1) and the glory of the Lord is being revealed as never before, upon and from within His people.

The gospel of the Kingdom of God is so much more than we learned in traditional Christianity. It is not a gospel of being saved from hell to go to heaven. The gospel of the Kingdom is not for after you die, but **"the Kingdom of Heaven is within you now."** Most Christians do not realize what they inherit when they call on the name of Jesus and become born of the Spirit. Multitudes of people sit with the seed of God on the inside of them, yet they haven't found the way to enter into the presence and spirit of God within them. They do not know how to escape the corruption that is in the world; they cannot get free from the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life. The gospel of the Kingdom will set you free and enable you to live godly in this present evil age.

Nations will come to the brightness of the rising of the people of God in these days. The Kingdom of God will not just fall out of the sky. Jesus will not just suddenly come down and set up His Kingdom. Christ is coming, but His coming is not just an **event** that will happen outside of us, He will also appear **in** us.

"He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. 1:10).

"When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory" (Psalm 102:16).

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

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

"And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" (Zech. 14:5).

"To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" (1 Thess. 3:13).

God's People Are Coming Together

There are three ways for us to go in these days. We can go the way of the world, the way of religious practices, or we can arise with the glorious Church of God that is coming forth clothed in majesty and honor. There is a people who have given themselves totally to be possessed by God—a people who have renounced self because of getting a glimpse of the true nature of God that abides within them.

These are the days when the people of God are coming together, coming out from all those places where they have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day, during the falling away and the apostasy. God's people are coming out from the tombs in which they have been imprisoned—all the old dead theological teachings and dead denominational movements. They are coming together as the people of God, a glorious Church who is laying down everything of the old self, everything of the flesh, and is beginning to walk in the reality of the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

The people of God who are experiencing the Kingdom of God are the most persecuted church on the earth, because we are not talking about being like God someday after we die. We are not talking about a theory, but we are beginning to experience and walk in the reality of the Kingdom of God being manifested within us today.

The gospel of the Kingdom and the living and abiding Word of God will divide you, and separate you, and purify you, and give you a clear and proper understanding of the Kingdom of God in you, **not someday, but today.**

The teaching commonly called The Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5, 6, & 7, reveals to us the nature of the people of God who have discovered the reality of the indwelling Spirit of God within them. I do not for a moment believe that a person is saved today and **instantly** changed into the full nature and character of God. I also do not believe we should be saved for any length of time and not experience *in some measure* being transformed into His likeness and image. We should not believe **the lie** that we must wait until we die to be like Him. If you would die today, you would be no more like Him than you are now. Death has no power to change

you into His likeness; in fact, the Word teaches that death is an enemy. Death is not your friend. Most of God's people have their hope in the wrong things. Their hope is to die and go to heaven or to be raptured, and these are both false hopes. Our hope is clearly defined by the Apostle Paul in Colossians 1:27, "*Christ in you is the hope of Glory.*" Paul also said in Philippians 1:20,21, "*According to my earnest expectations and my hope, that in nothing shall I be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body . . . For to me to live is Christ.*" Our hope is to see the fullness of God arise in us so that we become a habitation of God in, by, and through the Spirit.

Everything that we read in the Bible is significant. Everything that is written has meaning for us. Jesus was about to begin, here in Matthew 5, to reveal the life and character of a person who lives in the Kingdom of God. He began to teach, "If you want to be in My Kingdom, if you want to rule and reign with Me, this is a picture of your life and nature. If you want to enter the realities of the Kingdom, this is what you will seek: a character that reproduces the 'Sermon on the Mount'."

If you want to be in the Kingdom, you don't have any choice but to accept this kind of life. Now this word is not for any condemnation. There is no way the natural human life can live this way; this is the life of God that is in every believer that will come forth and totally possess you. The issue is, do you just want a "ticket to heaven" or do you want to be transformed into His image? Do you want Him to take your life and replace it with His?

The Word teaches us that we are joint heirs with Him. That means that everything He has belongs to you. We give Him everything that we are and then He gives us everything He is.

An Elevated Consciousness

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him" (Matt. 5:1).

To be able to see and understand the things of God, you have to come up and away from the things of the world. Your consciousness must be elevated above natural thinking and understanding. *"The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Cor. 2:14). The natural mind would never accept the fact that we can live as Jesus taught in Matthew 5!

John said in The Revelation 21:10 that *"He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me that great city, the Holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God."* To see a heavenly vision, you will notice that the prophets were *lifted up*. Isaiah said in Isaiah 6:1, *"I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple."*

We all know that our position in Christ is that we are seated with him in heavenly places, but our consciousness must be lifted up to the place where we walk in the experience of that reality or it does us no good. Our consciousness must be lifted up above the natural realm, lifted above the things of the earth, and the things that are coming on the earth, to be able to see the spiritual things that are now being revealed to his people.

True Deliverance

What Jesus reveals here in Matthew 5-7 is the nature and the character of the Christian. There is a deliverance ministry today such as has never been seen before, and it's called receiving the Word of God. If you are in a

dark room you don't bind the darkness, you just turn on the light. For years, God's people have been taught to bind the devil and fight him when all they needed to do was to receive and walk in the light of the Word. *"God is light and in him is no darkness at all"* (1 John 1:5). If you will seek God for a revelation of His Spirit within you and you get a taste of that, you will no longer need to bind the devil. Darkness cannot stand the light, and if you will fill your consciousness with the Word of God, your whole body will be filled with light. Deliverance today is not a **man** who has a great deliverance ministry, but deliverance is in the light of the Word of God. *"The entrance of thy Word brings Light"* (Ps. 119:130). It was said of Jesus, *"He cast out the spirits with his word."*

The biggest lie of the carnal mind is that you cannot live godly. You know by experience that it is impossible, because you have tried it and failed. We must realize that our experience does not nullify the Word of God. If you will seek for God, you will find him within yourself. Then you will know the reality of living a godly life and you will watch yourself being transformed into His image.

Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 5:3).

Some interpret the above verse this way, "Blessed in spirit are the poor." They teach that poverty causes you to be blessed. This is why the Roman Church has a poverty vow for their priests. Some believe that if you want to be happy and blessed you must be poor.

On the other hand, some teach that if you walk in the reality of the Kingdom, you will always be prosperous, thinking that great gain is a sign of godliness. A poor Christian can be

full of the riches of Christ and a rich Christian can be bankrupt of the riches of Christ. The things of the Spirit are always a matter of the heart.

To Be Poor in Spirit Is To Be Empty

To be poor in Spirit is speaking of our human spirit. What does it mean to be poor in our spirit? If you are poor you are empty. Before you can be filled in your spirit with God, you must be emptied of everything else. If you want to fill something, you can't fill it if it's full; it must be emptied first. We must be emptied in our spirit. Every day when we come to God, we must get fresh manna. We must empty ourselves and not hold on to yesterday's manna and be satisfied with our past experiences. I may have enjoyed the Lord so much yesterday, but I can't live on yesterday's experience. I must empty myself and be filled with God every day. I may have experienced the heights of God yesterday, but that is not good enough for today. The Kingdom of God is in the ever present **now**. You cannot live in the experiences of the past; you must live in God now. "*Behold, now is the day of salvation*" (2 Cor. 6:2). If people could learn to live in the ever present now they would begin to find it very easy to walk in the spirit. What keeps you from living and walking in the spirit now is that you look back at your failures of the **past** or you look to the **future**, thinking that some day you are going to be better, and you miss the Kingdom of God, which is **NOW!!**

Today, this very moment, is salvation available to us. If we sinned last week or the moment before, we can experience forgiveness now. If we were on the mountaintop yesterday, we can still experience fellowship with God now. We may not always be on the mountaintop, but we can always experience the flowing of the Spirit of God within.

Do Not Hold On to the Old Ways

To be poor in spirit also means not to hold on to the old things. God is always on the move, constantly bringing you into greater understanding of His Word. You find many people today who are proud of still being in a past move of God, still holding on to the old way and the old things. To be poor in spirit, you must empty yourself of the old things, and give up the old way. You must always take the new way and the new move of the Spirit. You can read in church history how God has used various men and women and moves of His Spirit to recover His people back to His original intention of building a tabernacle for His Spirit to dwell in. God wants to live, move, and have His being fully manifested in and through humanity. We must glean from all the past moves of God and then let Him take us on into perfection. Many of God's people are satisfied with what they have of the past. They are full, and think the revelations they have had in the past are enough. "I am full now, God. I am satisfied being in an old move. I don't want to change. I am happy here; I am already full."

To be poor in spirit is also to have a proper attitude toward yourself. One who is poor in spirit realizes his need for more of God in his life and is not afraid to confess it. You may be into positive confession and say, "I have all things and have need of nothing," but I have to say I need more of the reality of God in my life every day. We can give a lot of lip service to God, but if we don't realize our need, and our shortcomings, and are not seeking to become like Him in every way, we will never know the reality of His life rising within us to scatter all our enemies.

If we are truly poor in spirit, we will realize our helplessness and our hopelessness as far as being able to live the kind of life that Jesus teaches us to live in Matthew 5-7. How can

we, as mere carnal men, ever live the God-kind of life? We realize we cannot do it with our carnal nature. *It is hopeless!* This realization makes us feel empty and poor in spirit and causes us to cry out to God for the reality of His indwelling Spirit to stand up within us and bring deliverance from our carnal nature. As we begin to seek God, a transformation starts to take place within us and we find that effortlessly, the life of God grows within us. In a small way at first, in different areas of our life, we begin to manifest the life of God. The river of life will begin to flow in us. Let us be like Abraham, who learned to trust in God, Who gives life to the dead, and calls those things that are not as though they were. You might be dead to the kind of life that Jesus talks about here. You may not be able to walk in the abundant life that Jesus offers, but God gives hope to the dead, and He will cause His life to come alive within you.

A Prideful Attitude

"Two men went up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee prayed, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week and give tithes of all that I possess'" (Luke 18:10-12).

We must not allow that kind of attitude to develop. We can look at others and be just like this Pharisee and thank God that we are better than they. That is a critical religious spirit, and it is one of the most damaging spirits in the Church today. This comparing ourselves with others' weaknesses can give us a false sense of worth. Whenever you criticize or judge another person, the only thing you are saying is that you are better than that person. One who has been exposed to the light of God, and who realizes his need, could never judge or criticize another.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." This is not some place you go when you die or something you get after you die, for **the Kingdom of Heaven is within you**. Living in the Kingdom is something to be experienced **now**. We do not experience this by natural means, ways or methods, but the Spirit of God in us will bring us into this reality. Don't worry so much about being good, or failing; just seek fellowship with God, and day-by-day you will find yourself becoming more like Him.

The Realization of the Kingdom

The realization of the Kingdom comes when you begin to *experience* the Kingdom. The reality of the Kingdom is to just know that it is real. Many today know the Kingdom of God is real, but they have no experience. They may even be able to teach about it, but have little or no experience of it.

You can know the reality of good food by reading a cookbook. You can even study it, and learn all the recipes, and then teach others all about it, without any experience of the actual mixing of the ingredients and the eating of it. Most of Christianity today is like this. We know all the doctrines; we know Jesus lives in us; we know so much, yet so many are not filled with Jesus, but with resentment, bitterness, backbiting, hurts, and anger, and they do not know how to live the Christian life. Our Christian bookstores are filled with self-help books and psychology on how to be a Christian and how to live the Christian life. We even have books on how to love our wife and children! There is nothing wrong with these books or the reading of them, but I must ask this question: "If Jesus truly lives in us, why do we need them?" We can learn to be a better person, but **what we need is Jesus living in us!** If Jesus lives his life in us, we won't need all the "how to" books. Please don't be offended with these words, but

examine your own life and see if Jesus is realized in you or whether you are manifesting **self**. The Word says, *"They will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears . . . always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (2 Tim. 4:3, 3:7).

To have the realization of the Kingdom, you must begin to experience the life of God coming alive in you, filling your consciousness with the awareness of the ability of God to live His life within you. As Jesus said, **"You must be born again."** Everyone who is born by the Spirit of God has the realization of the Kingdom of God. To be born again means just what it says—you must have another life (the life of God himself) born into you. You cannot be born again without something happening to you on the inside. There are thousands of Christians, especially in America, who have an **intellectual** gospel, and have never experienced the touch of the Spirit of God on their lives. Oh, they know and believe that Jesus is their Savior, but, they have no experience. To be persuaded that Jesus died for you and to accept him as your Savior without an experience is not enough. **YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN!** There must be an inner experience that takes place in your life. We must receive life from above. To enter into the realization of the Kingdom is to have the King himself born within your heart. The life of the King, the *zoe* life of God, the nature and character of God, must come alive within your consciousness.

The Manifestation of the Kingdom

Not many of God's people manifest and reveal to the world the reality of God being lived in their lives. That's what the Kingdom of God is all about—having the character and nature of God revealed in humanity.

The principles that Jesus laid down in Matthew 5-7 are not a new set of rules and regulations. Jesus did not say "To be a Christian you must try to live this way." He did not say, "You must do this and not do that." What He is saying in the Sermon on the Mount is, "If you are a Christian, truly born of my Spirit, something happens on the inside of you and you will begin to live this kind of life. This is a growing and a transforming process, not a natural learning process. My life will begin to operate and manifest within you as you put to death the old man (for this corruptible must put on incorruption). As you do this, the New Man will come forth."

We Begin With Baptism

We begin the Kingdom life with baptism. *"Teach and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of (not the names of) the Father, Son and Holy Spirit"* (Matt 28:19).

Until you are willing to be baptized, until you're willing to go down into the death waters of self-life, you will never be a disciple, or be able to manifest the Kingdom life. You may know all about it, and even experience it to a degree, but you will never manifest it until you're willing to die out to self. If you are not willing, just seek God and He will make you willing. Baptism and discipleship always go together. Paul said, in Romans 6:3, *"So many of us as have been baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death."* If you think that going down into the water changes you, without an **inward** reality, you are sadly mistaken. To baptize someone is not to just simply put them into the water. As you baptize, you must believe that as you are baptizing them in water, you are literally placing them into God. They must be willing, and clearly understand, that as they go down into the death waters they are placing themselves into God and they are not to come

up the same. They are leaving in the death waters that old man, the old self-life.

In Whose Name Are We To Be Baptized?

