

A woman with long brown hair, seen from behind, is walking away on a dirt path. She is wearing a white robe and a red shawl draped over her left shoulder. She is wearing simple brown sandals. The background is a bright, hazy landscape. A dark, torn-edge banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the title in white text.

Living As
Jesus Lived

Zac Poonen

LIVING AS JESUS LIVED

by

Zac Poonen

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About the Book

CHAPTER 1

God's Purpose for Man

God did not create man because He needed a servant. He already had millions of angels to serve Him. He created man because He wanted someone who would manifest His character and His nature.

If we forget this truth, it is easy to get sidetracked into imagining that service for God is the primary purpose of our salvation in Christ. This is the mistake that many believers have made.

When God was about to make Adam, His words were,

“Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness” (Genesis 1:26).

When Adam sinned, God in His foreknowledge, had already made provision for lifting man out of the pit of sin into which he had fallen. The incarnation of Christ and His death on the cross were in God's mind, before Adam was even created.

God's intention in the redemption that He has provided for us in Christ, is that we might be brought back to the place where we can fulfil His original purpose for man – to manifest His nature.

Our salvation is through faith in Christ. But faith can be based only on a divine revelation of the Person of Christ. It is only such faith that will allow the Holy Spirit to transform us into the likeness of Christ.

An intellectual or a partial knowledge of Christ, apart from divine revelation, can leave us as blind as the Bible-scholars of Jesus' day were. Their understanding of the Scriptures led them to look for another Christ, who would have different characteristics from what Jesus of Nazareth had.

The Jesus found in the pages of the Bible is One, Who being God, equal with the Father, "emptied Himself" and became a man (*Philippians 2:6, 7*).

Here is where we need to understand the truth carefully. In His Person, Jesus was still God when He came in our flesh, for God can never cease to be God. The clearest proof of Jesus' Deity in the days of His flesh, is seen in the fact that He received worship. Seven times in the gospels we are told that He accepted the worship that men offered Him (*Matthew 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; Mark 5:6; John 9:38*). Angels and God-fearing men do not accept worship (*Acts 10:25, 26; Revelation 22:8, 9*). But Jesus did – because He was the Son of God.

What did He empty Himself of then? Of His privileges as God.

Consider two examples. We know that "God cannot be tempted" (*James 1:13*). Yet the Scripture states that Jesus was tempted (*Matthew 4:1–11*).

We also know that God is omniscient (knowing everything). Yet the Scripture says that Jesus had to come near a fig-tree once, before He could find out whether it had any fruit (*Mark 11:13*). Once Jesus

said that He did not even know the date of His own second coming to earth (*Mark 13:32*).

So, it is crystal clear that Jesus had emptied Himself of the privileges of Deity, when He walked on this earth in our flesh.

"The Word was God...and the Word became flesh"
(*John 1:1, 14*).

Both these truths concerning the Person of Christ – His Deity and His humanity – must be believed equally, if we are to avoid heresy.

No truth in Scripture can be ignored without suffering spiritual loss. And so, if equal emphasis is not given to the Deity and the humanity of Christ, in our understanding and in our ministry, we will end up believing in an incomplete Christ – "another Jesus" than the one revealed in Scripture. This will result in corresponding loss in our Christian life and ministry. We are called not only to worship Christ as God, but also to follow Him as a Man.

Jesus has not only redeemed us through His death, but also shown us through His life on earth, how God intended man to live. He is not only our Saviour but also our Forerunner (*Hebrews 6:20*). He has given us an example of how to live at all times and in all situations, in perfect obedience to God.

Forgiveness of sins, the fullness of the Spirit and all the means of grace that God has provided, are all meant by Him to lead to one final goal – that we might be conformed to the likeness of His Son. In fact, every doctrine in God's Word can be understood in its proper perspective only as it is seen in the light

of God's eternal purpose for man – to make Him like Jesus.

The chief ministry of the Holy Spirit is twofold, and is described thus:

“We behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, and are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The Holy Spirit constantly seeks to show us the glory of the Lord Jesus in the Scriptures (the mirror) – and then seeks to change us into that likeness.

God the Father in His sovereignty, also orders all our circumstances to this same end.

“God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him...for whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:28, 29).

Every event and circumstance in our life is meant by God to mould us and transform us a little more into the likeness of Jesus.

And so we see, that our Father in heaven and the Holy Spirit in our hearts are both working towards one goal – that we might become like Jesus.

The more we partake of our Lord's nature, the more we will live on earth as He lived. This is the Spirit-filled life.

Jesus did not come to earth as an angel, but like us. The Bible says, “He was made like His brothers in all things” (*Hebrews 2:17*) (His brothers are His disciples – *Matthew 12:50*). If He had not been made

like us (His brothers) “in all things”, He could not have become our Example. Neither could He have commanded us saying, “Follow Me,” for we obviously could not follow One Who did not have our limitations, even as an angel cannot teach us to swim, since he does not experience the downward pull of gravity as we do.

Then Paul's exhortation in *1 Corinthians 11:1*, to follow him as he followed Christ would also become meaningless, for Paul could not possibly have lived as Jesus lived. Then the life of Christ becomes a life that we can only admire, but never follow.

But praise God that Christ did come in our flesh, and having accepted the limitations of our flesh, has given us an example to follow.

Since it was as a man, that Jesus lived a holy, pure life, there is no reason now why we too cannot “walk as He walked” (*1 John 2:6*).

Because we are weak as human beings, God offers us the same power of the Spirit that was given to Jesus when He lived on earth as a man.

What God did for Jesus He will gladly do for us, for “He loves us as He loved Jesus” (*John 17:23*). But His power is made available only “to those who believe” (*Ephesians 1:19*). So it is because of lack of faith in God's Word that believers today are impotent and powerless against sin and Satan.

The excuse that the Devil would have us make when we are commanded to “follow in His steps who committed no sin” (*1 Peter 2:21, 22*), is that being human we cannot but sin occasionally. But when we see that Jesus came in our flesh and did not sin, then TWO things happen:

1. We no longer have any excuse for sinning.
2. We have faith that we too can live in victory over sin as Jesus did.

And so Paul's prayer is mine too, as you read the truths of Scripture in this book:

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him (Christ)... and...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.”
(Ephesians 1:17; 3:16).

It is only through the full knowledge of Christ that we can know the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the perfect example of the Spirit-filled man.

As we look at His life and see how He lived on this earth, we can understand unmistakably what the characteristics of a Spirit-filled life are.

CHAPTER 2

Living in Humility

The greatness of God is seen by the world in the marvels of creation (*Psalms 19:1*). The universe is so vast that the human mind cannot comprehend it. Galaxies of stars have been flung out across space, billions of light-years apart. At the same time, each bit of matter in this universe is made up of atoms, so small that the naked eye cannot see them, yet containing hundreds of electrons rotating within them. How great is our God!

But to the disciple of Jesus Christ, the greatness of God is seen, not primarily in these wonders of the universe, but rather in the humility that made the Son of God empty Himself and come in our flesh and identify Himself with our fallen race.

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory,” said John the apostle (*John 1:14*). And we can add – “such glory, that far outshone the glory seen in creation.”

The great King of Heaven came and dwelt as one of us in our flesh. And He came, not in a condescending, patronising sort of way, but with real humility, making Himself one with us in every way.

We see the glory of the Lord Jesus in a far greater way in His humility than even in the wonderful miracles that He did.

It is this pathway of humility that the Holy Spirit desires to show us first of all, so that we might learn to walk in it all our days. It is here that we are to follow Jesus primarily.

Before Jesus lived that pure and love-filled life on earth, as a man, He humbled Himself. That was the first step. And that is the first step for us too.

Many thousands of years before Jesus came to earth, God had created an angel called Lucifer who was perfect in wisdom and beauty. Lucifer was appointed by God as the head of the angelic order. But, being lifted up with pride and discontented with his appointed lot, Lucifer sought to go up and to exalt himself (*Ezekiel 28:11–17; Isaiah 14:12–15*). Thus he brought sin into God's creation. God cast him down immediately – and he became Satan.

Pride is therefore the root of every sin and evil in this universe.

When Adam sinned, he too became infected with this Satanic pride.

Every child of Adam is now born with this infection.

To redeem man from this poison, Jesus humbled Himself.

As sin originated in the pride of Lucifer, so our redemption originated in the self-humbling of Jesus. We have as much of the mind of Christ as we have of His humility. This is the infallible gauge of spiritual growth.

The very coming of Jesus to earth from the glory of Heaven is in itself a marvellous demonstration of

His humility. But we are told further that, even “as a man He humbled Himself” (*Philippians 2:8*). “Made like His brethren in every respect” (*Hebrews 2:17*), He took His place before God as all other men. He became nothing so that God might be everything. This is true humility.

Worldly glory and greatness are measured by a person's position, wealth, accomplishments, family status, etc. But how different is the glory of God as seen in Jesus Christ!

Jesus was the only person ever born who had the opportunity to choose the family into which he was to be born. None of us had that choice.

Which family did Jesus choose? An unknown carpenter's family from a place called Nazareth, of which town people said, “Can any good come from there?” (*John 1:46*). Joseph and Mary were so poor that they could not even afford to offer a lamb as a burnt offering to God (*cf. Luke 2:22–24 with Leviticus 12:8*).

Further, Jesus was the only person ever born, who could choose exactly where he would be born. Having the opportunity to determine the place of His birth, which place did He choose? A cattle food-box in a lowly stable!

Notice further, the family-line that Jesus chose for Himself. Four women are named in the family-tree of Jesus, mentioned in *Matthew 1:3–6*. The first one, Tamar had a son through committing adultery with her father-in-law, Judah. The second one, Rahab, was a well-known prostitute in Jericho. The third one, Ruth, was a descendant of Moab, who was born as a result of Lot committing adultery with

his own daughter. The fourth one was Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, with whom David committed adultery.

Why did Jesus choose such a shameful family-line to come through? So that He could identify Himself totally with Adam's fallen race. There we see His humility. He did not desire any pride of family or genealogy

Jesus identified Himself totally with man. He believed in the essential equality of all human beings, irrespective of race, family, position in life, etc., and became one with the least and lowest in the social strata. He came below all, that He might be the servant of all. It is only the one who gets beneath others who is able to lift them up. And that is how Jesus came.