Paul said, *"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"* (Gal. 3:27). There are so many different doctrines about baptism, but not much **teaching** on the experience of it. Some teach that you must be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Others teach that you are not baptized unless you are baptized in the name of Jesus. To be baptized into the name of Jesus is to be baptized into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Word says that Jesus was the embodiment, the fullness of the Godhead. The Father dwelt within him in this fullness; the Spirit was given to Him without measure. So if you want to be baptized in the name of Jesus, that's wonderful, because the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is complete in the name of Jesus who is the fullness of that name. If you want to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, that's wonderful too, but if you start to fight over which way to baptize according to your concepts and opinions, you might go down into the water and not even experience baptism. You may argue over which way to baptize, by pouring water over the head or going under the water. You would be much better off to understand and experience the spiritual aspect of baptism. When you are willing to fall into the ground and die, when you are willing to put yourself aside, you go down into the water and leave the old life buried, and come up with the resurrected, transcendent life of God Himself. This happens simply by believing what the Word says. By faith we are resurrected to a new life, even the uncreated, indestructible life of God Himself. As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. If you have not put on Christ, you have not been baptized, no matter how many times you go

down into the water. To be baptized is to be immersed into the Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The water is an outward sign of an inward reality. There is a change of heart that must take place. This is the miracle of baptism, a work of grace, done by God simply through believing.

Baptism is really termination, and germination. It terminates everything of the old creation and it germinates everything of the new creation. If you have not yet given the Holy Spirit permission to terminate you, you have not yet entered experientially into the Kingdom. You must be terminated before you enter the Kingdom of God. The Church today is not a shining burning testimony to the Kingdom of God, because of the mixture, the impurity that is allowed to remain.

Is It Possible To Live God's Life?

Early in my Christian life, I was hungry to be like Jesus, and I asked the question many times: "Is it possible to live the sermon on the Mount?" I never found one person tell me it was possible. They told me it was a goal to reach for, but it wasn't possible until you die! Jesus never said, "Try hard, do the best you can, and after you die you will be like Me," yet this is what most people believe. What He did say was, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like this . . ." If you **truly** experience the Kingdom life, then Matthew 5-7 will be your experience. Jesus said, "Blessed and happy are you if you're like this—poor in spirit, mournful, meek, merciful, pure in heart, a peacemaker and persecuted." This is the character of God being reproduced within humanity. Again I must stress, this is not the natural human life. You could never be this way through natural ways or methods. This is the life of God that you have inherited through the new birth.

Blessed Are They That Mourn

Jesus said, "*Blessed are they that mourn.*" Sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? The lack of mourning among God's people shows the true spiritual condition of the Church. If we are filled with the Spirit and reality of God, and are manifesting the love of Jesus, how can we not be mournful over the condition of God's people? The whole **system** of Christianity is sick from the head to the feet, and most don't even know it.

The Church is so full of hype, so full of the prosperity and health gospel, that the saints of God have no time to develop intimate relations with Him. God does not just want to give you health and wealth. God wants to totally possess you. He wants all of you, not just your time in church. If God fills you with His life until you are utterly transformed into, and conformed to His Son, you will have all things. If you seek after anything else, even something from Him, you may get it and still not be a spiritual person. **Some of the most gifted men in the Church today are not spiritual men.**

If there is not a sense of mourning in us at all, then our spiritual life is not in a proper condition. Why do Christians not mourn over their present condition? How can we look at our life that is so short of the love life of God and not mourn? We do not need to feel condemnation, but we should have a burning desire to be conformed into His image. When we see ourselves in the light of God, we will fall at His feet and cry out to Him.

If there is no mourning in your life, it is usually due to the lack of true repentance. It is not popular these days to preach against sin. Now I know there was a time in the Church when all you heard was preaching on sin and repentance, and it did give people a sin consciousness, but now we have gone over to the other side where we don't mourn over our shortcomings anymore. We think we always

must have a happy face and think only of our righteousness before God. We must be happy and bubbly and never downcast. There is a realm in God where you can experience that, but I dare say very few live there. If you are in mourning, people will come to you and say, "What's wrong with you? Why don't you have the joy of the Lord?" They are not used to seeing God's people mourn.

When some people sin today, instead of repenting, they start making a positive confession, "Well, bless God, I am the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus." God tries to deal with you and you say, "Devil, I do not receive that condemnation! That was my *old man* and I'm not under the law anymore, but under the grace. Take that, Mr. Devil." That may be the truth, but are you using positive confession to cover up the fact that you are missing God in your daily life?

Righteous Disposition

Righteousness means right standing with God. If all you have is a positional righteousness, you're in a heap of trouble. Your righteousness before God in your position must become your **disposition**. God's righteousness must be worked into you until you are experientially walking in it. All of God's characteristics must be wrought into your being, not just your mentality. You can speak positively and quote the Word all day long, but if your heart is not right, if you are in rebellion, it will do you no good. We should be positive and speak positively, but not in order to cover up our carnal nature.

Isaiah 61:1 says, "*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the opening of prison to them that are bound, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and*

the day of vengeance of our God, and to comfort all that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion [Zion is the city of God. Today the Church is the city, the dwelling place, the habitation of God.], to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." This is why Jesus said, *"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."*

I say again that there is no mourning because there is no real repentance in most of our lives. It is a very good practice at the end of the day to open yourself to the Lord, and ask Him by His Spirit to reveal to you and bring to your remembrance all the areas in which you missed Him. Most of us know that to sin simply means to "miss the mark", and we miss the mark many times in a day and sometimes don't even realize it. Pray for the light of God! These things must be by the Spirit of God; no man can do these things in himself. God must open our eyes. If you seek Him, and ask Him, he will enlighten you and rise up within you and give to you a true spirit of repentance. Many times during the day we miss the mark. We get angry and shout at our husband or wife, we argue with one another, we allow anger to be expressed in us. If you are beginning to walk in the reality of the Kingdom, these things will make you fall and mourn. Jesus said, *"Blessed and happy are those who mourn,"* because mourning will bring healing, cleansing and restoration to you, and the return of the peace of God.

What Is Our Hope?

Many people today are waiting for a rapture, but I can assure you that if you are waiting for a rapture, you are waiting for the wrong thing. I have written before about how Jesus can not come back until all His enemies are made His

footstool. *"The last enemy to be destroyed,"* according to 1 Corinthians 15:26, *"is death."* This means that before Jesus can come back, there must first be a people on the earth who have overcome death. *"Behold, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump . . . for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality . . . Then shall be brought to pass the saying, Death is swallowed up in victory"* (1 Cor. 15:51-54). If you will meditate on these verses and open yourself to the possibility of overcoming death, the Spirit of God will begin to teach you present-day truth that will bring fresh anointing to your life.

"For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now, and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to know the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:22-23). This is our hope and our expectation—to see Christ appear in us in His fullness. This is what we are waiting for! Anything else is a false hope. If you are waiting to die and go to heaven, you have a false hope. The Word of God clearly reveals to us that **NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION**—not after you die. The only hope we have is **CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY**. Paul cried out in Romans 7:24, *"Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?"* Then in 8:2 he says, *"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ has made me free from the law of sin and death."*

We are entering into the greatest manifestation of God that has ever taken place on the earth, for those who are willing to have the character of God worked into them. *"Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted."*

Coming Into His Presence

We need to be reminded every day that we come before the Lord based on the shed blood of the Lamb. We are able to come to God because of what He has accomplished for us, not because of anything we have done. We are worthy to come before Him because **He has made us worthy**. I stand in His presence without any sin, without any condemnation, without any sense of inferiority, because of the work of Calvary. There is no one on this earth who is so vile or sinful or degraded that the blood of Jesus cannot reach them. The Church should be preaching the gospel of reconciliation, not condemnation. We can tell the most sinful person that there is now no barrier between them and God, because God has reconciled them by the Cross. *"God was in Christ, reconciling the whole world unto Himself, not holding their trespasses against them"* (2 Cor. 5:19). There is an old hymn that says, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy Cross I cling." The only thing that you can offer God is that which He has placed *in you*. The love of God has been shed abroad in *our* hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. We cannot even love God until we experience His love flowing in us. Man with His natural carnal nature has nothing to offer God. If you love God at all, it is only because He came to you bringing the bread of His Word and the wine of His enjoyment. When He begins to touch our lives, we realize the vastness of His love. This causes us then to seek Him and to love Him back, but not with our own love. The love we offer to God is the love that He places within us when we begin to experience Him.

We Are Holy Ground

We must begin to realize that we are holy ground. We are holy because wherever God is, is holy ground. When Moses stood before the burning bush and was told to take off his

shoes, it was only because God was there. The Spirit of God is living and pulsating in us today, and that is why we are a holy people. If you do not have the reality of the Spirit of God in your life, you cannot live a holy life, no matter how hard you try. However, when the Spirit begins to live through you, you will not even have to try to be holy. The Christian life is not one of trying to be good and failing, or even trying to be anything. The natural, carnal man never has to try to live the human life; he just lives. Living the God-kind of life is no different. Once the Spirit of God comes alive on the inside of you, you just *live!* Of course, this is a matter of growth and transformation. We are changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another degree of glory, day by day. What makes you holy is not your conduct or your self righteous attitude. It is not your trying so hard to do what God wants you to do. What makes you holy is the fact that the Spirit of God has been placed on the inside of you and He is a **HOLY SPIRIT**. Therefore if you seek Him who is within you, you will become a holy person. If you will seek Him, He will cause you to lay down your life and begin to serve others, and you will become that which He is. You can become very religious, and be very good, and go to church and dance and sing, and still not be a holy person. Holiness is God's character coming alive on the inside of you.

Your body is holy ground. Man was created from the dust of the ground, and when God's Spirit comes alive on the inside of me, I become holy ground. I am just like a garden that you plant seeds in, and it grows beautiful flowers. Paul told the Corinthians that they were God's husbandry. The word "husbandry" means a farm, a place to grow things. All the lovely things of the Spirit of Christ are to grow in us. We are holy ground. Our lips are holy lips. Our lips are to be consecrated to God, and are to speak only the lovely things

of Christ, to build up the saints of God and edify one another. **When you learn to control what you speak** to yourself and to others, **what you speak will change your life.** Our hands are holy hands. Why do we have holy hands? Because the Holy Spirit dwells in us. When I touch you under the inspiration and anointing of the Holy Spirit, there will be a dispensing of God to you to meet your need. If you need healing and I lay hands on you, there is a transference of the Holy Spirit to you that begins the healing process.

A lot of people are confused in the area of healing because they think only in the terms of miracles. Thank God there are miracles! I have personally known people who have been confined to a wheel chair, and have seen them get up and walk. So many times when we pray for someone and they don't instantly recover, we lose faith. Jesus said in Mark 16:18 that those who believe in Him would lay hands on the sick and they would recover. Recovery is not an instantaneous miracle, but a process that takes time. This does not mean that you should lay hands on everyone who is sick, but if the Spirit of God directs you to pray for someone, then from your spirit is transmitted the healing power of God, and healing immediately begins to take place.

God Will Bring Forth His Character

The gospel of the Kingdom is that which God is bringing to the Church today. Until you experience the Spirit of God producing His character in you, you will never manifest the Kingdom of God. Many people today are experiencing different aspects of the Kingdom, but they must not only *experience* the Kingdom, they must *manifest* the Kingdom. Today, the people of God are learning how to raise up the Spirit of God within them. The Spirit is putting to death

their carnal nature and manifesting the character of God within.

Blessed Are The Meek

The teaching of the Kingdom of God is offensive, both to the worldly and to the religious people. Everywhere Jesus went, He offended religious people when He taught about the Kingdom of God and did things that were contrary to their traditions. He healed on the Sabbath day and they were violently opposed to it.

Becoming a meek person is not a very popular subject in the religious world. To become a meek person is in contradiction with what religion teaches you. There has been a teaching in the Church in the last few years on improving your self image and being self assertive and attaining self realization. If you are a bad person, you will probably have a poor self image. If you have a bad self image, psychology can teach you to have a **good** self image. It is definitely better to have a good self image than a bad one, but remember—in the beginning there were two trees in the Garden. They were the "Tree of Life" and the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil". Psychology deals with the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If you have a bad self image, through psychological counseling you may change your natural life and become a better person with a good image of yourself. Now there is nothing wrong with this, but we must know that a good person is not necessarily a **godly** person. God is always good, but *good is not always God*. The only thing that satisfies the heart of God is not for you to be just a **good** person, but for you to be a **godly** person! The teaching in Matthew 5-7 is to cause you to seek a godly character.

When Jesus came, His people were not looking for one who was **poor in spirit and meek**. They were looking for a king who

would come and destroy all the kingdoms of the world and set up a new Kingdom under God. He did do that, but not in the way they expected.

What Meekness Is

Meekness means gentleness: enduring injury with patience and without resentment; the absence of vindictiveness.

If you are serving God's people and giving of yourself to others, do you resent it when they don't appreciate you, or when they do you wrong? Do you feel sorry for yourself? If so, you are not a meek person. One who is meek seeks only to serve his fellow man regardless of how they treat him.

True meekness has gentleness, but with power. A meek person has true spiritual power, and, like Jesus, will not fight against flesh and blood. A meek person knows how to do warfare in the spiritual realm. Jesus did not attack people, but He cast out demons, healed the sick and brought light into the darkness.

The great danger in the Church today is the preaching of an intellectual gospel. God is not interested in just saving us so we can go to heaven when we die! Jesus taught that the Kingdom of Heaven is within you. This is not a place to go to when you die. **If all you receive is an intellectual Jesus whom you think will take you to heaven when you die, you have missed the kernel of the gospel.** The Word teaches us that when we truly receive Jesus, we become a different person. If you come to Jesus and there is no change on the inside of you, then you need to keep seeking Him until you experience His life, *and you will change*. Once you experience God's life, you will never be happy until God leads you into a life of holiness. If you have truly received Him and you are not living for Him, you will never be happy again, except

for fleeting moments. The Spirit of God on the inside of you wants only one thing: He wants to be let loose. He wants to possess you totally. He wants to fill your mind, emotions and will with the life of God. He wants you to be totally transformed on the inside, so that Jesus once again can live in the flesh and manifest the life of God to a lost and dying world.

A meek person will not be self assertive. If you begin to be self assertive and to stand up for your rights, it will make you start to feel better about yourself but you will be far from meekness. I have seen Christians destroyed by becoming self assertive. A meek person never has to defend himself. Whenever you begin to defend yourself, you are walking away from meekness. If someone begins to criticize you for the way you minister or the way you do something, and you begin to rise up from within to defend yourself, you are not a meek person. Jesus taught that you are to love your enemies and do good to those that persecute you—not rise up against them. A meek person will bless his enemies and pray for them. If you know someone has wronged you and you are a meek person, you will do everything within your power to bring restoration to them. If someone wrongs you, do something good for them. Take them out to dinner or buy them a gift. If you will be good to your enemies, by putting aside your self and your natural feelings that want to rise up and blast them, and then blessing and praying for them, God will use your godly character to save them, and bring them into a relationship with Him like you have.

I have had the experience many times in my life of winning people to love me when they didn't like me, by being good to them and blessing them and praying for them. If you are married, you definitely need to learn this principle. You can win the respect of your mate by having a godly character.

A meek person never thinks unkindly of those who do not understand them. Does it really matter if someone doesn't understand you? Only if you are a proud person! If you have pride in yourself, what others think bothers you. A spiritual person needs only one recognition, and that is the Father saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." If you have God's approval, you don't need man's natural approval.

Having True Spiritual Value

Meekness is having a true value of oneself. We do need to have a true estimation of ourselves in God. If you really are manifesting a godly image, and you know that Jesus is living on the inside of you, you will have a proper, true value of yourself. The Word of God teaches you that when you have the life of God in you, you will not **try** to live godly, but you will **be** godly. There is a big difference between **trying** and **being**. The true Christian is one who does not try to be holy. **He is holy because the Holy One lives inside of him.** Two lives cannot live in the same temple. You will either live a life of self-exaltation and self-manifestation, or you will let self fall into the ground and die to bring forth the manifestation of the life of God. The true character of the Christian is the character and attributes of God flowing from his being.

When you have a wrong value of yourself, it is very difficult for you to change. If you are naturally a good person, it takes the Holy Spirit to bring the light of God to shine into you and reveal to you those hidden dark areas that need to be changed. Every person that lives by their self-life lives by that knowledge of good and evil. The fruit of the tree of knowledge is a life flowing from you that is both good and evil. One day you may be very good and the next day very bad. One day you can love me and the next day when I do you wrong, you don't even like me anymore. If

you are a holy person, it is evidence that you are receiving life from the Tree of Life, which is God Himself, and not just from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If you can say that the character of God is being formed in you, and that day by day you're being conformed to His image, then you know you are living by the right source. When you are godly, it is only because the nature and character of your Father God has been reproduced in you. Every seed produces after its own kind, and when the seed of God in you gets the proper watering and nourishing, and you learn how to lay aside your natural likes and desires, and you learn to live for God, then that seed in you will reproduce after its own kind and will produce in you the God-kind of life. That is so much better than **religion**, so much better than just *trying to be good*.

Pride Is a Deadly Enemy

A meek man is not a proud man. He is not proud of himself. Pride is a deadly enemy to the life of God in you. Pride keeps many Christians from being able to operate in the power of God. Self will always become exalted when you begin to move in the power of God. A meek person is really a humble person, a very gentle person.

Abraham was a meek person. He did not assert himself with Lot, but he gave him the choice of the best land. When you can just stand back and let others have their choices first, and you're willing to take what is left, that is meekness. A meek person will say, "Brother, I want you to have first choice." Abraham said, "Lot if you go this way, I'll go that way. You have first choice."

The Word tells us that Moses was the meekest man on the earth. He was a gentle person, but he had true spiritual authority. When the children of Israel made the golden calf, God

said to Moses, "Stand aside, because I will destroy this people and I will make a mighty nation out of you." How many of us could have stood that test? How many of us would have said, "Yes God, that's right. Kill them all, because I know that I'm a good person and if you raise up a people from **me**, they will be the best." Moses didn't do that. He said, "God, You can't do that because you *promised* these people. You made a promise to Abraham that his seed would inherit the land, so you can't destroy them." Moses said, "If you are going to blot them out, blot me out too."

"For what glory is it, if when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently, but if you do well and suffer for it and take it patiently, this is acceptable to God" (1 Peter 2:20). If you suffer because of doing good and you take it patiently, that is meekness. He goes on to say, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to one who judges righteously."

This is the character that God wants to produce in us. If people are misusing us, talking about us, we bear it. We don't threaten, we don't rise up against them and make accusations, we simply commit ourselves to God, who judges righteously.

A Meek Person Is Not Self-Centered

A meek man is not sensitive about himself. How many people do you know who are so sensitive that they wear their feelings, so to speak, on their coat sleeves? One who is being conformed into God's image will learn not to be sensitive about himself. You can learn to deal with hurt feelings and sensitivity by not responding to it. If you are a sensitive person

and you are hurt easily, it is hard not to hurt back. A spiritual person is very sensitive also, but when they are hurt, they hurt for the one hurting them, not for themselves. I know this is foreign to our natural thinking, but when someone talks evil against you, if you are a spiritual person, you will hurt for the one bringing the accusation against you. If you are easily hurt, learn to bear it, and take it to God. Sensitivity is one of the biggest enemies which can keep the character of God from being manifested in you. When someone hurts you, and you respond with your tongue, you hinder the work of the Spirit in your life. I know this is a hard word for some. You may be a very sensitive person and you can't help that, but learn not to respond out of your hurt. You can learn to deal with it. A meek person will never respond in a negative way when someone hurts him.

Jesus is our example and He had His beard pulled, He was spit upon, He was mocked and nailed to the Cross, and from that Cross He said, "**Father forgive them, they don't know what they are doing.**" When you are wronged and learn not to speak out, that sensitivity will begin to die. A meek person does not have to defend himself, because they realize there is nothing to defend. A meek one will learn to leave everything in the hands of God. He doesn't argue, he doesn't fret, he doesn't talk about it. He submits everything into the hands of God.

Meekness, which is an attribute of God's character, can never be manufactured—but if you have the Spirit of God living in you, you will find yourself becoming a meek person. Jesus said, "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*" Matthew 5-7 reveals to you the character of God and leaves you no excuse and no alternative. If you are a child of God, and you are going to live in the Kingdom of God, you have no choice but to learn to live this way. If you will daily seek

after God, the Spirit of God within you will begin to be manifested in all that you do.

Hungry for God

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

This verse does not say, "Blessed are they who have no sin," or "Blessed are they who have no evil desires," or "Blessed are they who obey God." What it *does* say is that you are blessed if you hunger and thirst after righteousness. If you have a heart cry for God, if you are hungry for God, your **outward condition** is no problem for the Lord.

If you are hungering after Him, you will eventually be filled with Him and this will take care of your outward condition. Some of God's people are under terrible condemnation because they have habits they believe God doesn't want them to have. There was a time in my life when I thought that if I could only quit smoking and quit some other things in my life, God would be pleased with me and I would have better fellowship with Him. This is what religion teaches you. Religion says that God is a holy God, and if you want to have fellowship with Him, you must not do things He doesn't like. If this was true, no one would **ever** be transformed. He came to save the sinner, not the righteous. There are multitudes of people who are hungering after God and some of them smoke and drink, and their lives are messed up; they are captivated by the world. They are in bondage to religion, and God wants to set them free—not condemn them. The only thing that is necessary is to have a hungry heart!

How To Cultivate a Hungry Heart

When I was the pastor of Springs of Life Ministries in Oregon, I used to tell the saints,

"We can develop a hungry heart in you if you want one." One of the most exciting things in the universe is to be able to create hunger and desire in people for God, and you can do that by words spoken through you in the Spirit of God. Words are the most powerful and creative thing in our world. Jesus said in one of His parables that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who cast seed into the ground. The seed is the Word, and we are the ground the Word is cast into. So, if you want to increase your hunger for God, just stay around people who are always casting forth the seed of the Word of God, saints of God who know how to speak the Word in spirit and power. As you begin to hunger and thirst after God, His Spirit will begin to fill you and grow in you, and then you will be able to come out of all the habits and bondages in your life. When you begin to hear the truth, it creates a hunger in you and puts a hope in you. When you realize that God can come *alive* in you, His Spirit will begin to stand up in you and deliver you from every hang-up, and set you free from every bondage in your life.

Seek Only Righteousness

If you will hunger and thirst after righteousness, you will be filled. There are so many things in this day and age, even in the Christian world, that you can seek after and become distracted by. There is a multitude of teachers today on television and around the world who are teaching Christians to set their minds on things other than seeking after righteousness. There are teachers today who are putting fear in the hearts of God's people, drawing their attention to those things that are coming to the earth. Jesus never taught us to look at **natural** Jerusalem to try and figure out what is going to happen. What Jesus did say is, "People's hearts will fail them for fear of the things that are coming on the earth." You get your charts and graphs out and start looking at those things, and start teaching

people about all the terrible things you think are coming on the earth, and you sow fear in the minds of God's people, and get their attention off of *seeking after righteousness*. Jesus said, "When you see these things begin to happen, look up." Don't look at what's happening—look up!

Seek Those Things That Are Above

"If you then have been raised to a new life, thus sharing His resurrection from the dead, aim at and seek the rich eternal treasures that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." (Col. 3:1, Amplified).

Don't look at what is coming on the earth, but look up! Raise your consciousness to seek those things that are above the natural thinking. Set your mind on and aim at the higher things, not on the things of the earth. You have *died* to the natural thinking and the carnal way of living. Your new life is hid with Christ in God. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, those who have a burning desire to bring forth within them this life that is hid with Christ in God. The Christian must get his attention, and his sight, and his aim, off of everything but *seeking after God and His righteousness*.

Can you imagine what it would be like if we could get Christians around the world to take their attention off of things that are happening, even in the Church? Our attention for the most part is centered on division, strife and debate. We argue over who has the right doctrine, which is the best church, and numerous other things. When Christians will take their eyes off of all these things and set them on seeking the reality of God and His righteousness coming alive on the inside of them, we will see the glorious Church without spot or wrinkle begin to be manifested on the earth. This would fulfill Jesus' prayer in John 17 that **we all would be one**. If there is no

oneness in Christians, it is only because they are not seeking God and His righteousness. The majority of Christians are seeking so many other things. Jesus never said, "Seek after God and His blessings," or "Seek after God and healing, or prosperity." How many are seeking after God and a position in the Church? It is not that these things are wrong, but what are you hungry for? What is the desire of your heart? Are you hungry for position and recognition, or are you hungry for the righteous, holy character of God to be formed in you? You may hunger after and receive many things, even things of God, and still miss the high calling of God. **The only people who are truly happy are those who are hungering and thirsting after God and His righteousness.** If you seek after prosperity, you may receive it and still be empty inside. When you seek after righteousness, you will be filled with the nature and character of God, and then all things will be added to you without your seeking them. God's design, intent and purpose is to fill you with Himself. Man's true happiness comes only as he is filled with God. Jesus promised that if you seek after God and His righteousness, you will be filled.

Death to Self-Life

There has been much teaching in the Church on putting self to death, and for the most part it has caused us to get into the workings of the flesh, trying to put ourselves to death. Death to self is nothing you can do within yourself. Death to self is in the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:45 says that Christ was made a "*life-giving Spirit*". In this life-giving spirit is everything you need. There is divine life, the fine uplifted humanity of Jesus, His death and resurrection, His ascension and enthronement. Every time you touch the spirit of Christ within you these elements are transfused into you. When your self-life

begins to rise up, if you will turn to the Spirit of Christ within you, you will sense the killing aspect to your flesh and you will rise above it.

Hungering and thirsting after righteousness will solve the problem of self. You cannot hunger and thirst after righteousness and be self-seeking at the same time. When you are hungering after righteousness, you cannot always go where you want to go, and say what you want to say, and do what you want to do, because the Spirit of God will draw you to Himself.

A Burning Desire To Obey God

If you are hungering and thirsting after God, you have a burning desire within you to obey God. You may not always do it; you may have character flaws, and bad habits, and problems with your will, but I'm talking about an inward condition of your heart. You have a burning desire on the inside of you that Jesus would become Lord of every area of your life. If that is your desire and you are hungering to be conformed to His image, *you will be filled*. From my own experience, I can assure you that this is so. There have been times in my Christian life when I have been under so much bondage it seemed as though God was nowhere near, but I never stopped seeking and hungering after God. I lived many years in Lancaster, California, and I would drive out into the desert every day and park my car and seek after God. I used to say, "God I must have the reality of your presence come alive within me. Nothing else is worth living for. I must know the reality of your Kingdom within me. If You do not become the Lord of every area of my life, I have nothing to live for." I had met the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I had touched the God of glory, and once that happens nothing can satisfy you except being conformed to His image. The more you hunger and thirst after righteousness, the more you will be

transformed day-by-day into a mature son of God.

Hungering After Righteousness

We know that the doctrine of righteousness means to be in right standing with God. We know that everyone who receives the "Life-giving Spirit" of Jesus is taken out of the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of God's Son. Those who hunger and thirst will be filled. I began to hunger after God at about the age of eleven. I wanted to know God in a real way. I was raised in church, but I wasn't satisfied with the church. I wanted to know the reality of God on the inside of me! I continued to hunger after God, and it wasn't until I was 29 years old that I met the God of glory. I spent many years seeking, but He was worth waiting for. I will never forget my first experience of the reality of God. I wept for several days in His presence. A lot of people get caught up in what I call a "Christ fast-food mentality." They want to be changed **now**; they want to be like God **now**; they don't want to wait on God and spend much time seeking Him. They want to be like Him, but they don't want to take the time for the transformation of the soul. They want everything **now**. The Word says, "*In patience possess ye your souls*" (Luke 21:19). We must be consistent and steadfast, because Jesus said, "*When you seek me with all your heart, you will find Me*" (Jer. 29:13). **You are not going to find Jesus in Sunday-morning religion**; you are not going to find Him just by going to an altar and saying some words. You are not going to find Him until *you hunger and thirst after Him with all your heart*. Hebrews 11:6 says, "*He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*" He rewards you by filling you with His nature and character, so that you are transformed into what He is!