The Holy Spirit transforms us through the renewal of our mind (*Romans 12:2*). It is in our thoughts that the seed of true Christ-like humility is sown. It is not by our actions or by our behaviour before others but rather by our thoughts (when we are by ourselves) that we can ascertain whether we are being transformed into Christlikeness in this area or not – our thoughts concerning ourselves and about how we compare with others.

It is only when we are truly small in our own thoughts, that we can genuinely “regard others as more important than us” (*Philippians 2:3*), and consider ourselves as “the very least of all the saints” (*Ephesians 3:8*).

Jesus always considered Himself as a man to be nothing before His Father. Therefore the glory of the Father was manifested through Him in all its fullness.

Because Jesus took this position of nothingness before the Father, He could joyfully submit to anything that the Father ordered for His life, and obey all the Father's commandments wholeheartedly.

“He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death” (Philippians 2:8).

Total obedience to God is the unmistakable mark of genuine humility. There is no clearer test than this.

For thirty years, Jesus submitted to an imperfect foster-father and mother – because this was His Father's will. He knew far more than Joseph and Mary; and was sinless, unlike them. Yet He submitted to them.

It is not easy for man to submit to those who are intellectually or spiritually inferior to him. But genuine humility has no problem here – for one who has truly seen himself as nothing in God's eyes, has no difficulty in submitting to anyone whom God appoints over him.

Jesus chose a fairly unimpressive profession – that of a carpenter. And when He entered into His public ministry, He had no prefixes or suffixes to His name. He was not ‘Pastor Jesus.’ Much less was he ‘The Reverend Doctor Jesus!’ He never sought nor desired any earthly position or title that would exalt Him above the common people whom He had come to serve. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

When the crowds once flocked after Him, wanting to make Him their king, He quietly slipped away from their midst (*John 6:15*). He desired to be known only as ‘the son of man.’

He never sought nor cared for the honour of men. He lived before His Father's face alone, and was quite content to go all through life ignored and despised by men. The Father's approval alone mattered to Him.

Whenever Jesus healed someone or did a miracle, He was keen that no one should know about the healing, for His miracles were acts of compassion done for needy individuals, and not publicity stunts. Even when He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, He gave strict instructions that no one should be told about it (*Mark 5:43*). Only after Jesus had left this earth, was the record of His life made public by His apostles.

When He took a basin of water and washed His disciples' feet, on the last night before He was crucified, it was typical of what had been true of His entire life. He had been a servant of all men. He was quick to note that the disciples' feet were dirty and was equally quick to pick up the basin and to do the needful, instead of waiting to see if someone else would do it. That action was symbolic of a lifetime of service to others. Jesus did not wait to be asked to do something. He found out the need and did the needful.

Jesus associated intimately with the lowest strata of society and moved among them as their equal. And yet, although He was sinless and perfect, He never made others feel awkward because of their imperfections. He had no patronizing air about Him when He moved around with His disciples. In fact, He moved so freely with them that they felt free to rebuke Him and even to give Him advice (*Matthew 16:22; Mark 4:38; 9:5*).

We see the humility of Jesus in His seeking for the fellowship of His disciples in prayer. In the garden of Gethsemane, He asked Peter, James and John to pray with Him, because His soul was "deeply grieved to the point of death" (*Matthew 26:38*). Jesus was conscious of the utter weakness of the flesh that He had taken on. That was why He sought their fellowship in prayer.

It is because we are not honest enough to acknowledge our nothingness, that the manifestation of God's power through us is limited. Jesus has shown us the way of humility. It is to acknowledge the weakness of our flesh, and our nothingness as human beings.

Because Jesus humbled Himself, therefore God exalted Him to the highest position in the universe (*Philippians 2:9*). Those who go the farthest along the way of humility will sit with Jesus on His right and left hand in glory.

All through Jesus' life He kept going down. He came down from Heaven and kept going down, down, down all the way to the cross. Never once did He reverse this direction and seek to go up.

There are only two spirits operating on the earth today. One, the spirit of Satan (Lucifer) urging people to go up – whether it be in the world or in Christendom. The other, the Spirit of Christ leading people to go down like their Master. Like the corn of wheat, Jesus went down, and all His true disciples can be identified unmistakably by this characteristic.

The humility of Jesus is seen in all its brilliance in His death. There never was a more unjust trial than the one Jesus went through. Yet, He submitted to injury, insult, injustice, humiliation and ridicule, in

silence. He did not call down curses on His enemies. He neither threatened revenge nor called for angelic assistance. He gave up all His rights as the Son of God.

The ‘clenched fist’ is an appropriate symbol of the human race – signifying both the desire to hold on to one’s rights, powers and possessions, as well as the desire to fight back when attacked.

Jesus on the other hand, willingly opened His palms to receive the nails on the cross. His palms were always open, giving, giving and giving. Finally He gave up His own life as well. This is true humility. And this is true ‘manhood’ as God intended it to be.

The disciple of Jesus who wants to manifest the divine nature must be willing to suffer injustice without complaining.

The Bible says,

“If you bear patiently with suffering when you do right and that is undeserved, it is acceptable and well-pleasing to God. For even to this were you called – it is inseparable from your vocation. For Christ also suffered...leaving you His personal example, so that you should follow on in His footsteps...when He was reviled and insulted, He did not revile or offer insult in return; when He was abused and suffered, He made no threats of vengeance; but He trusted Himself and everything to Him Who judges fairly” (1 Peter 2:20–23 - AMP).

The humility of Jesus did not permit Him to judge anyone. God alone is the Judge of all men; and any man who judges another thereby occupies the place

that God alone is entitled to occupy. As a man on earth, Jesus said, “I do not judge anyone” (*John 8:15*). He committed all judgment to His Father. There too we see the beauty of His humility.

Jesus willingly submitted to the humiliating death that His Father planned for Him. Beyond the human instruments that planned and executed His crucifixion, He could discern the Father’s hand and He willingly drank the cup that “the Father gave” (*John 18:11*).

“He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8).

This is the real Jesus of the Scriptures. Unlike modern evangelists, He was not honoured as a celebrity or a film-star. On the contrary, He was despised and rejected by men; and the world of His day got rid of Him by nailing Him to a cross. The world today is no different; and the disciple is not above His Master. A Christianity that is popular and that attracts the honour of the world is a counterfeit of the true faith. The entire life of Jesus – from birth to death – demonstrated the fact that “that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God” (*Luke 16:15*).

“Learn of Me,” Jesus said, “for I am humble of heart” (Matthew 11:29).

Humility was the main thing that Jesus asked His disciples to learn from Him. And that is what we must learn from Him too.

CHAPTER 3

Living in Holiness

God is Light and Love (*1 John 1:5; 4:8*). He “dwells in unapproachable light” (*1 Timothy 6:16*). Because He is holy, He calls us also to be holy.

But holiness, for a human being, can come only through temptation. Adam was created innocent, without even the knowledge of good and evil. God wanted him to be holy; and for this, God allowed him to be tested.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil had been created by God Himself and was not evil in itself. It existed in a world over which God pronounced the words, “Very good” (*Genesis 1:31*). It was very good, because it afforded Adam the opportunity to be holy, by resisting temptation.

The Bible says, “Consider it all joy when you encounter various temptations” (*James 1:2*), because temptations give us the opportunity to partake of God’s holiness (*Hebrews 12:10*) and become “perfect and complete” (*James 1:4*).

As we look at the holiness of Jesus, we do not look at that inherent holiness that He had as God, for that would be no example for us. We look at Him as one “made like His brethren in all things” and “tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sinning” (*Hebrews 2:17; 4:15*).

Jesus is our Forerunner (*Hebrews 6:20*), Who ran the same race that we have to run, paving the way for us to follow. And so He says to us, “Follow Me” (*John 12:26*). And looking unto Him Who has run the race ahead of us, we too can run with endurance, without fainting or losing heart (*Hebrews 12:1–4*).

Jesus endured every temptation that can ever come to any man. He was tempted “in every point, as we are”. This is clearly taught in *Hebrews 4:15*. And this is our encouragement. Jesus exercised no power that is not offered to us by God today. He met and overcame temptation, as a man, in the strength given to Him by His Father through the Holy Spirit.

Satan has always told man that God’s laws are burdensome and impossible to be obeyed. Jesus came as a man and exposed that lie of Satan by His life of perfect obedience. If we had any temptation to overcome, or any command of God to obey, that Jesus did not face, then on that point we could have an excuse for sinning. And if Jesus had lived that perfect life, without the weakness of our flesh or with power unavailable to us, then His life could not be an example that we could follow, nor could it be an encouragement to us in the moments when we are tempted. But Jesus demonstrated through His life as a man on earth, that the power God makes available to us is sufficient to meet the demands of His law that we see in His Word.

“We do not have a High Priest Who cannot sympathize with out weakness, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are” (*Hebrews 4:15*).

The sinless life of Jesus is God’s demonstration to the world that it is possible for man through the power of the Holy Spirit to have full victory over sin and to obey God joyfully. If we abide in Him, we CAN “walk even as He walked” (*1 John 2:6*).

Jesus faced all the enticements to sin that we face everyday, and was taken by His Father through every temptation that can ever come to any man. Thus He was equipped to be our Leader and our High Priest (*Hebrews 2:10, 17, 18; 5:7–9*). In all those situations, He denied Himself and mortified the desires of the flesh that tempted Him to sin. Thus He consistently “suffered in the flesh.”

The Scripture points to Him as our example:

“Since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God” (*1 Peter 4:1, 2*).

Jesus demonstrated through His life of “obedience unto death” that it is a far lesser calamity to suffer anything that may befall than to disobey God in even one point.

The essence of all sin is found in doing one’s own will. And the essence of holiness in a human being is found in denying one’s own will and in doing the will of God. This is how Jesus lived. He said:

“I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me...I have come not to do My own will, but

the will of Him Who sent Me... Not as I will, but as Thou Wilt” (John 5:30; 6:38; Matthew 26:39).

Jesus offered up His own human will as a perpetual sacrifice to His Father, even when it meant intense suffering. We are told that

“in the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears” (Hebrews 5:7).

Jesus had warned His three disciples in the garden of Gethsemane that since human flesh was weak, it was only through watching and praying (that is through seeking help from God) that temptation could be overcome (*Matthew 26:41*). He Himself prayed and only thus did He overcome.