Righteousness means to be in right standing with God, but it must become more than just a doctrine. If you are really hungering after righteousness, a doctrine will never satisfy you. I can talk to you, convince you, and show you from the Word that if you are born again you are just as righteous before God as Jesus is. You can become *intellectually* convinced that Jesus is your righteousness and that there is no need for condemnation in your life, yet if your life is not right before God, if you are not experientially becoming the righteousness of God, the doctrine of righteousness will never satisfy you. The doctrine of righteousness is to show you your position before God—to stir you up to seek the experience of righteousness in your **disposition**, not just your *position*. God speaks and you say, "Amen." He says, "Go," and you go, not trying to figure out how to get there. We read in the Word about men like Abraham and David and we say, "I would like to be like those men in Hebrews 11." To be like those men, you have to live like they lived. Where are the Christians today who live like those men lived?

The Cloud Is Moving

The cloud is moving in the Church today, and when the cloud is moving you had better move with it. We all are baptized into the cloud. In the wilderness, the children of Israel had to move with the cloud—they had no choice. Today we have no choice either, if we want God. We must move with the cloud. Today God is setting His men in the Church—pastors after his own heart who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. They are moving in the anointing, under the authority and the Word of God. We need to move with them. We need more leaders in the Church who can say, "Follow me as I follow Christ." If you hunger and thirst after righteousness, there will come a day when you can say that. A doctrine will never satisfy you. You must have the experience of righteousness. You

may have many habits and areas in your life that are not pleasing to God, but if you will seek Him, you will experience complete deliverance from all bondage.

If you are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, you will also have a burning desire to be free from sin. If you're in sin and it doesn't bother you, I feel sorry for you. If you don't want to hear about holiness and righteousness, and you don't want to hear about God's character being formed in you, you really need to **seek God** until His reality begins to arise within you. There is still hope for you, but you should take the time to seek God daily until He stirs within you. Everyone who hungers after righteousness wants a character that conforms to Matthew 5-7.

God takes us just as we are. We have nothing to give Him, but He takes that nothing and transforms us into the image of His Son. Jesus once again comes alive on the earth, and ministers and strengthens and builds up the Church. If you think you are something in yourself, you are nothing. If you think you could do a better job leading the people of God, I feel sorry for you. God takes those who are weak, who feel they have nothing in themselves, and He gives them His strength and ability.

God Wants To Fill You With Himself

If you really hunger after and want the life of God to be manifested in you, you need to study the life of Jesus. Look at this man Jesus! He is the tabernacle of God; He is the fullness of the Godhead. All things were made by Him, through Him and unto Him. You were created for His pleasure. What **is** His pleasure? **He wants to fill you with Himself.** He wants to fill your desire for righteousness and holiness. He wants to fill your desire for a right relationship with Him. Jesus is not someone whom we try to *be* like. He wants to

fill us with the Godhead so that we become *what He is*. When He enters you with His "life-giving Spirit" and you seek Him, you will become like Him. God wants a group of people who realize their hopelessness in trying to be like Him, and then seek Him until He begins to do in them what He wants to do.

There is a very simple way to know the perfect will of God for your life. God's will is the same for every person. **He wants to completely fill you with Himself.** Many pray sincerely to know the will of God, thinking that He may want to send them to Africa, or any number of places. If you will take the time to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, He will fill you with His Spirit and then you will know His perfect will for your life.

To hunger after righteousness means that you put everything that you are into what you are seeking. People do this in the natural all the time. People put everything that they have, all of their time, all of their finances, all of their study, into what they want to become. We will do the same if we hunger and thirst after God. We will want more than anything else to see God's Kingdom manifested on the earth.

"As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1-2). We must condition our souls to seek after God. We must learn how to release that flow of life, the life of God within us, to flow into our souls so that our souls will hunger after God.

"How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yea even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh

cries out for the living God" (Psalm 84:1-2). Our heart and our flesh does not cry out for sin and the lusts of the flesh, but for God. This will be our experience if we exercise ourselves to hunger and thirst after God.

If you never become hungry and thirsty after God and His righteousness, you will never know true spiritual blessing. You may know good health, prosperity, and a certain amount of peace, but if you never become one who seeks after God with all your heart, you will not know true spiritual blessing.

Receiving Abundance of Grace

We all know that it is impossible with our carnal or natural nature to become what this Word is requiring us to be like. However, if you are **not** like this it is not God's fault. People say, "I would like to be holy, but if God doesn't do it, it's not my fault." Paul says in Romans 5:17, *"For if by one man's offense death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."* Have you *received* the abundance of grace? Notice it does not say they which are *given* abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, but to those who *receive* it. God is no respecter of persons. God does not give to some and withhold from others. You must receive that which has been given. This is the gospel of grace. Before you experience being born of the spirit, you are in bondage to sin and death. You can't be righteous; you can't be holy; and you have no power to change. God says that to live in His presence you must be holy. There is no sin, and no injustice that can live in His presence. He demands that you be holy as He is holy. This is where grace comes in. Everyone who will receive grace, who will take the Word of God and receive it unto themselves, mixing faith with the Word, will begin to reign in life. If by one man's offense death reigned, much more

the gift of grace is more powerful than the law of sin and death. God has already poured out all of His grace. In His Word is all the knowledge that you need to make you realize that all you need to do is open yourself to receive all that He is. Grace takes all the **try** out of becoming a Christian. If you are still **trying to be righteous**, you have missed the simplicity of the gospel. If you are truly a Christian and Jesus is alive in you, He will live His life in you. Either you are born of God or you are not; either you are still lost or you are found; either you are perishing or you are receiving the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness.

How To Receive This Grace

You may say, "I have tried all my life to be a righteous person and failed; what am I to do?" It is so simple that most don't see it. You simply need to **receive it**. What you are today is a product of what you have been **receiving** all your life. **What you receive into your heart you will become.** Man cannot by himself or by his carnal nature produce the life of God, but he can receive it. If you are not manifesting the character of God, then you have been receiving the wrong things into you. If you are receiving the things of God then the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance, are being produced in you. If you are living this way, you don't have to conform to an outward law of rules and regulations. You hunger and thirst after God and these things **grow in you**.

We Must Learn To Eat Jesus

Learning to eat Jesus will be the most profitable thing you will ever do in your spiritual life. Jesus said, in John 6, "*I am the living bread that came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and never die—as*

the Father has sent me and I live by the Father, so he that eats me shall live by me." We can learn to feed on Jesus moment by moment in our daily life, and as we do, His life will grow in us and we will begin to live by that life.

You will express whatever you receive into you. When you are around some people, all they express is sports. They constantly take sports into themselves. They eat, drink, think, and breathe sports. You can always tell where a person's heart is by hearing them speak for a while. Jesus said, "***Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.***" Whatever you are filling yourself with will come out of your mouth when you speak. Whenever I'm around the saints from Church, you can't talk to them very long before the Lord starts to be expressed through them. You can tell that they are filling themselves with spiritual food, because that is always the main topic of their conversation. Whenever we get together, even a few of us in our homes, the presence of the Lord is so sweet.

If you want to receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, this is what you must do. You must learn to avoid everything that would hinder His life from flowing in you. I know that this is not an easy word, but Jesus never told His disciples that to be a Christian would be an easy life. The Christian life is only hard for you as long as you hold on to your own ways and your own desires. Proverbs says that it is the way of the *transgressor* that is hard. I have said many times how hard it is to be a Christian, because I was at that time a transgressor holding on to my own way. If you are truly hungering after righteousness, you will avoid everything that is **against** righteousness. You must also avoid and not receive into you those things that hinder your spiritual appetite. Many Christians do not hunger after righteousness because they are a product of what they have

been receiving all their life. They have never been diligent to cultivate a spiritual hunger. Even in the natural, we can develop a taste for things we do not like by being diligent to eat them. If you do not have a hunger for righteousness, you must learn to discipline yourself to take in spiritual food. The gospel of grace is not a gospel that allows you to **remain** in any unsatisfactory condition that you are in. When you experience grace, it will cause you to **hunger** after righteousness, and will lead you out of bondage.

Cultivating Spiritual Hunger

You need to cultivate your spiritual hunger. Sometimes you need to drop even things that are not sinful, but which take your time away from seeking God. **You can receive into you all the fullness of God by spending time in His Word and in His presence.** Many Christians spend more time reading the newspaper, or any number of other things, than reading and studying the Word. They can't understand why they are not hungry for the things of God. It is our choice. We can receive and develop spiritual hunger, or we can receive and develop natural fleshy desires. God has provided everything that we need to grow up into Him in all things. Our natural selfish life must fall into the ground and die. Every day of our lives, we must seek after and receive spiritual nourishment. I know people who are so hungry for God that all they do is listen to tapes, read spiritual books, and go to church every time the doors are open (provided they find a good one). Sometimes they listen to the same message again and again so they can grasp the truth. That is hungering after righteousness.

If you are hungering after righteousness, you will want to be where the anointing is. You will not run from the light; you will run towards the light. Sunday-morning religion is not enough! You will want to be with the

saints every time they come together. If the presence and anointing of God abides upon a people when they come together, you need to be there every time. If you can't find a church where the presence and anointing of God abide, then you need to meet with some saints in your homes where you can fellowship together in His presence.

The following was received by the author while meditating on eating Jesus:

"Behold, I stand at the door of your consciousness and knock, and if you will open to Me, I will come in and feast with you and drink with you, and you with Me. I long to enter into My garden, into sweet communion with you every day. You may not always sense my presence within you, but I say to you—I am there, deeply hidden within your being. I will bring you more fully into an understanding of My light and revelation knowledge, and My Spirit that I have placed within you. You will more and more experience, as you seek Me, the fullness of joy that is in my presence. By learning to feast on Me you will be able to enter My presence any time. You will be able to turn aside from the cares of this life, and with simple childlike faith you can call on Me and discover that just to call on My name, 'Jesus', is like ointment poured forth. Just the name of Jesus upon your lips will cause the oil of the Holy Spirit to begin to flow within you. Just to say, 'O Jesus, I need you. O, Jesus, I need your touch. O Jesus, I need the sense of your Spirit stirring on the inside of me.' This will bring you more revelation knowledge and spiritual experience than some of the most profound teaching you could ever hear. I answer the cry of a hungry heart. I don't look at your outward condition; I look way beyond the faults; I look deep into your being and I see the seed of My life; and I speak to that life and water and nourish that seed, and I bring forth

within you the glorious, magnificent life that I am. I cultivate within you my incorruptible, indestructible seed. I bring forth a life within you that will not know defeat or failure. If you will learn to lay at My feet, you will come to know Me in such a wonderful way. You can only give back to Me that which I bring forth within you. You can only love Me when you experience my love flowing within you. If only you will lay aside all that you are and cry out to Me, you will discover that I AM THAT I AM. I am within you everything that you need at every moment of the day. Forget the natural strength; learn to turn to Me and cry unto me with all your heart, and you shall know that I am the deliverer. Your deliverance shall come, not from without, but from within. I shall arise within you and become your life."

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Blessed Are the Merciful

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7).

These teachings of Jesus in the so-called Beatitudes are systematic. They follow an order. You could never be a merciful person unless you have already experienced being "poor in spirit". Every day, we must empty ourselves and seek God for something fresh. We must realize the areas in our life that are lacking the character of God. The more you experience God's life, the more you hunger after Him. Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted. After I experienced the life of God coming alive in me, I began to mourn over my wretched condition. Jesus comes and fills that longing of your heart, and one day you awaken, and you realize that God in you is sufficient, and that causes you to be a meek person. You begin to hunger and thirst

after God and His righteousness, and only then can you be a merciful person.

We should always examine ourselves in the light of Jesus. If you are ever to be a merciful person, you must realize that everything you have obtained in God is an act of His divine grace. Everything that you have experienced in God is the result of two things: God *giving* His grace and you *receiving* that grace. No man can work for what God has to give; he can only *receive* it.

"They, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Cor. 10:12b). Do not look at someone else and compare yourself to them. When we do that, we can easily see what is **wrong** with them, and compare ourselves, not with their strengths, but with their **weaknesses**. One who is merciful does not compare himself to another person; he will only compare himself to Jesus. No amount of comparing yourself to another can justify you before God. You can never be like the Pharisee in the temple who prayed, "Thank God I'm not like this publican!" One who is merciful will always have the attitude of, "God, be merciful to me."

The Kingdom Is Based on Who You Are

The gospel of the Kingdom is not based on what you **do**, but on **who you are**. If we truly want to do the works of Jesus, if we want to experience what it is to be one who moves with the anointing and the authority of God, we must first be saturated and permeated with God. We must take the time to soak up the presence of God in our daily life. Don't get caught up in outward religious activities. It is not a matter of **working**, but of **being**. One who walks in the realization of the Kingdom does basically two things: They learn how to contact God within themselves, and then become filled with Him. When you are filled

with God, you become a carrier of His presence on the earth. I used to get so upset when I heard about obedience and holiness, because I tried for years to be holy and obedient and couldn't make it. However, today I realize that *I am a holy person*, because holiness is wherever God is. If God is in you, you are a holy person, and when your eyes are unveiled to see this, you will experience it. All you need is to learn to enjoy that living anointing and presence of God that abides within you.

The message of the gospel is not **what you can do for God, but who you are!** The Bible was written to reveal to you who you are in Christ. The Bible tells us who we are, but because of veiled minds and religious teachings, your mind will not accept the simple revelation that Jesus lives in you. We must diligently seek God until we come into the experiential knowledge of Jesus arising on the inside of us. Whenever you get into the presence of God, something stirs on the inside of you, and you begin to realize it's not what you can do, but what you become when filled with the realization of His presence. Once you realize who you are, then what you do will be an **out-flowing of His life**. Your work for God will not have the stench of human nature on it, but it will be a pure flowing out of the life of God. **You have to be a Christian before you can act like one.** To be a Christian means to be like Christ. Our churches are full of people trying to be Christians. I had God on the inside of me for many years and I was always trying to be a good Christian, because I didn't have a revelation of His life in me. I had a *doctrine* that told me Jesus lived in me. I was told that when I received Jesus, He came into me, but I didn't have the revelation of Him arising within me to **live His life** instead of mine. He died, not only to save me from my sins, but to become a life-giving Spirit to **live inside of me, instead of me**. There are multitudes in

churches trying to become something that they already are. They have the life of God on the inside of them, but they don't experience it.

Jesus Is the Only Christian

Matthew 5-7 is not presenting a new religion with rules and regulations, nor a higher standard for us to try to live up to. Jesus is very simply saying here, "If you are a Christian, if I live in you, this is what you will be like: Every time you come into My presence, I will expose you. All the darkness, all the rebellion, everything in you that is not pleasing to Me I will expose, and then you will have to fall at My feet and receive My forgiveness." So many people have not learned to receive God's forgiveness. They try so hard to be **good** and they have such a poor image of themselves because they're not making it. You will never have a good image of yourself by *trying to be good*. Self must fall into the ground and die, and *Jesus must arise* within us. When Jesus begins to stir within you, it does not matter how poor your self image is; you just fall at His feet, and receive forgiveness. If you are in sin and bondage, don't run away from God. If you don't find the character of Jesus coming forth in you, don't run away from him, **run to Him**. Drop all your religious activities, forget all your religiosity and just seek Him. He will then begin to stir on the inside of you and you will become that which you desire. *The only true Christian is Jesus*. Human effort will never make it. You could never feel good enough unless you're comparing yourself among others, to give you a self-righteousness. Jesus is the only one who can live the Christian life, and until He is birthed in you, you will never live the Christian life. You may as well forget your activities. Paul told the Galatians, "*I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you*" (Gal. 4:19). Multitudes of Christians are busy

working for God when all the time they need to have Him **formed within them**.

Doctrine Alone Will Not Satisfy

Jesus never said that we need to try to act like Him. We read the Bible with the natural mind and become confused and go try to do what it says. Jesus wants to reveal Himself within you, to reveal your new character. His seed of life is in you, and when you're willing to seek Him, and lay down your life, He will come alive in you and **live instead of you**. You will never be satisfied with the greatest doctrine and teaching in the world, you must **possess** the realization. You can be taught for years that Jesus lives in you, and never experience it. You must spend much time in His presence seeking Him until He begins to grow within you. **To be a Christian is to possess a certain character and be a certain kind of person**. Christians need to realize that they already **are** what they are trying to become, and rest in Him until He grows within them.

He Has Given to Us All Things

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Pet. 1:3). The word "life" here is the Greek word *zoe* and it means **"God's life."** The word "godliness" means "the expression of that life". If you have received Jesus, God has already given to you all things that pertain to that life and the expression of it. Everywhere you go you can be conscious of *carrying* the presence of God and *expressing* His life. In the Old Testament, the Priests carried the Ark on their shoulders. In the Ark was the expression of God. We can be conscious of carrying around the awesomeness of the presence of God. That is what a priest does in His daily life. We become kings and priests unto God, carrying His presence and His

authority in the earth. **This is the highest revelation you can have in the Kingdom of God.** The two most important functions in the Church are the Priest and King. Most of God's people think that there are only five offices in the Church: Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor & Teacher. Not everyone is called to one of these offices, but **all** are called to be Priests and Kings. The highest calling you can have is the Priesthood and Kingship. The Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher are to equip you, and build you up, and to cause you to realize your high calling as a Priest and King. *"Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His father"* (Rev. 1:5b-6). If you really want to be something in the Kingdom of God, then allow His presence to fill you so that you are a carrier of His life in the earth. We can't all be Apostles and Prophets. We can't all be leaders in the move of God on the earth, but we can all be **carriers of His presence**.

God's Authority

The most exciting life you will ever experience is to live in the presence and anointing of God. His abiding presence will bring you into the authority of God. God's authority is not for you to use on someone else. A man who exercises authority over someone else does not have true spiritual authority. When God begins to arise in you, **His authority first and foremost is to bring you into subjection to Himself in all things**. We must first subdue our carnal nature. We must first take the beam out of our own eye. We must first deal with the sin in our life. Then, wherever we go, people will say, "My, what is so different with this person? When they walked into our home a sweet presence and peace came in with them."

We Are a Holy People

"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Pet. 2:9). Peter tells us here not what we should try to become, but who we are: "You are a holy people." Oh, how we need to seek God until we get the revelation: I am a holy person, I am sanctified, set apart for God. Jesus is *"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and higher than the heavens"* (Heb. 7:26). This Jesus lives in us. We have the holy, righteous God on the inside of us. The realization that Jesus is in us will stop all the struggles and the strivings to be like Him. When you begin to realize His presence in you, you can't help but be a holy person. I am a holy person because I have a new nature on the inside of me. For years, I tried to make myself holy by my actions. I was just like the Apostle Paul said of the Jews. He said they missed the righteousness of God by going about trying to establish their own righteousness. The revelation of having God in you will make you what you are trying to become, and you will never have the revelation unless you seek God with all your heart. It is so hard today to get most Christians to seek after God. They will go to church, serve on committees, teach Sunday school, or do many other things, but they will not take the time to sit quietly and seek after God. Jesus did not have to try to be righteous. He said, *"The devil comes and he finds nothing in me"* (John 14:30). We all can grow in God until we too can say, "The devil may come, but he finds no place in me."

The Word says, *"Give him no place"* (Eph. 4:27). This experience will come out of your hungering and thirsting after God. You do not have the natural strength to give the devil no place when he comes. You must have the strength of God. You must have a revelation that you are a temple that carries around the holy nature and character of God. How could

Satan have any authority over one who realizes that? John 1:12 tells us that *"as many as received Him, gave He the power, the authority, the ability, the right and the privilege to become the sons of God."* If you have been born of the spirit you heart's cry is, "Oh, to be like Jesus." The Word of God will reveal and unveil to you the reality of "Christ in you the hope of glory". That is why the Apostle Paul prayed in Ephesians 1:17-20, *"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when he raised Him from the dead."*

In Us Is the Power That Raised Jesus from the Dead

Do we really believe this Word of God? This is a great problem in the Church today—we have a bunch of *unbelieving* believers. Do you believe that you have the resurrected power of Jesus living in you? We have that same power that raised Jesus from the dead now living in us. There are Christians who have read the Bible for years and have not experienced and do not know that the same power that raised Christ from the dead now dwells in the believer.

"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the son of God" (Gal.2:20).

Oh, what a marvelous experience to be filled with God so that He lives His life in and through us. A Christian is one who has God

living inside them. We talk about being Spirit filled. **One who is truly Spirit-filled is controlled and motivated by the Holy Spirit.** A *doctrine* of being Spirit filled will never satisfy you. I was told as a new Christian that all I had to do to be filled with the Spirit was to speak in tongues. Now, speaking in tongues is a wonderful experience, but it is only the beginning. I know many people who have received tongues and they certainly are not filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit. Again, I must say that if you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you have a *holy* spirit. The Holy Spirit is not full of bitterness, resentment and anxiety. He is a very gentle, meek and holy person. If you will spend time in His presence seeking Him, His character will be reproduced in you.

The Apostle Paul said, *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away and all things have become new"* (2 Cor. 5:17). We must continue to seek God until everything of the old creation does not affect us anymore. The old creation, including the world, sin, self, and the devil, were all terminated at the Cross. Self-life is very deceptive. In fact, there is no such thing as a self-governed person. You are either governed by and receive your life from the serpent, represented by the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil", which is living by a knowledge of good and evil, or you are governed by and receive your life from God, represented by the "Tree of Life". When you are born again, you receive a new life-source and your nature is changed. For this reason, you can never be happy again serving sin, because you have a new nature. This is why we must seek God until His life fills us and completely transforms our soul into His expression.

The life that we live is simply an expression of *what is on the inside of us*. If you are

expressing a life that is sometimes good and sometimes evil, then you know that you are still living, at least in some measure, by the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil". If you can be full of love today, and tomorrow be expressing bitterness, anger, anxieties, and hatred, then know that you are what you express. There are so many who will love you until you disagree with them, and then all their love turns to resentment. They think "Lord, how can they do that to me?" How did Jesus respond on the Cross? He said, *"Father, forgive them"* (Mt. 12:34). What is in you, you will express. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Jesus expressed mercy at the Cross. Mercy is compassion with a desire to relieve pain and suffering. Mercy does not carry any "ifs" with it—"If you treat me right," or "If you don't wrong me." True mercy is full of compassion, and a deep longing desire to help and to relieve suffering, even the suffering of someone who is wrongfully using you.

Mercy and Truth

God is merciful, but He is also just and full of truth. God will not be merciful at the expense of truth and justice, or at the expense of His righteous nature. There are some Christians who feel it is permissible to have sin and bondages in their lives, because God is merciful and He understands that we are weak and just human. The truth is, when you call out to Jesus, He comes into you, and you are in covenant with Him and there is no way out. The Apostle Paul told the Ephesians that they were sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption. Once the seed of God is activated on the inside of you, **God is under contract to that seed to bring it into maturity.** If you don't understand right from the very beginning that your will must be brought into submission to the divine Will, you may go through a lot of suffering. God will bring to maturity in you that which He

began! He is the author and the finisher of our faith. That is **mercy**, but not at the expense of truth. God in His mercy will put the rod of correction on you. Once you belong to God, He will never leave you alone. The Holy Spirit is sometimes lovingly called "The Hound of Heaven". He will never leave you alone until you submit to Him. He does this not by force, but by drawing you again and again by His love.

Learning To React in Love

If you are truly a merciful person, you will react in love when someone wrongfully uses you. When someone wrongs you and you express the life of the serpent in bitterness, wrath, and judgment, you do not know the mercy of God. Only God has the right to judge, and His judgment is always for **purification**, never for condemnation. **The judgments, the fire of God, the tribulation, is always for the purification of His seed in you.** When someone does you wrong, they are in your power. Jesus said to His disciples, *"Whosoever sins you retain they are retained, and whosoever sins you forgive are forgiven"* (John 20:23). So when a person wrongs you, how you react towards them will depend upon what kind of character has been formed in you. If you have the character of God, you will be merciful and say, "Father, forgive them; they don't understand what they are doing." No one who wrongs one of God's anointed understands what they are doing, or they wouldn't do it. If you really see yourself in the light of God and His holiness, you will realize that no man can have that holy character formed in him if he has not had a revelation of God's life and ability in him. Even Christians who wrong you do not understand what they are doing. They do not have an understanding of the forgiveness of God. If you really have an understanding of the forgiveness of God, nothing can keep you under condemnation, and you will not

condemn or take vengeance on another. As a child of God, you can never get to a point in your life where forgiveness is no longer available. God's forgiveness is unlimited, and when you realize that, it will bring you out of your bondage. Every time you miss God, every time you fail, you can run to the arms of your Father for forgiveness. When you learn God's forgiveness for yourself, then you will be able to forgive others.

How Often Must I Forgive?

In Matthew 18:21, Peter asked Jesus, *"How many times must I forgive my brother who sins against me?"* How many times must we put up with the same person doing us wrong time after time and still forgive them? I know what the Word says, but how many times do I have to take this? Jesus then told a parable about the servant who owed ten thousand talents. This is a picture of us. There is no way we could ever pay the debt we owe God. We blow it every day of our lives. There is nothing we could do to pay the debt of sin in our lives. Jesus lived the example of a man filled with God, and went to the Cross and paid the debt for all of our sin. There is no sin in your life that is too big for the blood of Jesus to cleanse, so that you can stand in God's presence holy, unblemished and undefiled. God has forgiven the insurmountable debt of **all** your sin. That is mercy, and that is God's character. That is why He could forgive men who nailed Him to a cross. **God expresses what is on the inside of Him—love, mercy and compassion.**

Now, when we have someone do wrong to us, how do we react? That is what this parable is all about. If you do not forgive those who wrong you, then Matthew 18:32-35 applies. *"Then his lord, after he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt, because you desired me to. Should you not also have compassion on your*

fellow servant, even as I had pity on you? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses."

The character of the Christian is one who forgives just as Jesus forgave. Anyone who has been exposed to their carnal nature realizes that in that nature they stand condemned before God. When we call out to God, He forgives everything we ever did or will do, and then *asks us to do likewise* to our fellow man! Jesus said if we won't forgive, then we will be turned over to the tormentors. There will be circumstances raised up in your life to make you realize your total wretchedness. If you judge and condemn another, you may find yourself doing the same thing or even worse. This is why Jesus admonished us, "*Judge not, that ye be not judged*" (Matt. 7:1). If you have problems in your life with unforgiveness, and resentment, you need to seek Him, and His character will wash all that out. When we truly experience God's forgiveness, there will no longer be any pride in us. There will be nothing in us that will be vindictive towards another. There will be no insisting on our own way. In God's Kingdom, you don't always get your own way, if you're submissive to the Spirit of God.

God is presenting us with the truth in these messages. Some for years have been claiming to be Christians, saying, "Jesus lives in me." Some have had the doctrine of righteousness and holiness without much reality. It is time that we seek God until the things of the Spirit are made a reality in our lives. It is time to let God take all our knowledge and let Him *build it into us*, so that He can raise up His corporate expression on the earth, the Glorious Church without spot or wrinkle.

Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

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

How many times have you thought, "Oh, if only I could see God!" Seeing God is a promise made to the **pure in heart**. Thank God it's a matter of the heart, and not the intellect or emotions. Sometimes I just don't feel like doing what I should, but my heart will lead me in the right direction. The gospel of Jesus is a gospel to the heart. Thank God, it doesn't depend upon how we *feel*. If our heart is truly seeking God, we will be able to take control of our feelings. Maybe the saints of God are meeting and I just don't feel like going. We can rise up and speak to our body, "Feet, you are going to take me where the saints are this morning." I may not feel like worshipping God on a certain day, but if I follow my heart I will raise my voice to sing and praise, and I will find myself in the enjoyment of God.

What Is Our Heart?

Some say that the heart and the spirit are the same in scripture, being synonymous terms. "*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saves such as be of a contrite spirit*" (Psalm 34:18). You can look in your Strong's Concordance and see that these two words are different. "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me*" (Psalm 51:10). "*A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken*" (Prov. 15:13). "*A new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh, and I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep my judgments and do them*" (Ezek. 36:26). These verses show that the heart and the spirit are not always used as synonymous terms.