Jesus told His disciples just before going to Gethsemane that the day would soon come when they too would be able to do the works that He did, for the Father would give them the Holy Spirit to be their “Helper” (*John 14:12, 16*). Jesus did not come to make us miracle-workers, but to make us holy. His works were works of holiness, works of obedience to the Father and these are the works that He has promised that we shall be able to do as well. He did them all, as a Man filled with the Holy Spirit.

When the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they too received the power to do the works of obedience that Jesus did. During Jesus’ life on earth, they had received the power to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers and cast out demons (*Matthew 10:8*), but not the power

to overcome sin. For that, they had to wait until they were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

The fullness of the Spirit is meant to enable us to do “the works that Jesus did,” or in other words “the will of God” (See *John 4:34*).

This is the glorious life that God offers us under the New Covenant.

“What the law could not do weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin. He condemned sin in the flesh, IN ORDER THAT the requirement of the Law (‘the will of God’) might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk (live) according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:3, 4).

The significance for us, of Jesus facing temptation and overcoming it lies in the fact that thereby He has opened for us a Way wherein we may follow Him.

The Way that Jesus has opened, is called, “the new and living way” in *Hebrews 10:19, 20*:

“We have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh.”

It was in the Most Holy Place of the Temple that the glory of God dwelt. This is the place into which Jesus has opened the way for us to follow Him, so that we may partake of His holiness. He is the Forerunner Who has entered through the veil of the flesh, first

of all (*Hebrews 6:20*). We are to run the race now, looking at His example (*Hebrews 12:1, 2*).

We don't have to rend the veil, for that has already been rent by our Lord, once and for all. But we do have to follow Him along that way of the rent veil – the way of the cross, the way of death to the flesh and its lusts.

It was through death to the flesh that the glory of God's holiness was seen in the life of Jesus. And there is no other way for us. If we bear this "dying of Jesus" in our body, then and then alone will that pure and holy "life of Jesus be manifested in our body" (*2 Corinthians 4:10*).

The Holy Spirit in us will lead us, as He led Jesus, always along the way of the cross. And this is the way along which we shall be able to increasingly partake of His holiness. It was thus with Jesus Himself, and it will be thus for all who follow along the same way.

Jesus came to make us partakers of the divine nature, so that the same life that was in Him might be in us too.

"His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness... He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature" (*2 Peter 1:3, 4*).

God has not promised to make us sinlessly perfect on this earth. We are to press on to perfection. But we can live in victory over conscious sin.

We have seen that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are. Some of our strongest temptations are those which come to attack our thought-life. So too

it must have been with Jesus. Yet He never sinned. We can overcome in our thought-life too.

Jesus' speech was pure. No filthy word ever escaped His lips, and no idle word either. He always spoke the truth. There was no deceit in His mouth. No one could ever engage Jesus in a conversation about how to make more and more money (beyond one's needs). He was just not interested in such matters. His mind was set on things above and not on things on earth. No doubt, He used material things, but He did not love them, nor was He attached to any of them.

The holiness of Jesus was inward. It was not an external piety manifested in food, dress or association. He was no ascetic or hermit. He lived in the midst of the workaday world, wearing the clothes that others of His social level wore, and eating and drinking normally (*Luke 7:34*), enjoying the good things that God has given man to enjoy in this world (*1 Timothy 6:17*). Yet He was never self-indulgent in the matter of food, for He would discipline Himself not to use His miraculous powers to turn stones into bread, even after forty days of fasting. He associated not just with religious people, but even with the worst types of sinners, and remained spotless. His holiness was essentially inward.

It was not only sin that Jesus avoided. He also gave up many legitimate pleasures that were unprofitable, or that could not be indulged in without sacrificing some part of the Father's business which He had come to complete. (*1 Corinthians 6:12*).

Jesus' holiness came out of a life of meditation on the Word of God. He knew the Word thoroughly by the age of 12, because of laborious mental toil

in meditating upon the Scriptures, seeking for the light of the Spirit upon the Word. He knew more than the learned doctors of theology, because He sought for the revelation of the Spirit. Jesus did not go to a Bible-school. He learned under the hand of His Father, as the true prophets in Old Testament times did – Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, John the Baptist etc. No true prophet in the Bible ever came out of a Bible-school. Let us remember that!

Jesus studied the Word and then obeyed it. Thus the Word became a powerful weapon in His hand, not only in His battle against Satan (*Matthew 4:1-11*), but also in His preaching ministry. He spoke with authority, and His preaching ran counter to the popular traditions of His day proclaimed by the scholars and doctors of the law.

He exposed the hypocrisy and worldliness of the Pharisees, and told them that they were hell-bound, despite their doctrinal fundamentalism (*Matthew 23:33*). At the same time He exposed the doctrinal errors and the wrong interpretations (of Scripture) that the Sadducees held (*Matthew 22:23-33*).

Jesus never sought popularity in His preaching. He would gladly accept torture and agony rather than yield one iota of truth. He did not believe in “peace and unity at any cost.” Even His enemies acknowledged, “We know you are very honest and teach the truth, regardless of the consequences, without fear or favour” (*Matthew 22:16* - TLB).

The holiness of Jesus was also seen in His zeal for the purity of God’s house (*John 2:14* - ff.) When He entered the temple and saw men making money in

the name of religion, righteous anger burned in Him and He drove them out with a whip.

The Bible commands us to be angry without sinning (*Ephesians 4:26*). When the Roman soldiers beat Jesus and whipped Him in Pilate’s hall He patiently bore it all. He was never once angry where it concerned His own person. Such anger would have been sin. But where it concerned the purity of God’s house, it was different. There, to refrain from anger would have been sin.

He used the whip that day, unconcerned about whether people would misunderstand Him and think that He had lost control of Himself and given in to the flesh. He did not live before the face of men in any case. He had come to bring a sword (*Matthew 10:34*); and He used it unsparingly. It cut, wounded and hurt. And thus the Father’s glory was manifested.

Jesus’ life was the most beautiful, the most orderly, the most peaceful and the happiest life that this world has ever seen. This was because of His total obedience to God’s Word.

Consider the order there is in the physical universe. The stars and planets move about in the heavens in such perfect order, that we can set our time accurately to the millionth of a second, by them. Such is their dependability that astronomers can calculate the position of any star or planet for any date in the future. What is the secret of such perfect order? Only one thing: They obey the will of God exactly, revolving in the orbits laid out for them and at the pace set for them by their Creator.

Wherever there is obedience to God, there is perfection and beauty. And wherever there is disobedience to God, there is chaos and ugliness.

Even the stars are a mute testimony to the fact that God's commands are the best for us, and that His commands are not burdensome.

Jesus' life bore witness to the fact that godliness alone of all things is profitable both in this life and in the next (*1 Timothy 4:8*). No man can be more happy, more peaceful or more content than a godly man.

“The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life” (Proverbs 14:27); and Jesus obeyed the command to “live in the fear of the Lord all the day long” (Proverbs 23:17). God heard His prayers, because of His godly fear (Hebrews 5:7). Heaven was always open over Jesus, because, He lived in the fear of God. “I reverence My Father” (John 8:49 - AMP), He once said. And He demonstrated by His life the truth of the Word that says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10).

Jesus' prayers were heard, not automatically because He was the Son of God, but because of His godly fear (*Hebrews 5:7*). He was anointed with the joy and the authority of the Holy Spirit – “the oil of gladness” – not automatically because of His being God's Son, but because He loved righteousness and hated sin (*Hebrews 1:9*). God can commit Himself only to a man who is morally pure. This is the secret of spiritual authority.

The religious world of Jesus' day, however, did not share God's view of the holiness of Jesus. Jesus' holiness provoked their hatred, because He pointed out their sin fearlessly (*John 7:7*). And so Jesus suffered hostility, rejection, hatred, criticism, excommunication by Jewish religious leaders and finally death itself – all because He preached holiness. They would not have crucified Him if He had merely lived a holy life. But He denounced their hypocrisy and exposed their sin through His preaching. Therefore they were determined to silence Him.

Jesus said,

“Their sentence is based on this fact: that the Light from heaven came into the world, but they loved the darkness more than the Light, for their deeds were evil. They hated the heavenly Light because they wanted to sin in the darkness. They stayed away from that Light for fear their sins would be exposed” (John 3:19, 20 - TLB).

The ‘Christian’ religious world of today is just the same; and the disciple is not above his Master. Walking in holiness will not bring us the acclaim of lukewarm Christendom. “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” – in any country and in any age (*2 Timothy 3:12*); and that persecution will come primarily from the religious world, as in the case of Jesus Himself.

If any man will follow the Lord, let him sit down first and count the cost, and then let him “go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (*Hebrews 13:13*).

CHAPTER 4

Living in Love

We have seen that God is both Light and Love. The glory of God was seen in the Lord Jesus, full of Light as well as of Love. Light and Love are inseparable. True holiness is full of love and true love is perfectly pure. They are distinguished here only for purposes of our own understanding.

If one claims to have holiness but does not manifest divine love, then what he has is not genuine holiness but Pharisaical 'righteousness.' Those on the other hand, who claim to have great love for everybody but who don't live in purity and righteousness, are also deceived into mistaking their wishy-washy sentimentality for divine love.

The Pharisees had a 'righteousness' that was starchy and dry. They were like bony skeletons – hard and repulsive. They had some truth, but all warped and out of proportion.

Jesus had all the truth. He stood for every jot and tittle of the law of God more than the Pharisees did. But He was not just bones. The bones were covered over with flesh, as God intended human beings to be – the Light was enveloped by Love. He spoke the truth, but He spoke it in love (*Ephesians 4:15*).

His words had authority, but they were gracious too (*Luke 4:22, 36*).

This is the nature that the Holy Spirit desires to communicate to us and to manifest through us.

God IS Love. It is not that He just acts lovingly. He IS in His very essence LOVE. The glory of God as seen in Jesus, manifests this clearly. Jesus did not just perform acts of love. He went about “doing good” (*Acts 10:38*). But that was because the love of God flooded His whole being.

Love has its origin, like holiness and humility, in our inner man. It is from the innermost being of the Spirit-filled man that the rivers of life flow (*John 7:38, 39*). Our thoughts and attitudes (even if never expressed) give an odour to our words and actions and to our personality. And others can easily detect this odour. Words and acts of love count for nothing, if our thoughts and attitudes to others remain selfish and critical. God desires “truth in the innermost being” (*Psalms 51:6*).