We Contact God With Our Spirit

To make contact with the Lord is simply a matter of using our spirit. The well of Living Water, Christ, the life, the ability and nature of God, is in our spirit. The function of our spirit is to contact, receive, commune with, and worship God. If you want to worship God, you must worship Him in spirit, not with the natural mind and reasoning. **If you want to contact God, you must learn how to worship Him with your spirit.** Jesus said in John 4:24, "*God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*" When we receive Jesus, our spirit is quickened by the Spirit of God. Our spirit becomes energized with divine life. I Corinthians 6:17 says, "*He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.*" You are one with God, not in your natural mind, but in your spirit. This is why the Apostle Paul says in Romans 12:2, "*Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" We must spend time in God's presence and in His Word to allow His Spirit in our spirit to flow into and transform our natural mind into a spiritual mind.

Touching God in Our Spirit

This can be illustrated by electricity. Electricity is a type of God. You have a base station where the energy is stored, and you have the lines through which the energy flows. Then you have a plug in your home. All the power of electricity is available to you, but you must plug into it to benefit from it. You cannot light your house with a lamp unless you plug into the electricity. God the Father is the source of divine life. God the Son is the course through which the life flows. The Holy Spirit in our spirit is the plug through which we make contact with the divine life. We have the flowing of God with His divine essence and ability available to us in our spirit. When we touch God in our spirit,

we immediately sense the energizing life-giving power of His Spirit, just like you would be charged with electricity if you touched a bare wire. You can have electricity transmitted into you simply by a touch. There are testimonies of thousands of people who can say, "One day I received a touch from God." I can remember so vividly the day when I first felt the touch of God. When the divine electricity was transmitted into me, I didn't understand what had happened to me for quite some time. I didn't know why I would begin to weep when I would walk into an assembly of God's people. My mind could not understand the things of God.

When you understand that to touch God is always a matter of your spirit, then your mind cannot cheat you out of touching God when you feel depressed, or you miss God, or do something wrong. Always remember that touching God is not a matter of the mind or the soul exercising its power, but a matter of *you touching God in your spirit*. No matter how bad a life you live, if you stick your finger in an open light-socket you will be energized with electricity. God's principle is the same. **No matter how many times you miss God, no matter how bad you are, if you will turn to God and exercise your spirit to touch Him, you will be energized by His divine electricity.** Jesus went to the Cross to make God available to you *regardless of your condition*. If we could be righteous within ourselves and could walk the Christian life with self-effort, there would have been no need for the Cross of Christ. Because of the blood of Jesus, and the offering of His spotless life as the Lamb of God, we have access to Him. We can put our finger in the light socket, regardless of our outward condition, and have God flow through us. If you really understand this, you can always get to God. Your condition does not matter. So many try to adjust their outward condition to get to God. Every time

you seek after God and touch Him, you get the divine electricity transmitted into you and that will adjust your outward condition. It is not what you can do in your own strength, but it is a matter of getting to the power source. When you realize the value of the forgiveness of the blood of Jesus, you can immediately enter into the Spirit and touch the divine electricity, and that will cleanse you and adjust your walk. Something has been added to our spirit. No longer are we separated from God, but His divine nature and ability have been added to our human spirit.

Those Who Are Pure in Heart Will See God

The pure in heart shall see God. God is visible today, but because of the blindness of men's hearts they don't see Him. If you will seek after God until He purifies your heart, you will see Him. Today it is very easy to see God if your heart is pure, if you are being sanctified by the Spirit. Most people think that sanctification is instantaneous, and it is, but it is also a process. When Jesus comes into you, you are sanctified, set apart for God, but His character must be worked into you. We must be transformed into His likeness and image.

The only place you will ever find or see God today is in humanity, unless He gives you a vision of His physical form. To really know God, you must know Him from within yourself. You must grow in His life until you can say with the Apostle Paul, "It is no longer I who live but Christ Who lives within me." When people see the pure Spirit of God flowing from a person, they are attracted to them. **God never condemns; He reconciles and forgives because of the sacrifice of Calvary.** God is love, and when you truly love people, they sense God within you, even though they may not know what it is. The average person in our country today has not turned off God. They are turned away from a

religious system that has given them a false impression of God. The system of Christianity is very confusing and not conducive to attracting people to a God who loves them unconditionally. As Christians, we must ask ourselves what impression we give others about God through our actions. We may say a lot of the right things, but our actions are what impress people.

Attitudes and Motivations

"Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven. Therefore when you do alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily, I say unto you they have their reward. But when you do alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your alms may be in secret, and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly" (Matt. 6:1-4).

Matthew 6 is an excellent chapter to reveal the attitudes and motivations of the heart. Do we give money to be seen of men, to be known by men as a tither or giver? If we do, we already have all the reward we will get. When I first discovered the meaning of these verses I didn't really know where my heart was. I knew at the end of the year that certain ones in the church knew how much money was given. We have always believed in giving a lot through the years and I had to really search my heart to see if I was giving partly because I took pride in the fact that at least some knew how much we gave. I couldn't say for sure that I didn't take pride in my giving. Many times I would see a brother or sister in the church in need and I would give them money and tell them the Lord impressed me that I should meet their need. There was definitely room for pride in this because they knew that

I was a godly person and I heard from God and was helping them.

Giving in Secret

Since I could see the possibility of pride in this I decided that I would begin to *give in secret*. I knew right away that this was going to cost me, because to give in secret without anyone knowing it, I wouldn't get a tax credit for giving. I began right away to give in secret. I didn't decrease my giving, but I never let anybody know what I gave and never put my name on an offering envelope. I found that I received the greatest joy in doing something that only God knew about. After that, when I saw a need and the Lord impressed me to help, instead of going to that person and giving them money, I would put a little note in an envelope and say, "The Lord has touched me that you have this need, and here are the finances to help out." I would drop that in the offering basket in church with the person's name on it. I received much more joy in giving this way. There was a brother that I used to fellowship a lot with and he became unemployed for quite some time, and I started helping him financially in this way. One day when we were in fellowship he said to me, "I am so excited about how God meets our needs." He told me he really had a need and was praying about it and the first thing he knew an usher came up and handed him an envelope with his name on it and there was the money to meet that need. I can't tell you how much joy that gave me, and God received all the credit for it. There was no entrance for pride, because the brother didn't know who gave him the money. If you have never done this, please try it. You'll love the joy it will bring!

Praying in the Church Meeting

"When you pray be not as the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues

and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. I say unto you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father in secret, and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly" (Matt. 6:5).

When I first read this, I took it too far and decided I would never pray in public again. Many times in the church meeting I would have an anointing and want to pray, but I wouldn't do it because I didn't want to be seen of men. God dealt with me on that and I realized that was not what He meant. He didn't say not to pray in public, He said not to do it to be seen by men! It's your *attitude* and *motive* that matters. If the Spirit of God wells up within you in a corporate meeting, it is beautiful to pray together. I don't pray in public just so you can see how wonderful I pray.

God showed me how to know if I was praying just to be heard of men, or if I was truly praying under the anointing and flow of God. When you pray, enter into your closet. Do you have closet prayer? Do you spend time every day alone seeking God? It is one thing to come together and pray in church and be "spiritual" but it's another thing to enter into your closet every day and pray privately where no one sees or hears you. If you are diligent to pray privately in secret, then you don't have to be concerned about praying in public, because you then know you're not doing it just to be heard by men, because you pray every day.

Selfish Ambition

You may be seeking God with selfish ambitions. Today, there is a prosperity gospel that is preached in the Church and there is certainly nothing wrong with prosperity. If you become conformed to Jesus in every area,

I can assure you that you will be prosperous. When you hear the prosperity message, if your heart is not pure, you will always think of material possessions and wealth. What is your purpose in tithing and giving your money? Is it so that you can get a hundredfold return? That may or may not happen, but is that your motive for giving? Would you rather be made rich in faith? Would you be willing to be made rich in suffering? The Apostle Paul said, *"That I might know Him in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, that I might be made conformable to His death"* (Phil. 3:10). Would you rather be prosperous in love and godly wisdom? Very few hunger after these things, but most hunger for the material blessings. There is absolutely nothing wrong with being materially prosperous. It depends upon your attitude and motivation.

There has been a lot of talk about Job, but look at his heart. He had a heart for God. He thought that God was putting boils all over his body and he could do nothing but sit in a pile of ashes. In spite of all this suffering, Job said, *"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"* (Job 13:15). You may say that Job was an ignorant man, but he had a heart to serve God. Job said, "I know that in my flesh I shall see God."

Even though our needs are never met, even though we never have an abundance of material possessions, we must fix our heart on God until it is pure before Him. I don't want anyone to get the wrong impression. Jesus said that if you seek first the Kingdom of God all things would be added to you. To seek the Kingdom of God is to have your whole being under the subjection and authority of the Spirit of God. That is what it means to seek the Kingdom. You may not be experiencing much yet, but if your heart is seeking in this way, you will eventually have a pure heart.

You Cannot Serve God and Self

There comes a time in every Christian's life when the Holy Spirit will shine on the motivations of his heart. We seek God but we also seek self-satisfaction. We have shared in the past on Mystery Babylon, the great harlot in The Revelation. Mystery Babylon is produced through a mixture of serving God and being concerned for self at the same time. If you are trying to reserve anything for yourself, you need to drop it. I have heard it said, "I tithe my money; I do everything I know to do, yet God is just not blessing me." This is very subtle, but this kind of thinking is blaming God for not meeting your needs. I have even heard people say, "God is not keeping His part of the bargain!" If you are truly seeking God from a pure motive, you can be thrown into the street or have any number of things happen to you and it will not cause you to question God. It will cause you to open to God and say, "Where have I missed it?" A pure motive will always say, "God, I know I have missed it because your Word says, *'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things will be added unto you'* (Matt. 6:33), so there must be an area of my heart that is not seeking You first." If you are a Christian and your needs are not being met, why question God? You need to search your heart and pray for the light of God to expose any hidden areas such as unbelief, rebellion, or such.

The Door to Our Being

The only way God can flow out of your spirit is through your heart. Our hearts can be described as the center of our focus. Your heart is wherever you have your attention. Whatever your attention is focused on is where your heart is. The gospel is not just for the spirit. It must become the center of our attention and focus. Our goal should be centered on becoming like Jesus.

"O, generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Matt. 12:34-35).

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile a man" (Matt. 15:18).

Our heart is the door to our being, and everything that comes into us or flows out of us must go through the heart. The message of the gospel is not just an intellectual gospel to the **head**. The gospel of the Kingdom is for the **heart**. If you are just a religious person, and go out and try to convince people to come to Jesus, giving them historical facts that would convince them intellectually, and it goes no further than that, you have done them a great disservice. Our churches are full of people who are convinced that Jesus is their Savior. Most people think that is enough. We must have an intellectual knowledge of the gospel, but without the born again conversion experience, we have only an intellectual gospel and are still lost. It is not enough just to believe that Jesus is Savior and died for our sins, **YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN!** You must seek God until He begins to rise up in you with His life and nature. The gospel must reach past the head and enter into our heart, the door of our being, and flow into our spirit.

Our heart truly is the gateway to our being. Whatever you set your heart on, and whatever you allow to come into your heart, is what you will become. A lot of people never go on with the Lord because they do not understand this principle. No matter how far into the mind

you get, no matter how messed up your emotions get, no matter how far you feel God is away from you, you can turn your attention to the Lord and exercise your spirit and touch Him. When I turn my attention to spiritual things, and I turn my heart to seek after God, then regardless of how I *feel*, I can enter into the presence of God and touch Him. Do not let your failures or your sin stop you from turning to God. No matter how many times you fail God, He is still available to you if you will but turn your heart toward Him. If you have been born again, then you have another life and nature on the inside of you. You will want to be changed into His likeness. If you do not want God and do not want to be conformed to Him, and you do not want to learn obedience to Him, and you do not have a desire for the things of God, then you are **not** born again. It does not matter how much you know **about** God, if there is no inner heart conviction and no conversion, then you must seek God until you are regenerated in your spirit.

A Pure Heart

To be pure in heart means to be **unmixed**. Something that is pure is unmixed with anything else. If you have pure gold, it is unmixed. The problem today with most of us is that our heart is not pure; it is mixed. We seek God, but we also seek many other things. To have a pure heart for God is to have a heart that seeks only God—a heart that is free from anything that might lower the quality of God's life within you. To be pure also means to have a singleness of purpose. If you have more than one main purpose in life, then your heart is not pure.

Most of us have a mixed heart. We love God; we seek God; we are regenerated; but our heart is still divided. We still seek many other things besides God. James says that the "double minded man is unstable in all his

ways." To be double minded is to have a divided heart.

"Teach me thy way, O Lord, I will walk in thy truth, unite my heart to fear thy name" (Psalm 86:11). Why does he say here to unite my heart? Because most of us have a divided heart. We are not single in purpose, and we are mixed with the things of the world. We need to pray, "Lord unite my heart." The one who has a divided heart is like the man in Romans 7. He delights to do the law of God in his inner man, but he finds another law at work in his members bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death. Here is a man who is born again, who is seeking God, who has a regenerated spirit that is crying, "O wretched man that I am." He is a divided man, because his heart is divided and is not yet single. *"Whenever the heart shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away"* (2 Cor. 3:16). Many times, a child of God will go to his spiritual leader for counsel. In the light of the Word and through fellowship and prayer, he gets a clear understanding of what he should do because he has been in the light. When he leaves and goes home, many times he will do the opposite of what he received while in the light, because he hasn't learned how to keep his heart centered upon God.

Many times, when you meet with the saints you feel so much spiritual strength. Because of being united in worship, prayer and praise, you feel like David, who said he could *"run through a troop and jump over a wall"* (Ps. 18:29). However, when you get home, sometimes you immediately get into a fight with your husband or wife, because the heart is not centered, not single, and has not been trained to keep focused on the Spirit of God within. God must have our full attention and focus to be able to possess us.

"O that there were such a heart in them that they would fear Me, and keep all My

commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever" (Deut. 5:29).

It is hard to understand why Christians get upset when you start talking about keeping the commandments of God. The very fact that Christians would oppose keeping the commandments of God shows that there is something wrong on the inside. Now we realize that the natural carnal man is incapable of keeping God's laws. However, the Christian has within him the life and nature of God to enable him to walk in all the righteous requirements of the law. That's the good news of the gospel. It is no longer a case of man's efforts or self ability. It is a matter of centering your heart on Jesus until He comes alive on the inside of you. We need to cultivate a desire to be like Him in all things.