Jesus placed a high value on all human beings and therefore respected all men. It is easy to respect the godly and the cultured and the intelligent. We can even think that we have attained to great heights when we love all our fellow-believers in Christ. But the glory of God was seen in Jesus’ love for all men. Jesus never despised anyone for his poverty, ignorance, ugliness or lack of culture. He specifically stated that the whole world and all that it contained was not as valuable as one human soul (*Mark 8:36*). That was how He valued men. And so He delighted in all men. He saw men deceived and bound by Satan; and He longed to set them free.

So great was this longing born of love, that He was willing to pay the ultimate price to free men from sin’s grip over their lives. And because He was willing to die for men to save them from their sins, He earned the right to preach against sin forcefully. We have no right to preach against sin, if either we have not judged that sin in our own flesh and overcome, or if we are unwilling to die (if need be) to save others from the sin that we preach against. This is what it means to “speak the truth in love” (*Ephesians 4:15*).

It is the warmth of love in the words that we speak that produces fruit for the glory of God in others. Although there is plenty of light at the North and South Poles, nothing grows there, because of the lack of warmth.

Jesus saw clearly the relative value of people and material things. He knew that people had been made to be loved, and things to be used. Due to the perverting influence of sin, that order has been reversed in the world, and things are loved and people used (for one’s own ends).

Jesus saw that people were far more important than things. He loved men so greatly that He identified completely with them, and made them feel wanted. He shared their burdens and had words of kindness for the downtrodden, and words of encouragement for those defeated in life’s battles. Never would He consider any human being as worthless. They may be crude or coarse, but they were still people who needed to be redeemed.

Things, on the other hand, mattered nothing at all to Him. Material things have no value at all unless they are used for the benefit of others. One can

imagine that if a neighbour's child walked into Jesus' carpenter-shop and broke something expensive, it would not have disturbed Jesus in any way, because the child was far more valuable and important than the thing broken. He loved people, not things. Things were to be used to help people.

The Holy Spirit renews our mind so that we might "see things as it were from God's point of view" (*Colossians 1:9* - Phillips). To love a person is to see him as God sees him – with compassion.

God rejoices over His people with singing (*Zephaniah 3:17*). And since Jesus was filled with the Spirit of God, He shared His Father's joy over His children. So too will it be with all whose minds are renewed to look at people from God's point of view. The thoughts that Jesus thought of other people were always and consistently thoughts of love – never thoughts of criticism for their awkwardness or their crudeness. People were therefore able to detect the sweet fragrance of His spirit, "and the common people heard Him gladly" (*Mark 12:37* - KJV). This is the love that God floods our heart with when we are filled with the Holy Spirit (*Romans 5:5*).

Jesus was constantly moved with compassion towards the sick, the needy, the hungry and the shepherdless. He made their misery His, and thus was able to comfort them. We can comfort the misery of others only in the measure in which we have identified ourselves with it. Jesus was sensitive to the unspoken needs of others, because He used His imagination to put Himself in their situations and thus was able to understand their problems. He was greatly grieved once, when He saw men so

hardhearted that they did not have any compassion for a needy man (*Mark 3:5*).

In His relationships with men, Jesus constantly died to Himself. He was never offended by anything that anyone did or said to Him. Nor was He ever offended by the failure of others to do something for Him, for He never expected anything from others. He did not come to be served but to serve.

Because He bore the cross daily, Jesus was never irritated with anyone, however crude or stupid he might be. The slowness of others never got on His nerves, nor did untidiness, disorderliness and carelessness in others, ever make Him impatient. The perfect man can easily bear with imperfect people. Only imperfect people find the imperfection of others to be intolerable! Patience is one of the greatest manifestations of our love for others.

Consider the glory of Jesus' love, in His speech.

Jesus never belittled others or passed remarks or jokes about them that hurt them. He never made any subtle wounding statements. He never discussed the shortcomings of His disciples behind their backs. It is truly amazing that in three years, He never exposed Judas before the other eleven disciples – for even at the last supper, the eleven could not guess who was going to betray their Master.

Jesus used His tongue to encourage and admonish others, thereby making His tongue an instrument of life in God's Hand. He used His tongue to speak soothing words to the weary (*Isaiah 50:4*), and also as a sword to cut down the proud and the haughty (*Isaiah 49:2*).

How greatly encouraged the Roman centurion and the Syrophenician woman must have felt when they heard Jesus praise them for their faith, publicly (*Matthew 8:10; 15:28*). The sinful woman who was praised for her love (*Luke 7:47*) and Mary of Bethany who was praised for her sacrificial offering (*Mark 14:6*) would never have forgotten the words of Jesus.

How strengthened Peter must have been through Jesus' assurance that He would pray for him (*Luke 22:32*). Just a few words, but what strength and encouragement they conveyed.

Many others must have heard words from Jesus' lips that lifted their weary spirits, for it says in *Isaiah 50:4* that Jesus listened daily to His Father's voice so that He might have an appropriate word for the weary souls that came across His path each day.

The righteousness of Jesus was not one that gave Him a gloomy appearance. No. He was anointed with the oil of gladness (*Hebrews 1:9*). He had such overflowing joy on the eve of His crucifixion, that He could say to His apostles, "...that my joy may be in you" (*John 15:11*). He went everywhere spreading that joy to joyless, dreary souls.

He was gentle with all men, never breaking a battered reed or quenching a dimly burning wick, (*Matthew 12:20*). He saw the good points in weak, sinful people and hoped for the best in everyone. He was the sort of person one longed to be with, for He was understanding, kind and gentle. Only the proud and those with secret sin avoided Him.

The love of Jesus was not sentimental. It sought the highest good of others. And so He did not hesitate to give a word of admonition where He saw that

there was need for such a word. He rebuked Peter for trying to turn Him away from the cross – and that too with such strong words as, "Get behind Me, Satan" (*Matthew 16:23*).

He rebuked James and John for seeking places of honour and for wanting to take revenge on the Samaritans (*Matthew 20:22, 23; Luke 9:55*). And He rebuked His disciples seven times for their unbelief.

Jesus was never afraid of speaking the truth, even if it hurt others, for His heart was filled with love for them. He was not concerned whether His reputation for kindness would be lost by speaking strong words. He loved others more than Himself and so He was willing to sacrifice His reputation in order to help them. Therefore He spoke the truth firmly, lest men be ruined eternally. The eternal welfare of men mattered far more to Him than their opinions of Him.

Peter described the ministry of Jesus as "going about doing good" (*Acts 10:38*). Truly, this summed up His life. He was not just a good preacher, nor was He just interested in winning souls. He loved the total man, and did good wherever He went, both to the bodies and the souls of men.

His enemies, taunting Him, called Him, "a friend of tax-collectors and sinners" (*Luke 7:34*), and that was exactly what He was, a friend of the most despised people in society.

It is not natural for man to go around doing good and befriending the outcasts of society. Even when this is done, it is often done with self-centred motives. But Jesus' love for the outcasts and friendless was selfless and pure.

We cannot manifest the nature of Christ by cultural refinement, but only by dying to that which is natural, and receiving that which is divine from the Holy Spirit.

The love of Jesus enabled Him to serve His disciples joyfully, and to do dirty jobs for them – like washing their feet. This was not done to impress them with His humility, but was the natural outflow of His love for them.

Human goodness and love invariably have some ulterior motive, such as seeking honour or some other selfish reason. It is corrupt at its source. It is divine love alone that is uncorrupted. Jesus did not do good with any thought of personal gain. His goodness was a manifestation of the nature of His Father Who “gives His sunlight to both the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust too” (*Matthew 5:45* - TLB).

God’s nature is to do good and to give and give and give. That is as natural to Him as it is for the sun to shine. This was the glory manifested in the life of Jesus. He constantly did good, served others, helped others and gave whatever He could to others.

The words in *John 13:29* indicate what the disciples had seen of Jesus’ use of money throughout His public ministry. They had seen that Jesus used money for two purposes alone: To buy what was needed AND to give to the poor.

Jesus had taught His disciples that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (*Acts 20:35*), and demonstrated by His life that the happiest and most blessed life that a man can live on this earth is one

lived totally for God and for others, where he gives himself and his possessions to bless others.

Jesus wept and prayed for those to whom He preached. He wept over Jerusalem, when they would not receive the Word of God. He had wept for the hypocrites in the temple, before going in to use the whip to drive them out (*Luke 19:41, 45*). Only he who weeps is qualified to use the whip.

No man on earth ever had a more important job to fulfil than Jesus. No man ever packed more useful labour into 3 years of public ministry. Truly, He must have been busy day and night. Yet wonder of wonders, He never appointed a secretary to regulate the access of people to Him! When His disciples tried to act as secretaries for Him, He rebuked them (*Mark 10:13–15*).

He made Himself freely accessible to all people at all times, though He had a miracle-ministry far exceeding any man’s (which fact alone would have made many people make demands on His time).

His relatives thought that He was out of His mind to allow such a situation where He would even ignore eating, in order to have time to minister to people in need (*Mark 3:20, 21*).

People knew that Jesus was freely approachable. That was why Nicodemus felt free to visit Jesus late at night, after Jesus had finished a busy day of preaching. Nicodemus knew full well that he would be most welcome. Jesus gave that impression to people – that they were welcome to come to Him for help, day or night.

The sick were brought to Him one day after sunset – a great number of them – and Jesus laid His hands

on everyone of them (*Luke 4:40*). That must have taken Him many hours. But He did not try to shorten the process by praying a mass prayer for them. He was interested in each one of them and wanted to give them individual attention. The fact that He was going to thereby miss His dinner and many hours of His sleep did not matter to Him.

Jesus did not consider His time His own. He gave Himself to people wholly. People in need could feed on Him, His time, His possessions, His everything (*Isaiah 58:10*). He was willing to be inconvenienced, and He was never upset when inconvenienced, or when people intruded into His privacy.

The mighty supernatural gifts of the Spirit that were manifested through Him blessed the people, because the power of God in Him was insulated with God's love and compassion. Miracles without love and compassion can bring spiritual death, like an uninsulated electric wire.

The love and concern of Jesus extended to His relatives according to the flesh, too. He did not have that warped idea of "the Lord's work" that the Pharisees had, who encouraged people who had gone into "full-time ministry" to disregard their needy parents, because they had to "love God more than their parents" (*Mark 7:10-13*). On the cross, as Jesus was dying, He was thoughtful enough to make provision for His mother's future (*John 19:25-27*).

Jesus lived so utterly for God and for others that, even when dying, He found time to lead a thief to salvation. Hanging there on the cross, He was unmindful of His own sufferings and of the jeering and hatred of others, and was more concerned that those who

crucified Him should have their sin forgiven (*Luke 23:34*).

Jesus always overcame evil with good. The floods of the hatred of others could not quench the flaming fire of His love (*Song 8:7*). This is the love that He gives us by His Spirit whereby we can love one another even as He loved us (*John 13:34, 35; Romans 5:5*). Thus we too shall manifest the divine nature.

CHAPTER 5

Living in the Spirit

In the last three chapters, we have seen the way Jesus lived on earth – in humility, holiness and love.

The danger now is to think that we can imitate Jesus in these areas and thus become like Him. The glory of God is to be manifested through us, not through an imitation of Jesus, but through our partaking of the divine nature.

Many non-Christians in the history of the world, who have had an admiration for Jesus, have tried to imitate His humility, purity and love, and have done a fairly good job of it. But it is like the painted fire, that gives no warmth.

Imitation diamonds can look so much like the real gems, that only an expert can detect the difference. But they are only pieces of glass, worthless in comparison. And man is an expert at imitation – even in the realm of imitating Jesus.

How then are we to escape deception? How are we to know whether we are merely imitating Jesus or actually partaking of the divine nature?

There is only one way, and that is by allowing the Holy Spirit to use the Word to expose and separate

the soulish from the spiritual in our lives (*Hebrews 4:17*). If we do not distinguish between the soulish and the spiritual we can be utterly deceived and not even know that we are deceived.

What believers need to understand most of all in our day, is how the power of their mind, emotions and will can hinder the working of the Holy Spirit. Where we do not distinguish between soulish and spiritual activity, not only is there the possibility of our being deceived by our own hearts, but also by evil spirits, who counterfeit the work of God.

Most believers are totally ignorant about the difference between soulish and spiritual activity, because they have not developed in their spiritual lives to the point where further progress becomes dependent on differentiating between the soulish and the spiritual.

A 9th-standard student may not know the difference between differential calculus and integral calculus (and probably considers them both to be the same), because he has not advanced far enough in his study of mathematics, to the point where further progress is dependent on distinguishing between these two forms of calculus.

If you are content with being considered upright and kind and gentle and compassionate by man, then you will not go beyond being a 'soulish' Christian, and beyond a mere imitation of Jesus.

Paul divides Christians into three categories:

- i. the spiritual man (*1 Corinthians 3:1*);
- ii. the soulish man (*1 Corinthians 2:14* - YLT); and
- iii. the carnal man (*1 Corinthians 3:1*).

This corresponds to the threefold division of man's being, mentioned in *1 Thessalonians 5:23* – spirit, soul and body.

When we are ruled by the desires of the body, we are carnal. But we can overcome those desires and yet be only soulish – ruled by the desires of the mind and the emotions. The spiritual man is the one who is ruled by the Holy Spirit and whose soul and body are under the Spirit's control.

Although the soulish man may not necessarily be "hostile towards God" as the carnal man is (*Romans 8:7*), he still cannot receive or understand spiritual things (*1 Corinthians 2:14*), for they are foolishness to him. Even the distinction between soul and spirit when presented to him will appear as foolishness and unnecessary splitting of hairs, because he is soulish and is content with being soulish, for he has a good testimony before men. He who seeks the honour of men can never advance beyond being soulish.

In these days of large-scale deception in the Christian church, with multitudes of voices and manifestations, all claiming to be from God, it is essential, as never before, that we distinguish between soulish and spiritual activity, if we are to keep ourselves from the wiles of the evil one.

*"The first man Adam, became a living soul.
The last Adam became a life-giving spirit"*
(*1 Corinthians 15:45*).

We who have been delivered from the headship of the first Adam and transferred to the headship of Christ

(the last Adam), need to understand what it means to cease living from the soul and to live in the Spirit.

It is not enough that the carnal element of our flesh be rendered inactive. The soulish element, though less ugly, is just as dangerous to spiritual growth, and must be dealt with too. We must seek to be saved increasingly each day, not only from the power of sin but also from the restless activity of our souls.

Soulsh people will never be able to understand why Jesus spoke as He did on certain occasions. Once, when He was in the midst of a crowd and was told that His relatives wanted to meet Him, Jesus pointed to His disciples and said that they were His closest relatives (*Matthew 12:49, 50*).

His relatives and others must have considered that to be a hard and inconsiderate statement. But Jesus did not desire to have any soulsh attachment to His relatives.

His disciples too could not have understood why Jesus had to be so hard in His rebuke of Peter, when He said to him, "Get behind me, Satan."

Soulsh people can never make such statements, for they are always wondering what others will think of them.

We may have overcome the sins of the flesh. But the question that comes to us now is whether we are going to live by the resources of our human, soulsh life, in seeking to be like Jesus, or by the power of the divine life.

Are we going to be made perfect by our own abilities or by the Holy Spirit (*Galatians 3:3*)?

Soulshness is a hindrance to spiritual growth. When Peter tried to turn Jesus away from the cross, he was doing so with intense human love for Christ. But Jesus identified it with the voice of the Devil. He said to Peter, "You are minding what partakes not of the nature of God (spiritual) but of men (soulsh)" (*Matthew 16:23* - AMP). The soulsh Christian is one whose way of thinking is still governed by the 'life of Adam.' There may be intense human love and even a desire for righteousness, but it is not divine.

When God made man, He made him spirit, soul and body (*1 Thessalonians 5:23*). Man was made to be the temple of God. And when God gave Moses the pattern of the tabernacle, the same threefold division was seen in it – for it symbolised man as the dwelling-place of God.

The tabernacle had three parts. One part was open – the outer court – and this corresponded to man's body, which can be seen. The other two parts – the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place – were covered; and these corresponded to the invisible part of man – soul and spirit respectively.

The presence of God was in the Most Holy Place. From there He talked with man. In regeneration, it is our spirit that the Holy Spirit makes alive, making us one spirit with the Lord (*1 Corinthians 6:17*) – even as a husband and wife become one flesh. God's intention in this is that through His Holy Spirit He might now rule over our redeemed soul and body. If we see this and submit to God in this His purpose for us, we can become spiritual men.

Man's soul consists of his mind (thinking faculty), his emotions (feeling faculty) and his will (deciding

faculty). He cannot contact God with any of these, just as He cannot touch God with his body, for God is Spirit (*John 4:24*).

As the material world can be touched only with the body, so too the spiritual world can be contacted only through the spirit. If we do not distinguish between soul and spirit, we can be deceived by the counterfeits of Satan in the soulish realm that masquerade as the work of the Holy Spirit.

With our soul by itself, we cannot know God. A clever mind has no advantage over a dull mind when it comes to knowing God, for the capacity of a man's soul gives him no advantage when it comes to what has to be received in his spirit. The spirit and soul are totally different. So, to try to know God through one's soul is as foolish as trying to see through one's ear!

Consider how we study the Scriptures. We use our body (eyes) and our soul (mind) when we read God's Word. But our spirit can still be dark as midnight, if the Holy Spirit does not grant revelation on the meaning of the Word. Bible-knowledge only proves that you have a good mind – a powerful soul. Your spirit can still be blind. God hides His truth from the clever and the intelligent, and reveals them to the humble (*Matthew 11:25*). The blindness of the theologians of Jesus day is the clearest proof of this (*1 Corinthians 2:7, 8*).

Our emotions also are a part of the soul. God cannot be felt by the emotions. Emotional exuberance is not spirituality, but merely the excitement of the soul. It can exist side by side with the deepest sin in an individual, even as intellectual sharpness can co-exist with sin.

The prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel were highly emotional, shouting and raving and dancing (*1 Kings 18:26–29*), but they were not spiritual. Such expressions can be found in highly emotional Christian meetings too, but they have nothing to do with true spirituality.

Judas Iscariot was probably the cleverest of the disciples, but his soul-powers did not help him to know the truth of God. The scholars in Jerusalem also could not understand what Simon Peter, with his lack of education, understood by Divine revelation (*Matthew 16:17*).

We cannot know God by the power of the soul. The soulish Christian is the one who attempts to do so.

The soulish Christian can appear to be humble, but he is always conscious of his humility. True humility is unconscious of itself. The soulish Christian has to make an effort to appear humble, whereas true humility is always spontaneous and effortless, for it flows from within.

The soulish Christian can also appear to have a zeal for righteousness. He can take the whip and chase people out of the church, and even thunder away against sin, imagining himself to be a prophet. But he seeks the honour of men for his actions. He always has one eye on the opinions of men. There can also be a more subtle variety of soulishness, where a man may say, "I don't care what anyone thinks about me." But the fact that he wants others to know that he does not care for their opinions reveals his soulishness.

The soulish Christian can appear to have great compassion too. But it will always be human and

unwise. For example, a soulish Christian may, in seeking to be loving, send regular material aid to a needy man, who may actually be a prodigal son, being disciplined by God. Such help will actually be a hindrance to that man's turning to God. The soulish Christian however will get a satisfaction, imagining that he is serving God, not realising that he is actually fulfilling the Devil's purposes by his 'acts of love.'

The above are just a few examples among many possibilities. But it should suffice to show us the desperate need of distinguishing between soulish and spiritual activity.

Soulsh fruit can look like the fruit of the Spirit, and many have been deceived. We can be deceived ourselves.

Plastic oranges and bananas have fooled many people sitting at a dining table. But they are only decorative and have no nutritive value. So too with soulsh imitation of the virtues of Christ.

All that has been said thus far does not mean that our soul is of no use. God Himself created the soul of man, and He has appointed a function for it. We do need to use our mind and our emotions, but true spirituality begins with our humbling ourselves under God's mighty hand, and yielding our will (which is the door to our spirit) to God utterly. It is outside this door of our will, that Jesus stands and knocks for entrance (*Revelation 3:20*).

When we are willing to say as Jesus did in the days of His flesh, "Not my will, but Thine be done," only then can we live as Jesus lived. Then God can rule our spirit. And our soul will become the servant of the Spirit of God. And then our body too will be

brought under the control of the Holy Spirit. Only such a man can be called 'a spiritual man' or 'a Spirit-filled man'.