The Lord said that the fulfilling of the whole law is to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind, and then to love your neighbor as yourself. A person who loves the Lord with all of his heart does not want to fall into disobedience. A man who loves his neighbor as himself would never commit adultery; he wouldn't steal or do anything against his neighbor.

How to Obtain a Pure Heart

There is a divine progression to obtaining a pure heart.

- 1. It must begin in our thought life.
- 2. It must then become what we speak.
- 3. What we speak will become our actions.

It is our thoughts, **what we think about**, that will begin the divine progression of purifying our heart.

"Finally brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things

are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of a good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

Imagine what is going to happen to you if you bring your mind into subjection to these verses. The very first step in purifying your heart is to begin to set your mind on the things of God. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 8 that to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace. The mind set on the flesh is death. This is what caused the Flood in Noah's day. It is stated in Genesis that the imaginations and the thoughts of man's heart were only evil continually. That is what caused the great flood that wiped out most of the human race. If you begin to think only on truth, honesty, justice, lovely things, good reports, virtue and praise, it will cause the divine flow of God's life in you to begin to stir.

Out of the Abundance of the Heart

Jesus said, "*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*" (Matt. 12:34). If you are continually thinking and meditating and reading the Word of God and getting it into your heart, then that is what will come out of your heart. You will begin to speak according to what you put into your heart. It is not very hard to discern where someone is spiritually when you hear them talk. Out of the abundance of your heart, what you have been focusing on and thinking about is what you will speak about. If you want to be a mysterious person and not have someone be able to discern you, if you don't want them to know what you are like, just don't talk.

We first train our minds to always focus on the things of God. This will renew our minds and change our conversation so that we speak according to the Word and principles of God. Then the words that we speak have the creative ability of God to bring our actions

into line with what we are thinking and speaking. What you are thinking and speaking you will become. Thoughts, words and actions will purify your heart, or keep you in the darkness. When you find yourself thinking the wrong kind of thoughts, **STOP IT!** When you begin to speak the wrong thing, **STOP IT!** This is very simple, but not so easy. Try sometime when you're angry at your spouse not to say the wrong thing. If you will pray for them instead, and set your mind on the things of the spirit, you will become purified in that area.

A singleness of heart, a pure heart, means you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. You become undivided in your quest for God. We sometimes put many things before seeking God. For some it's an occupation, for others it's entertainment, or it may be any number of things.

I have seen many people give up everything to follow the Lord. I was in a church in Southern California for a few years where God was flowing like a mighty river. This was a place where you could walk in and be delivered without anybody touching you or praying for you. In the praise and worship, there would be alcoholics and mainline addicts delivered. I have seen many people come to a meeting like that from all over the country and many times they would go home, sell all they had, give up retirement and everything to move to California to be a part of that move of God. These people had their priorities right. They were hungry for God. God will always provide for those who have such a heart to seek Him.

Our heart is like a large house with many rooms. Each area in our heart must be cleansed and purified. This is a process, and if you will put these truths to practice in your life, God will purify every area. If you have bitterness and anger and hate in your life,

these areas all must be transformed. Let us all seek for the purity of heart that will allow the Spirit of God to arise in us, so that we too can see God come alive and be manifested within us. When all of our impurities become washed out, then there is nothing left but the Spirit of the living God, Who has been birthed on the inside of us. He has filled our mind and our emotions and subdued our will so that we are conformed to Him in all things and are living in the anointing and presence of God. That is when we are a carrier of His presence, a New Testament priest on the earth.

Man Was Created To Express God's Glory

If you begin to understand what Jesus taught in Matthew 5-7, and you apply the principles that He teaches, you will grow up into Him in all things. The emphasis in the Apostle Paul's ministry was Jesus Christ in you as your hope. The very kernel of the gospel is **Jesus Christ in you, the hope of glory**. We will never know the glory of God until we experience the life of God coming alive on the inside of us. Man was created to be the glory of God's creation. The glory of God is the expression of God. Wherever God is expressed, there is His glory. Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus was *"the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person."* When God comes alive in us, then others begin to see His glory expressed in our lives.

Jesus teaches us, in Matthew 5-7, the character of the Christian. This is not to try to get us to act in a certain way, or to try to change our outward behavior. That is man's concept of religion. Man's religion says, "If you change your outward behavior, and do the best you can, God will accept you, but if you don't do the best you can, He **won't** accept you. Man, in his carnal nature, can never please God. No matter how good you are, it is impossible for you to live the God-kind of life with your natural human nature. Man in His

human nature expresses the life of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and that life cannot live godly. That life may be very good; it may go to church, it may try to serve God, to pray and do all the right things. Or it may be very bad and do all the wrong things, but it is still the *wrong life*.

Two Trees in the Garden

"And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food: the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil . . . And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree in the garden you may freely eat, but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat of it, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:9,16,17).

Jesus did not come to earth to live and die just to leave us a New Testament religion, or a new set of rules and regulations, or a higher standard to try to live up to. I was told as a young Christian that Matthew 5-7 was given to us by Jesus to raise the standard of the Christian life and make us realize we could never be like this, but "we must do the best we can." This concept is totally wrong.

What Jesus is saying in the Sermon on the Mount is that if you are truly born again, if His Spirit comes alive in you, and raises up in your consciousness, and you are becoming a son of God, then this will be your experience. This is not a goal that you cannot attain to, nor is it a goal you try to attain. It is **His life living and being expressed through you**.

The two trees in the garden represent two sources of life. We derive our living from one of these sources. The Tree of Life represents God as our life, living in total dependence upon the Spirit of God within us for everything we do in life. The fruit of this tree

produces the life of God in humanity, and has dominion over the works of the flesh. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil represents living by a knowledge of good and evil, independently of God. It is a life of always trying to choose the good over the evil. The fruit of this tree produces the carnal man. This man may be very good and very religious, but he is alienated and separated in his mind from the life of God. He sees himself and God as two individual beings. "I am me, and God is God." This is the consciousness that must fall into the ground and die, so that the resurrected Spirit of Jesus may rise in us and be all in all. The only way you know which tree you are feeding on is by the fruit that is being produced in your life.

A Life That Expresses Both Good and Evil

The best example we have of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is the system of religion, even the Christian religion. Every tree produces fruit, and every seed produces after its own kind. Jesus said, "You shall know them by their fruit." The fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is a life that produces and expresses both good and evil. Some of the time you can be very good and express the good side of the tree, but then you have times when you express things that are not so good. Today, I can express love to you, but tomorrow, when you do me wrong, I express anger, bitterness, and resentment. This tree of good and evil will also produce the fruit of self-righteousness. If you are able with your carnal nature to choose the good over the evil, it will produce a good self image in you and you may become a very self-righteous person. You may have a strong will and be able to make the right choices most of the time, and you will not be able to understand why everyone else cannot do what you can do. However, if you don't have a strong will, and you have a desire for the wrong things, and

you make the wrong choices, then what you have is a poor self image. This tree produces both a good self image and a bad self image. This is the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil being expressed as the natural carnal man.

No matter how long you have known God, even if you are born again but are living by the knowledge of good and evil, you will always be able to justify those things in your life that are wrong, because you try so hard to be good. You may go to church, read your Bible, and pray every day and still be living by the wrong source.

In the book of The Revelation, these two trees come to maturity. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil expresses Mystery Babylon, the great harlot. Mystery Babylon is so beautiful, decked with gold and silver and precious stones. These represent God's people. They have gold (the divine nature), silver (they have been redeemed), and precious stones (they have some transformation in their lives), but they have never learned how to completely put away the carnal nature and have the full expression of God's life come to maturity in them. **They are in a religious system that is a mixture and is not pure.**

The Tree of Life comes to maturity in the book of The Revelation as The New Jerusalem, the city of God. These are the people of God who have overcome their carnal nature and have become saturated and permeated with His life. They have become what God intended for man in the beginning—a full expression of His life on the earth.

The Tree of Life Represents God's Life

The Tree of Life represents God's life. Jesus said, "*I am come that they might have life and*

have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). He also said *"I am the life"* (John 14:5). The fruit of the Tree of Life is found in Galatians 5:22, *"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance"*. Most of God's people who were on the earth when Jesus came did not understand His teaching. They were a self-righteous people who prided themselves on living by a knowledge of good and evil. Even today, very few of God's people understand and experience God's life flowing in them.

God's Life in Man

Can you even imagine what it would be like to be totally abused by someone, and sense only grief and love for them? Most Christians don't even know that this is possible, but this is God's life flowing in a person. Jesus hung on the Cross, bleeding and dying, and said, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"* (Luke 23:34).

The only reason that we hunger and thirst after God is that we have had a revelation of Jesus. Somehow, some way, our hearts have been touched by God. Only the person who has really been touched by, and experienced, the love of God can say, as they're being abused, "Father forgive them, for they just don't know what they are doing." There is absolutely no excuse, when you know God intimately, to rise up in anger and retribution against a brother or sister because of anything they might have done to you.

Jesus knew that His people had a wrong concept of God because of their very own religion in the law of Moses. Jesus said in Matthew 5:38-39, *"You have heard that it has been said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say to you resist not evil."* He also said, *"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you,*

and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father" (Matt. 5:44).

We Do Not Live According to the Law

How do we live this kind of life? It is definitely not a life lived under the law. Living by the knowledge of good and evil is what puts you under law, trying to live up to a standard with the carnal nature. This is what the Apostle Paul shares in Romans 7:22-23. He said, *"I delight in the law of God in my mind, but I find another law in my members bringing me into captivity to the law of sin and death."* 1 Corinthians 15:56 says that *"the strength of sin is in the law."*

Every time you try with your carnal nature to overcome sin you give strength to it. I smoked as a Christian for many years, and I tried desperately at times to quit. Every time I would try to quit, the desire for smoking would actually increase. I was also a hundred pounds overweight for years, yet every time I would try to diet, the desire for food would increase. The strength of sin is in the law. The very fact that you put your self-effort into trying to overcome, will bring you into captivity to the law of sin and death. This is not to discourage you, but to reveal to you that you cannot live the life of God by self-effort.

John said, *"The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"* (John 1:17). Jesus did not come to give us a *standard* to try to live up to, He gave us **His life**. He does not make our carnal life better. He did not give us a life that couldn't make it, but He gave us the life that is really life. On the inside of you is the seed of God, a life that has no bounds or limitations. A life that knows no disease, no sickness, no sin, and no death. This is the life that is being revealed as available to the people of God today. That life comes to us through grace and reality. One of the meanings of the word "grace" is

"enjoyment". Jesus is grace personified coming to you and bringing to you the enjoyment of His presence. He said in John 7:37, *"He that believes in me, out of his being shall flow rivers of living water."* Whenever you get into the enjoyment of God, the Spirit of God (represented by the river), begins to stir and flow in you. The book of The Revelation tells us in 22:1-2 that in the water of life there is the Tree of Life. Whenever I get into the enjoyment of God, the river begins to flow, and I then begin to feast on the life of God that abides within me. From the enjoyment of God, and the flowing of His Spirit, and the feasting of His life, comes the transformation of the soul, and the increase of the fruit of the Spirit. We are changed into His likeness and transformed through the enjoyment of His presence, not by the works of the flesh. Through the enjoyment of God grows the fruit of the Tree of Life.

Jesus teaches us what the New Testament believer will be like. He has the Spirit of God come into him, and as he learns to yield to the Spirit's power within his life, he will reproduce the life of God in humanity.

The Peace of God

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9).

A peacemaker is one who first of all experiences the peace of God himself. This is the kind of peace that Psalm 46:1-2 describes: *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the sea."* A peacemaker is one who can transmit the peace of God to others. A peacemaker can bring peace into any circumstance. Again, I want to emphasize that the Christian life is absolutely a matter of **God's life functioning in us**. It is a life that is totally outside of our

fallen human nature, or our own character or soulish makeup. The Christian life is a matter of God Himself living His life through us. The Church of the living God is a group of people who live, not by their natural life, but by the life of God. The life of God is being developed and is growing within them.

This Teaching Is Not for the Multitudes

These words in Matthew 5-7 were not spoken to the multitudes. Matthew 4:25 says, *"There followed Him a great multitude of people from Galilee and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan."* When Jesus healed, and cast out demons, the multitudes followed Him. Matthew 5:1 says, *"And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain, and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him."* The multitudes did not go up into the mountain. The multitudes will not usually go anywhere where it's difficult to hear the Words of the Lord. The multitudes won't go to the mountain. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 8:1, we are told that when He came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him again. The multitudes never heard the words of the Sermon on the Mount. The only ones that heard the greatest message ever given on the practical Christian lifestyle were His disciples who followed Him up the mountain. A disciple is one who is willing to be disciplined. If you are not at least willing to be a disciplined one, you cannot receive Matthew 5-7. If you are not willing to lay your life down and be conformed to the character of Jesus, you will never even want to hear the teaching of Matthew 5-7. This teaching is for the ones who want to be conformed and transformed into the sons of God.

The Kingdom Is Where God Rules and Reigns

This character that Jesus teaches about in the Sermon on the Mount is not possible for anyone to have who has not been regenerated. It takes the life and the nature of God to be able live this way. **This life is not just a goal for you to try to reach for, but it's the life available to you when you receive the life of God through the new birth.** Matthew 5-7 is the character you must have to be in the Kingdom of God. God's Kingdom is wherever God rules and reigns. If God is not ruling and reigning in your life, then you are not in the Kingdom. You may be saved, but still not in the Kingdom in reality. This Kingdom life is not revealed to the unbeliever or to the carnal Christian, to the one who is not really interested in the things of the Lord, who is not willing to *press into* the Kingdom. If you are a carnal Christian, the truths of Matthew 5-7 will always be a mystery to you. You will never be able to understand how you, as a mere human, could ever live up to this standard. But if you are willing to let the Holy Spirit take you through the process of transformation, you will find that every seed produces after its own kind, and the character of Jesus will be reproduced in your life. Are you willing to change? Are you willing to wait on the Spirit and move according to His directions? God does not always send you what you *want*, but He will always send you what you *need*.

Jesus established an entirely different kind of living and a different Kingdom on the earth than what the Jews expected of Him. When Jesus came, the Jews were not expecting a peacemaker. They were expecting a warmonger! They were expecting that when the Messiah came, He would destroy all their enemies and set up a worldly kingdom. When he came talking about peace, and loving your enemies, and did not violently take the kingdoms of this world, they rejected Him. Today, once again, the Christians are looking for Jesus to come and destroy their enemies.