Conversion, being baptised in the Spirit and the exercise of spiritual gifts do not make a man spiritual, as is amply evidenced by the example of the Corinthian Christians. They exercised all the gifts of the Spirit, yet they were in bondage to the sins of the flesh, and gloried in their intellectual knowledge and their emotional raptures. They were not spiritual.

We have seen that in the tabernacle, the presence of God was in the Most Holy Place. Between the Most Holy Place and the Holy Place hung a thick curtain (veil). It was this that cut off the glory of God from shining through into the Holy Place. This veil symbolised the flesh (*Hebrews 10:20*). It is as the flesh is crucified (the veil rent) that God's glory shines through into our whole personality (our soul).

If we faithfully walk along the new and living way through the flesh that Jesus has inaugurated for us, then the life of God will shine through our personality and will be manifested through us more and more.

Then the Scripture will be fulfilled in us, which says,

"The path of the uncompromisingly righteous is like the light of dawn that shines more and more – brighter and clearer – until it reaches its full strength and glory in the perfect day (when Christ returns)" (Proverbs 4:18 - AMP).

It is thus that the Holy Spirit transforms us from one degree of glory to another (*2 Corinthians 3:18*),

until we become fully like Jesus on the day that He returns (*1 John 3:2*).

We have seen that Jesus never did His own will. In other words, He never lived by the guidance of His mind or His emotions. He lived in the Spirit, and His human soul was subservient to the Holy Spirit. Jesus used His mind and emotions extensively, but always as servants of the Holy Spirit, Who was Lord in His life. Thus the glory of God shone through Him, unhindered in all its fullness.

The Bible teaches that all our life and labour will be tested by fire, in the day that Jesus returns to earth (*1 Corinthians 3:10–14*). The test of fire will determine whether our work was soulish or spiritual. We are exhorted to build with gold, silver and jewels that can survive the fire, and not with wood, hay and straw that will be reduced to ashes.

What does it mean to build with gold, silver and jewels?

Romans 11:36 gives us the answer. There we are told that all things are “from God, through Him and to Him.”

All creation originated in God, is upheld by His power and is meant to glorify Him. But Satan and man have violated this law.

However, only that which originates in God, and is done in God’s power, for God’s glory, is eternal. All the rest will perish, being reduced to ashes at the fire of the judgment seat of Christ.

So, that which originates in man’s soul (from man) and is done through human power, for man’s

honour, is wood, hay and straw, even if it is called Christian work!!

On the other hand, that which originates from God, and is done through His power, for His glory, will be found to be gold, silver and jewels in the day of judgment.

The final day of testing is not going to test the quantity of our work but the quality. The material we have used will matter more than the size of our structure. The origin, power and motive of our labours are going to be far more important in that day than how much we did or sacrificed.

Jesus is our Example in this matter of not living by the soul, but living in the Spirit. He never acted on His own initiative, or through His own human abilities or for His own glory. He did only that which originated in God, and did that in God’s power and for God’s glory.

He repeatedly told His disciples,

“Whoever wishes to save his soul-life shall lose it: but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.”

These words of Jesus concerning hating (or losing) the soul-life are repeated seven times in the four gospels (*Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 14:26; 17:33; John 12:25*).

Surely this must be one of the most important things that Jesus taught if the Holy Spirit has seen fit to repeat it seven times in the four gospels. Yet, very few believers have understood what Jesus meant.

How are we to distinguish between the soulish and the spiritual in our lives?

The answer is: By looking unto Jesus, the Living Word, as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures, the Written Word.

We are to judge ourselves, not by the light of our own soul, but by God's light (*Psalms 36:9*). And that light is found in Jesus (*John 8:12*) and in the Word of God (*Psalms 119:105*).

Jesus, the Word made flesh, says,

“Learn from My example... and you will find rest from your soulish activity” (*Matthew 11:29* - Paraphrase).

We also read that

“The Word of God divides and shows us what is soulish and what is spiritual” (*Hebrews 4:12* - Paraphrase).

And so it is to Jesus, our Example (Forerunner) and to the Word of God as our Guide, that we are to look for light in this area. Perfection is found in the earthly life of Jesus and in God's Word. So let us look at these carefully.

CHAPTER 6

Living in the Will of God

“From Him are all things” (*Romans 11:36*).

Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven belonged to the poor in spirit (*Matthew 5:3*). He also said that only those who do the will of the Father would enter that kingdom (*Matthew 7:21*). The kingdom of heaven is eternal, and only that which has been done in the will of God will be found there. The poor in spirit are those who are conscious of their human insufficiency and who therefore submit to the will of God completely.

In this sense, Jesus was perpetually poor in spirit. He lived as God intended man to live – in perpetual dependence on God, refusing to exercise the powers of His mind apart from God. Consider His words:

“The Son can do nothing of (out from) Himself...I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak as the Father taught Me...I have not come on My own initiative, but He sent Me...I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself Who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say and what to speak.... The words that I say to you I

do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His work” (John 5:19, 30; 8:28, 42; 12:49; 14:10).

Jesus never acted merely because He saw a need. He saw the need, was concerned about it, but acted only when His Father told Him to.

He waited at least four thousand years in Heaven, while the world lay desperately in need of a Saviour, and then came to earth when His Father sent Him (*John 8:42*). “When the right time came, the time God decided on, He sent His Son” (*Galatians 4:4 - TLB*). God has appointed a right time for everything (*Ecclesiastes 3:1*). God alone knows that time, and so we won’t go wrong if we seek the Father’s will in everything, as Jesus did.

And when Jesus came to earth, He did not just go around doing whatever He felt was good. Even though His mind was perfectly pure, yet He never acted on any bright idea that came to mind. No. He made His mind a servant of the Holy Spirit.

Although He knew the Scriptures thoroughly by the age of twelve, yet He spent the next eighteen years as a carpenter, staying with His mother, making tables and chairs, etc. He had the very message that dying men around Him needed, and yet He would not go out into the preaching ministry. Why? Because the Father’s time had not yet come.

Jesus was not afraid to wait.

“He who believes will not be in a hurry” (Isaiah 28:16).

And when His Father’s time came, He went out of His carpenter’s shop and began to preach. Often thereafter, He would say concerning some course of action, “My hour has not yet come” (*John 2:4; 7:6*). Everything in Jesus’ life was regulated by the timing and the will of the Father.

The need of men, by itself, never constituted the call to action for Jesus, for that would have been acting out from Himself – out of His soul. The need of men was to be taken into account, but it was the will of God that was to be done. Jesus made that very clear in *John 4:34, 35*.

The need (*verse 35*):

“Look around you! Vast fields of human souls are ripening all around us, and are ready now for reaping....”

The principle of action (*verse 34*):

“My nourishment comes from doing the will of God Who sent Me, and from finishing His work.” (TLB)

Jesus did not do the many good things that His friends suggested, because He knew that if He listened to men and did the apparently good, He would miss the best that His Father had for Him.

Once, when men begged Him to stay in a particular place, He said He could not, because He had heard His Father’s voice calling Him to go elsewhere. Humanly speaking there were very good reasons for staying where He was, because of the unusual responsiveness of the people to His message. But

God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts and God's ways are not as man's ways (*Isaiah 55:8*). Early that morning, Jesus had gone out alone and prayed, and He had heard His Father's voice (*Mark 1:35-39*), before He heard Peter and the others with their suggestions. Jesus did not rely on human reasoning. He obeyed the Word which said,

“Do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths” (*Proverbs 3:5, 6*).

He leaned upon His Father for guidance in every matter.

In a prophetic reference to the Lord Jesus in *Isaiah 50:4*, we read, “Morning by morning, He (the Father) wakens Me and opens My understanding to His will.” That was Jesus' habit. He listened to His Father's voice from early morning and throughout the day, and did exactly what His Father told Him to do. He did not have discussions with men, to decide on what to do, but had prayer-meetings with His Father. Soulsh Christians plan through discussions with men. Spiritual Christians wait to hear from God.

Jesus lived by His Father (*John 6:57*). To Jesus, God's Word was more important than food (*Matthew 4:4*). He had to receive it many times a day, straight from the Father. Having received it, He obeyed it. Obedience too was more important than His daily food (*John 4:34*). Jesus, lived in dependence on the Father. His attitude throughout the day was, “Speak, Father, I am listening.”

Consider His chasing the money-changers out of the temple. There must have been many occasions when Jesus was in the temple with the money-changers there, when He did not chase them out. He did so, only when led to do so by His Father. The soulsh Christian would rather chase out the money-changers perpetually or never at all. He who is led by God however, knows when, where and how to act.

There were many good things that Jesus could have been done, that He never did, because they were outside the scope of His Father's will for Him. He was always busy doing the very best things. And those were enough. He had not come to earth to do good things, but to do the will of His Father.

“Did you not know that I had to be in the things of My Father,” He asked Joseph and Mary, at the age of twelve (*Luke 2:49 - YLT*). Those were the only things that He was interested in accomplishing. When He came to the end of 33½ years on earth, He could say, with real satisfaction, “Father, I have done everything YOU told Me to do” (*John 17:4*).

He had not travelled around the world, He had not written any book, His followers were few, there were still many unmet needs in many parts of the world, etc., etc. But He had finished the work that the Father had appointed for Him. That, and that alone, matters ultimately.

Jesus was a servant of the Lord Jehovah. And “the most important thing about a servant is that he does just what his master tells him to” (*1 Corinthians 4:2 - TLB*). He spent His life listening to His Father, and thus accomplished all His Father's will, without exhaustion or frustrated ‘busyness.’ He put His own

human interests to death. He was not soulish. He was spiritual.

Jesus gave high priority to prayer in His life. He would often slip away into the wilderness and pray (*Luke 5:16*). Once He spent a whole night in prayer to know the Father's will concerning the choice of the twelve disciples (*Luke 6:12, 13*). The soulish Christian considers time spent in waiting on God, as wasted time, and prays only to ease his conscience. Prayer is not a desperate necessity in his life, because he is confident of himself. The spiritual man, however is dependent on God perpetually for everything, and is thus driven, out of sheer necessity, to prayer.