They do not realize that, for the most part, He is a peacemaker. He did destroy our enemies at the Cross. Jesus today wants to come to the people of the world through you and me as a peacemaker. He has broken down the middle wall between God and man and has reconciled His creation back to Himself through the Cross. The words that were spoken by the angels to the shepherds at the birth of Jesus were "*Peace on earth, good will toward men*" (Luke 2:14). Today, we should not be preaching a gospel of judgment and condemnation, but a gospel of peace to all men. Peace to you and good will to all men. God has a good Will for every one of us, and that Will is simply for us to receive Him into our lives and then experience His peace in the midst of turmoil. Peace in the mist of all the troubles that come to us in our daily life. You cannot live this kind of life unless you're a new creation man. You must have the life of God in you to experience this kind of life. If you haven't received God's life, then no amount of self-effort will enable you to live this way. You must receive a new nature. Only the life of God can live godly. Once you receive the life of God and you are willing to allow the Holy Spirit to transform you, then you are able to live the life that Jesus lived while on the earth. A peacemaker is one who will stand out from all the peoples of the earth. He will even shine above other Christians. A peacemaker is a servant of men, and will lay down his life for others.

Out of an Evil Heart

Jesus said, "*Out of the heart proceeds murders, adultery and fornication*" (Matt. 15:19). If we are not regenerated, there is an evil fountain in us, and from that fountain in our heart proceeds all the evil, all the wars, and all the strife. All the problems of the earth come from the center of the unregenerated man. **The answer for man's problems is not humanism, not idealism, not communism,**

but a new life and a new nature. If you change man's heart, you will change the world! There are many organizations like the United Nations which try to produce peace. They are only putting a bandage over the problems. Organizations cannot get to the source of the problems because the source of man's problems is his heart. It is not political, social or economic. The problem is at the very core, the root of man's being—his heart. Until the heart of man is changed, until he is quickened by the life of God, there is no amount of teaching, no organization, no change of environment, that will help him. The only hope he has is an absolute change of his heart, a new nature, which can only come through contacting the Spirit of God.

What Is a Peacemaker?

If all God's people were peacemakers, there would be no strife and no division in the Church. The only division that should be in the Church is different places for us to come and worship. All the Christians couldn't meet in the same building. When the Apostle Paul wrote letters to the churches, he wrote to the church in the city. In the book of The Revelation, John was told to send out letters to the seven churches in seven cities. If the Lord wanted to write to the Christians today in Seattle, He wouldn't address it to the Lutherans, or Pentecostals, or Baptists. He would write it to the Saints in Seattle. Every believer in Seattle is a member of the Church, the Body of Christ. If we were all peacemakers, that's the kind of unity we would have. We might not all be together in one place, but we would flow together in His life, His love, and in His purpose. We would be growing up together in Him and be producing peace on earth and good will toward mankind.

The nature of a peacemaker is not a natural disposition. There are some who have a

natural disposition to want peace at any cost. They do not want any confrontation. However, if you are a peacemaker, you can confront and still bring peace into the situation. There is also a natural character that is bold and likes confrontation. That is definitely not a peacemaker. A peacemaker is not a quarrelsome person. Someone who is always ready to stand up and boldly declare their rights is not a peacemaker.

The first indication of a peacemaker is one who is actively involved in bringing the peace of God to others. A peacemaker has the answers for the world's problems. A peacemaker is able to transmit the peace of God to others and bring them into the understanding of that quiet, tranquil, peaceable life which they can have in God. Once you experience the peace of God you can have that peace in the midst of any circumstance, turmoil, or trial. A peacemaker must have a new nature and a pure heart.

A Peacemaker Is Not Touchy or Resentful

To be a peacemaker, you must be delivered from self. You must be delivered from self-concern, and be willing to completely forget about yourself. A peacemaker's main concern is to minister to others. If you are touchy, fretful, or resentful, it is impossible for you to be a peacemaker. If you are easily offended, you cannot be a peacemaker. What the world needs today is long-suffering. There have been so many hurts and disappointments, especially among God's people. There are many who have been hurt by pastors and fellow Christians. If you are touchy or resentful you will only be able to minister to people until they touch your sensitivity, and then you will withdraw. If you are self-centered, self-conscious or self-assertive, you cannot be a peacemaker. The very first step in bringing peace to others is learning to put yourself aside. The cause of war is self, and

self-preservation. Without selfishness, there would not be war on the earth. If I did not stand up for my rights and what I deserve, there could not possibly be war between us. If I am willing to sacrifice my desires and wants to make you happy, then I am a peacemaker. The slightest amount of self-preservation keeps you from bringing peace to a situation, because you will protect your feelings and your rights. You may ask, "Is this really fair to me?" If you are the least bit concerned about your rights and privileges and what's going to happen to "me" you will never be a peacemaker. If you ask yourself, "Why do I always have to be the one to suffer?" that is a self-centered question. You may be living with a husband or wife and ask, "Why do I always have to be the one to give in?" You will ask the questions until you learn that it really doesn't matter. If you really want to serve God, your rights and privileges do not really matter. We must look to the Holy Spirit to help us put down that self-centeredness. In the natural, it looks like the one you are giving in to is gaining, but in the spirit **you** are the one who is really gaining! Whenever you are the one who is always giving in and going the last mile, you are becoming rich in the spiritual things, and developing within you the character of God. A peacemaker is always trying to please the other person; they are always putting themselves aside. The more the life of God grows in you, the more you will enjoy being like this.

A True View of Self

To be a peacemaker, you must have a true view of yourself. If you have never come to the place that the Apostle Paul came to in Romans 7:24, where you cry out, "*O wretched man that I am,*" there will come a day when you will. Until that happens, you can never be a peacemaker. *Until you see that in yourself you are capable of doing what you are accusing others of doing,* you can never be a

peacemaker. Until you see that you are just as wretched as any other person, and that inherent in the self-life of man is the possibility of the worst kind of conduct, you may feel superior to others. If you really see, by the Spirit, your fallen selfish nature, you will become poor in spirit and cry out to God. If the Spirit reveals to you your rebellion, your unsubmitive nature, and unwillingness to do even the smallest things for the Lord because of your self-consciousness, it will help you to be merciful to others. When you see your own wretchedness, it causes you to be poor in spirit, and hunger and thirst after righteousness. You will begin to mourn over your condition. This will cause you to forget about yourself and your wants and desires. You will begin to absolutely hate your selfish nature.

Self Life Must Go!!!

In John 12:24, Jesus said, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone, but if it dies it brings forth much fruit. He that loves his life shall lose it, and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*" The word "life" here is the Greek word *psuche*, which means "soul life," or "self-life." If you do not have a revelation of self, and begin to hate whatever it is that you are holding on to that is keeping you in bondage, you will never be a peacemaker. We must, by the Spirit, press in to what God wants for us, regardless of what it costs our self-life. As Christians, we have a new nature and that is why we desire the things of God. We must press in to the things of the Spirit and forget about the flesh. We can learn to follow the new nature that wants the things of God. We can learn to keep our soul quiet.

The peacemaker is a new kind of person. He is able to look at other people objectively and evaluate them without being critical. He can

do this because he has allowed the Holy Spirit to transform him and enlighten him. He knows all the areas of his own life that need improving and where he misses God. The peacemaker knows how difficult it is to put down the selfish nature, so instead of criticizing others, he is able to minister peace to them. You can never bring peace to someone you are criticizing and judging. If you can say, "Lord, I don't understand how they can be a Christian all these years and still do some of the things they do," know that you could never bring them peace with that kind of an attitude. You would only bring them condemnation. You must realize that if it were not for the grace of God, **you** would be in the same condition or worse. The only reason we are where we are spiritually is that the Spirit of God has been able to unveil our eyes, bringing some understanding and revelation to our lives, which has brought us to the point where we are. When God brings true salvation to you and liberation from the flesh and its bondages, you can be a peacemaker, because you will not ever look down on another Christian who is not yet where *you think you are*.

A True Peacemaker

A true peacemaker has one goal and one desire. Paul says in Philippians 3:8, *"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."*

Are we really willing to suffer the loss of all things? Are we willing to suffer under the opinion of others if we begin to walk this life of a peacemaker? Paul goes on to say in verse 9, *"And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His*

resurrection." Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all knew the resurrection power of Jesus? The Word of God teaches us that as a believer with the life of God on the inside of us, we have the same power and Spirit that Jesus had while on the earth, the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. You will discover the spirit of resurrection life within you if you are willing to put aside everything and be found in Him. Verse 10 says, *"That I may know Him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."* You can never get away from suffering if you want to be conformed into the likeness of Jesus. One of the greatest sufferings you will go through in life is rejection. If you are not a peacemaker, rejection can destroy you. If you have not learned to put self down you will not be able to effectively deal with rejection. When God sends you out on a mission and people begin to reject you, you will not be able to stand your ground if you are a self-centered person and cannot handle your feelings.

Suppose I come to you and offend you by misjudging you. I accuse you of something that I feel is wrong with you that is just not true. I try to correct you in a situation for which you feel there is nothing wrong. This can really cause strong feelings of rejection. How you react to this, and what comes up on the inside of you because of my accusation, will reveal to you whether or not you are a true peacemaker, and whether or not you are self-centered. If I come to you and judge you wrongly, and try to correct you, and even put you down, and you have any feelings of anger, resentment or bitterness, then you are exposed in those areas and need more transformation. If you are not self-centered, and there is only a deep hunger and a longing to have Jesus formed in you, and your natural feelings have been dealt with, you will not react with negative feelings. If I am a peacemaker, you can accuse me wrongly, and

reject me strongly. It may hurt me and I may cry before the Lord, but there will be no feelings of anger or bitterness or resentment toward you. My attitude will be, "Lord, he has accused me falsely. Please forgive him, or show me where I am wrong." This will show you are a peacemaker, and you can bring peace to the very ones who are hurting you and accusing you falsely, because you are not resentful or bitter. You just want to bring God's peace in the midst of disagreement.

Learn Not To React in the Natural

"Wherefore, my beloved brothers, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). The first thing you want to do if you are a carnal Christian and someone accuses you wrongly is to speak out and be angry about it. If you want to be transformed, learn not to react and not to speak out from the natural man. Learn not to speak out those feelings of hurt and anger that come up in you. Go to the Lord and let His presence absorb all the natural reactions. This will help to build the Church. God's Church has not been built, mainly because of Christians not dealing with these types of things. Christians get hurt by one another and then roll on to the next place. It is called "rolling stones". Peter said we are stones to be built up a spiritual house, not rolling stones. We as stones need to be ground together, and built up together, and fit, and sized together to become God's dwelling place. Although our natural feelings and emotions are easily hurt, the Lord will use these circumstances to build you together. However, the very thing that will cause you to be ground together to deal with those rough edges, you will run away from, if you don't know any better. Many times, when someone comes into a rough situation with a brother or sister, they run away and become a "rolling stone". I have done this many times myself. If we can get the Church to deal with their natural feelings, then

they can be built up a spiritual house. If you spend some time with me, you will find some things about me you don't like, but if you run away from me and I run away from those who offend me, the Church will not be properly built up. The Word says that we are to be built together in the unity of the Spirit, not the unity of the natural man. If I like you because we both like the same things in the natural and so we fellowship together, that is not necessarily spiritual fellowship. When you offer to help someone—whether to take them into your home, or just be of service to them, do it as unto the Lord. I know we all would say we do all things for the glory of the Lord, but if that person you are helping begins to offend you and those feelings of resentment and bitterness begin to fill your mind and emotions, you can be sure that self-life is still on the throne of your heart. This happens just to expose your true nature and reveal to you where you lack. If no one ever came into your life to cause you problems, you would not know those wrong feelings were still there and could rise up against someone. When people come into your life and do you wrong and these feelings do not surface, then you know God has really done a work in you. When people can abuse you, and be against you, and accuse you falsely, and those natural feelings don't rise up, then you can still minister to them and help them through their difficulties. You are then a true peacemaker.

Learn To Control the Tongue

One of the best ways to learn to keep peace is to control your tongue. Don't express those feelings you know are carnal. When you begin to see strife arise in your home, you can bring peace if you don't express the natural inclinations. It does not matter **who** is right or wrong, it takes two to make war in a home. You can speak according to your carnal nature and bring division, or you can be slow to speak and bring peace. Trying to fight by

yourself can be very frustrating. Did you ever try to argue with someone who won't argue?

Once we give our lives to Jesus, we have no right to express anger, resentment, and bitterness toward anyone for any reason. We must realize that if we become upset and have all these wrong feelings, it's not the other person's fault. We may blame them, but we do not have the right to carry any resentment or bitterness. If anyone has the right to have resentment and bitterness, it is Jesus, because He suffered so unjustly. He suffered the greatest rejection ever known to man, but He said, "*Father, forgive them.*" He knew that they just did not understand what they were doing and He had compassion on them. We need to pray to have eyes to see as Jesus sees. When you get angry, learn to not speak, but think, "How is this going to affect this person or my family? What is this going to do to my church?"

Jesus said, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him." This is so different from the natural character of man. Jesus also said, "Do good to those who despitefully use you and persecute you." Where are the people today who can love and do good to those who are their enemies? You can only be like that if the life of God arises within you and begins to fill you. Husbands and wives need to learn to live by these principles. You do not have the right to express anger and bitterness against one another. If you are not self-centered and sticking up for "your rights", you won't do that. If you will be good to them and pray for them and bless them, you are sure to win them over. If you have a neighbor that is not treating you right, and you begin to be good to them, maybe take them a basket of fruit or take them some goodies when you are baking, how could you not bring peace to them? What is that going to do to any anger they may have toward you? That is how a Peacemaker acts.

He Has Made Us One

"For He is our peace who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in Himself of two one new man, so making peace" (Eph. 2:14-15).

This is God's goal: to break down every barrier between husband and wife, brother and sister, people on the job, everyone you meet, and bring you into fellowship and true spiritual oneness. The biggest walls are self-centeredness, self-preservation, and natural feelings. When the Holy Spirit breaks down all those walls in your life and forms the character of God in you, then you will bring peace everywhere you go.

May we all seek God until these truths become a part of our being, and the One New Man stands upon the earth to bring reconciliation and restoration to all of God's creation.

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:13-16).