Jesus said that the one thing needful was to hear His Word (*Luke 10:42*). Mary of Bethany was an example of this. Martha, on the other hand, though busy in unselfish service was restless and critical of Mary. In those two sisters, we see the contrast between spiritual and soulish activity. Martha was not committing any sin in serving the Lord and His disciples. Yet she was restless and critical of Mary. This is a clear picture of soulish service. The soulish Christian is restless and irritable. He has not ceased from his "own works," and has not entered into God's rest (*Hebrews 4:10*). His intentions are good, but he has not realised that his own works however good they may be, are still "filthy rags" in God's eyes, even after conversion (*Isaiah 64:6*).

The good sheep of Amalek (the flesh) are as unacceptable to God as the bad ones (*1 Samuel 15:3, 9-19*). But human reasoning cannot understand this. It appears foolish to throw away the good sheep, when they could be given to God. But God requires

obedience, NOT sacrifice. "To obey is better than sacrifice" (*1 Samuel 15:22*). But how can we obey if we do not hear what God has to say? Hearing has to precede obedience. Hence Jesus said that the one thing needful was to hear His voice. Everything else was dependent on that.

Those who 'serve' like Martha, however sincere, are really only serving themselves. They cannot be called servants of the Lord, for a servant waits to hear what his master tells him to do, before serving.

If we are emptied of self-sufficiency, we shall pray like Solomon did, "O Lord my God, give Thy servant a listening heart to discern between good and evil" (*1 Kings 3:7, 9* - margin). Jesus knew that He had to listen to His Father, if He was to discern between what was good (in its highest sense) and what was not good – between what was His Father's will and what was not.

Outside the Beautiful Gate of the temple in Jerusalem, Jesus often saw a lame man begging for alms. But He did not heal him, because He had no leading from His Father to do so. Later, after He had ascended to Heaven, Peter and John brought healing to that man – in the Father's perfect time – and that resulted in many people turning to the Lord (*Acts 3:1-4:4*). That was the Father's time to heal that man, not earlier. Jesus would have hindered the Father's will if He had healed that man earlier. He knew that the Father's timing was perfect, and so He was never impatient to do anything.

Jesus' life was a life of perfect rest. He had enough time in 24 hours every day to do all His Father's will. But if He had decided to do what appeared good

to Him, then 24 hours a day would not have been enough and he would have ended up in unrest on most days. Jesus could rejoice in every interruption that came to Him, because He accepted the fact that a sovereign Father in Heaven was planning His daily schedule. And so He was never annoyed with interruptions. The life of Jesus will bring our inner beings into perfect rest too. This does not mean that we will do nothing, but that we will do only what is in the Father's plan for our lives. Then we shall be more eager to finish the Father's will than our own pre-determined programme.

Soulish Christians are so intent on doing 'their own thing' that they are frequently irritable and restless. Some of them end up having a nervous or a physical breakdown finally.

It was impossible for Jesus to have a nervous breakdown, because He was in perfect rest in His inner man. He says to us,

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from My example, and you too will find rest in your souls"
(Matthew 11:29).

This is the glory of Jesus that the Spirit of God shows us in the Word and that He desires to impart to us and to manifest through us.

The Lord is our Shepherd and He leads His sheep into pastures of rest. Sheep do not plan their own programme or decide which pasture to go to next. They just follow their Shepherd. But one has to be emptied of self-confidence and self-sufficiency to follow the Shepherd like that. Jesus meekly followed

His Father. But soulish Christians do not want to be sheep, and are therefore led astray by their intellects. Our intellect is a marvellous and most useful gift of God, but it can become the most dangerous of all gifts if exalted to the place of lordship in our life.

The Lord taught His disciples to pray, "Father, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven." How is God's will done in Heaven? The angels there do not run around trying to do 'something for God.' There would be confusion in Heaven if they did that. What do they do? They wait in God's presence to hear what He commands, and then do exactly what they are individually told to do. Listen to the words of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias, "I am Gabriel who stands in the presence of God; and I have been sent to speak to you..." (*Luke 1:19*). This is the position that the Lord Jesus took as well – waiting in His Father's presence, hearing His voice and doing His will.

Soulish Christians may labour hard and sacrifice much, but the clearer light of eternity will reveal that "they toiled all night and caught nothing." But those who took up their cross daily (denied their soul-life and put it to death) and obeyed the Lord, will have nets full of fish in that day (*John 21:1-6*).

"Anyone who lets himself be distracted from the work that I plan for Him," said Jesus, "is not fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62 - TLB). "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfil that" (Colossians 4:17).

"Every plant which our Heavenly Father did not plant will be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13).

The question is not whether the plant is good, but who planted it. God is the only legitimate Originator of anything. The Bible begins with the words, "In the beginning God." So must it be with all our actions: They must have originated in God, and not in our minds, if they are to last forever.

"He who does the will of God will abide forever"
(1 John 2:17).

All the rest will perish.

So, let us ask ourselves this question:

**AM I LIVING AND LABOURING IN THE WILL OF
GOD?**

CHAPTER 7

Living by the Power of God

"Through Him are all things" (Romans 11:36)

Adam was created by God with fantastic powers in his soul. He could give a name to every animal and bird that God had made (*Genesis 2:19*). We find it difficult to remember even a few of those thousands of names. Adam could give a different name to each. That is just one indication of the power of Adam's soul. These powers that God had given him were meant to be used in dependence on God. But Adam chose to develop them apart from God, and after that fatal choice in Eden, began to live by his soul.

We must know something of the difference between Holy-Spirit power and soul-power, if we are distinguish between soulish and spiritual activity, and escape being deceived by the counterfeits of Satan.

Consider one area, where human soul-power is being used extensively in Christendom today – the area of healing.

Since the nineteenth century, science has begun to discover something of the tremendous powers of the human mind. The science of hypnotism has made great advances, and it is amazing to see what

is possible through mental powers. The principles of hypnotism are now being imported into Christianity under the label of ‘the gifts of the Holy Spirit.’

This is not to despise the genuine gifts of the Spirit, which will always lead to the building of the church and the glory of God; but rather the counterfeits, which look so much like the genuine, but which lead to the exaltation of human personalities and to the building up of their own kingdoms and their financial empires!

Much of what passes for Divine healing these days at the hands of ‘faith-healers’ (Christian and non-Christian), is merely the using of these powers of the human mind – convincing oneself that one is healed, even when the symptoms are still there. Since a very high percentage of illnesses today are psychosomatic (that is, physical diseases having a mental or emotional origin), it is true that ‘positive thinking’ and a changed attitude to the sickness itself, does often produce healing in the body. But this is just a result of the functioning of the natural laws of the body and mind. It is not supernatural healing at all.

Jesus still heals people today miraculously, but not by such psychological tricks. Wherever the genuine gift of healing is manifested, there will be no mental struggle to believe – for faith is the gift of God, and is based on the promises in His Word, and not the product of ‘positive thinking.’

By practising the principles of hypnotism (even unintentionally), men can have power over others in a way that God never intended them to have. This too can often be mistaken in Christian circles, for the authority of the Holy Spirit, in an individual.

There are grave dangers in developing one’s soul powers, apart from God. God gave us those powers to be yielded to Him for His use.

This was how Jesus lived. He put His soul-life to death, and refused to live by the powers of His human soul. He lived instead in entire dependence on His Father and sought for the power of the Holy Spirit constantly both for His life and His ministry.

We have already seen that He frequently withdrew into the wilderness to pray (*Luke 5:16*). During His last days, before the crucifixion, He would teach in the temple during the day and retire to the Mount of Olives during the night – no doubt to have extended times of undisturbed prayer (*Luke 21:37, 38*).

To live by faith is to live in such perpetual dependence on the Father.

Only that which is done through God’s power is eternal. All else will perish. The Bible compares the man who lives in dependence on God to a tree that draws its sustenance from an underground river (*Jeremiah 17:5–8*). That is how Jesus lived – perpetually drawing His spiritual resources, as a man, from the Holy Spirit (the river of God).

Jesus’ victory over temptation, was not through human determination, but because He drew strength from the Father, moment-by-moment. The way of self-denial as exemplified and taught by Jesus is not one where the soul attempts to master itself. No. That is Buddhism, and yoga, and is as different from the teaching of Scripture as earth is from heaven.

Jesus taught that as human beings we do not have the power to live and serve God as we should. He said that we were like helpless branches entirely

dependent on the sap supplied by the tree for fruitfulness. “Apart from Me,” He said, “you can do nothing” (*John 15:5*). And so, what we do manage to do, without the help of the Holy Spirit can be considered to be NOTHING.

Herein lies the vital necessity to be “filled with the Spirit continuously” (*Ephesians 5:18*).

Jesus Himself was filled and anointed with the Holy Spirit (*Luke 4:1, 18*), and He lived and laboured for His Father in the Spirit’s power. But this was possible, only because as a man, He was poor in spirit.

Jesus was conscious of the weakness of the human frame that He had taken on. Therefore He was perpetually looking for opportunities to get alone and pray. Someone has said that, as tourists look for good hotels and for important sights to be seen, when they enter a city, so Jesus looked for solitary places where He could pray.

He sought for power to overcome temptation and put His soul-power to death. No man was as conscious as Jesus was, of the utter weakness of the flesh, and so He sought the Father’s face in prayer for help, as no man ever did. He prayed with “loud crying and tears” in the days of His flesh. The result was that He was mightily strengthened by the Father, much more than any other man. Thus, Jesus never once sinned and never lived out from His soul (*Hebrews 4:15; 5:7–9*).

Isn’t it significant that 25 times in the gospels, the words “pray” or “prayer” are used in connection with Jesus?

Therein lay the secret of His life and His labours.

Jesus not only prayed before the great events of His life, but also after some of His great achievements. After feeding the five thousand miraculously, He withdrew into the mountains to pray. This was no doubt to guard against temptations to pride or complacency over the work accomplished, and to renew His strength by waiting on His Father (*Isaiah 40:31*). We usually pray only before we have some important task to do for the Lord. But if we would develop the habit that Jesus had, of waiting before the Father after we have finished our task, we would preserve ourselves from pride and thus be equipped to do greater things for the Lord.

The busier Jesus’ life became, the more He prayed. There were times when He did not have time to eat or even to rest (*Mark 3:20; 6:31, 33, 46*), but He always took time to pray. He knew when to sleep and when to pray, for He obeyed the promptings of the Spirit.

Poverty of spirit is a prerequisite for effective prayer. Prayer is the expression of human helplessness, and if it is to be meaningful and not a mere ritual, there must be a constant recognition of the inadequacy of human resources either to live the Christian life or to serve God.

Jesus continuously sought for the power of God in prayer, and was never disappointed. Thus He accomplished things through prayer, that even He could not have accomplished in any other way.

The one who is strong in self-confidence will continue to depend on “the arm of flesh” for victory over sin. Such a person has to be broken, before he can know the power of God unto victory. And so God permits him to be repeatedly defeated, month after

month, till he comes to a 'zero-point' and acknowledges His impotence. Then God pours out on him the Spirit of grace and leads him into a life of victory, and the glory of God begins to be manifested through His life.

It is when we become weak that we are truly strong (*2 Corinthians 12:10*).

Abraham produced Ishmael in the power of his natural strength, but God would not accept Ishmael, and asked Abraham to send him away (*Genesis 17:18-21; 21:10-14*). At the judgment-seat of Christ, when we present our well-meant efforts, produced through our human abilities without dependence on God, He will tell us too that they are unacceptable. All of that wood, hay and straw will then be reduced to ashes.

Only that which was done "through God" will remain.

When Abraham came to the place of impotence – when his, natural ability to produce children had ceased – then Isaac was born, through divine power, and this son was acceptable to God.

One Isaac is worth more than a thousand Ishmaels, as far as God is concerned. One gram of gold is worth more than a kilogram of wood – after the fire has tested them both. A little done in the power of the Holy Spirit is worth far more than much done in our own strength.

Our good works and our own efforts to serve the Lord will always be filthy rags both before and after conversion. But that righteousness which is produced by faith, and that service which has been done in dependence on the Holy Spirit – will form

our wedding garment on the day of the marriage of the Lamb (*Revelation 19:8*). What a difference – either filthy rags or a beautiful wedding dress! It all depends on whether our life is lived in our own soul-power or the power of God.

Jesus depended on the power of the Spirit for His ministry too. He did not dare to go into the preaching ministry without first being anointed by the Holy Spirit. For thirty years He had already lived in perfect holiness through the power of the Spirit, so that the Father could testify, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well-pleased" (*Matthew 3:17*). Yet He needed to be anointed by the Spirit for service. And so He prayed to be anointed, and He was (*Luke 3:21*). And because He loved righteousness and hated sin more than any man that ever lived, He was anointed more abundantly than any other man (*Hebrews 1:9*). As a result, people were delivered from the captivity of Satan, through His ministry. This was the chief purpose and the primary manifestation of the anointing (See *Luke 4:18 & Acts 10:38*).

God's work is not done through human talents and abilities. Men who are highly gifted naturally, when converted, often think that they can now use their intellectual and emotional powers to influence others for God.

Many Christians even mistake their eloquence, logic and clarity of utterance for the power of the Holy Spirit. But these are only the powers of the soul, and they will be a hindrance in the service of God, if any dependence is placed on them. Work done through human soul-power can never be eternal.

It will perish, if not in time, then at the judgment seat of Christ.

Jesus did not depend on the power of eloquence or of emotion to move people towards God. He knew that any work done through such soul-power would only reach the souls of His audience, and never help them spiritually. He did not, for the same reason, use musical entertainment of any sort to draw people to God.

He did not play on the feelings of His audiences and work them up to feverish excitement to get them to surrender to God. In fact, He used none of these and other soulish methods that are so common with evangelists and preachers today. He did not use emotional passion and soulish fervour to influence people. These are the methods of the politician and the salesman, and He was neither of the two.

As the Servant of Jehovah, Jesus depended entirely on the Holy Spirit in all His labours. The result was that those who followed Him came into a deep life in God themselves.

Jesus did not use soul-power to manipulate others to His way of thinking. He never imposed Himself on others. He always gave others the freedom to reject Him, if they so chose. Soulsh Christian leaders dominate their flock and their co-workers by their strong personality. People are awed into subjection to such leaders and adore them and obey their every word.

Multitudes may flock around such a leader, and they may even all be united, but it is only a unity of devotion to the leader. Such leaders may even delude themselves into thinking that what they have is the power of the Holy Spirit, because they are not able to

distinguish between soul and spirit. Their followers are also similarly deceived. But the clear light of the judgment-seat will reveal that it was all human soul-power and that it hindered the work of God.

There are political and non-Christian leaders too who have such a human charisma about them, that they are able to draw large crowds by the power of their personality and oratory etc.

Jesus was no such leader. Neither should any Christian be. We should dread to use our soul-power, for it is a violation of God's laws for man, and cannot but be a hindrance in His service.

Soul-power may be able to produce superficial changes in others and bring about a form of godliness in them, but there will be no deep devotion to God nor victory over sin in their private lives.

A truly spiritual work can never be done by the power of the human soul, but only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew this; and so He constantly put His soul-power to death. Thus He was able to do a deep and abiding work in those who followed Him in a very short time.

He never imposed His personality on others, never domineered over anyone, and never awed people by His language or His intellectual powers. He did not seek to impress men but to help them.

Soulsh Christians are more interested in impressing others than in helping them. Soulsh Christian leaders cannot build the true church, because they unite people to themselves and not to Christ the Head.

Those who have strong soul-power have to minister the Word in fear and trembling (as Paul did – *1 Corinthians 2:1–5*), lest the faith of their hearers

rest in the speaker's human wisdom rather than in the power of God.

Jesus remained at all times conscious of His human weakness. He said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself..." (*John 5:19*). Hence His intense prayer-life. Therefore the Father was able to do all His works in Jesus (*John 14:10*).

It is such an attitude of dependence on God that will keep us from using that which God has forbidden and which Jesus told us to hate – our soul-life and its powers. Then the Holy Spirit will be able to manifest the glory of the Lord through us.

If we live by faith (in dependence on the Lord) and our work is a work of faith, then we shall indeed build with gold, silver and jewels.

And so, let us ask ourselves this second question:

AM I LIVING AND LABOURING BY THE POWER OF GOD?

CHAPTER 8

Living for the Glory of God

"To Him are all things" (Romans 11:36)

God is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. And so, as all things of an eternal nature originate in Him, they find their consummation in Him too.

All things were created by God to bring glory to Him. This is not because God selfishly desires our glory. He is completely self-sufficient in Himself, and there is nothing that we can offer Him that can add to His sufficiency. When He calls us to seek His glory, it is because that is the way for our own highest good. We would be self-centred and miserable otherwise.

To be centred in Him is a law that God has built into creation. That law can be violated only by moral creatures with a free will. Inanimate creation joyfully obeys its Creator and glorifies Him. But Adam disobeyed that law, and we see the consequences in the misery of humanity.

In the prayer that the Lord taught His disciples to pray, the very first request is, "Hallowed by Thy Name." This was the primary longing in the heart of the Lord Jesus. He prayed "Father, glorify Thy

Name,” and chose the way of the Cross since that was to the Father’s glory (*John 12:27, 28*). One supreme passion governed the life of the Lord Jesus – the Father’s glory.

Everything He did was for the Father’s glory. There were no separate sacred and secular compartments in His life. Everything was sacred. He made stools and benches for the glory of God as much as He preached and healed the sick for the glory of God. Every day was equally sacred to Him; and money spent on the necessities of daily living was as sacred as money given to God’s work or to the poor.

Jesus lived in perfect rest of heart at all times, because He sought only the Father’s glory and cared only for His Father’s approval. He lived before the face of His Father and did not care for the honour or praise of men.

“He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory,” said Jesus (*John 7:18*).

The soulish Christian, however much he may appear or pretend to be seeking the glory of God, is really, deep down, interested in his own honour. Jesus on the other hand, never sought any honour for Himself.

That which originates in man’s cleverness and is carried out through human ingenuity and talents, will always end in glorifying man. That which begins in the soul will only glorify the creature.

But there will be nothing in heaven or in earth in the ages of eternity that will bring honour or glory to any man.

Everything that survives time and enters the portals of eternity will be what was from God, through God and to God.

It is the motive behind an action that gives value and merit to that action, as far as God is concerned.

What we do is important, but why we do it is far more important.

We have seen that Jesus waited on His Father to receive His plan, and also waited on the Father for the power to carry out that plan, so that He did all the will of His Father in the power of God. But that was not all. As we saw in the last chapter, Jesus went to prayer after some of His greatest achievements – to give the glory to His Father. He offered up the fruit of His labours as a sacrificial offering to His Father. He neither sought honour for Himself, nor received it when it was given Him (*John 5:41; 8:50*). When His fame spread far and wide, He retired to the mountains to glorify His Father (*Luke 5:15, 16*). He was determined never to touch that glory Himself.

The result of such an attitude consistently held, was that at the end of Jesus’ life on earth, He could honestly say,

“Father I have glorified You on earth” (*John 17:4*).

He had come to earth to glorify the Father as a man. He lived each day with that as His aim. He prayed earnestly that the Father alone would be glorified, whatever the cost to Him. And He finally died that the Father would be honoured and exalted and glorified on earth as He was in heaven.

Paul says that in the day of testing by fire (*1 Corinthians 3:13*) everyone will know “WHY we have been doing the Lord’s work” (*1 Corinthians 4:5* - TLB).

Motives will be exposed and examined by the Lord in that day.

Soulish service exalts self and draws people to ourselves instead of to God. The crowds come to hear us and are impressed and come back to hear us again and honour us and speak well of us. When we leave the place, they fall back to their former spiritual condition, no better for all the preaching that they heard. The real test of a man’s labour is the condition of the people to whom he ministered, after he himself is dead and gone. Then it will become evident whether his service was soulish or spiritual.

All labour that draws others to ourselves will be proved to be wood, hay and straw in the final day, for it only glorified man.

The ministry of Jesus was spiritual. The proof of that is seen in the fact that He left behind a number (small though it be) who also became spiritual, and not soulish. To manifest His glory, we must follow in His footsteps here.

Soulish service and living are paving the way for the arrival and the worldwide acceptance of the anti-christ – the totally soulish man. He will exalt himself above others and will draw crowds to himself, even using miraculous powers to do so (*2 Thessalonians 2:3–10*).

Drawing the attention of people to ourselves and to our work is therefore of the essence of the spirit of the antichrist. To have power over the consciences

of men, so that we tell them what to do and where to go, is soulish. To give advice to others is a spiritual thing to do but to exercise control over them is soulish.

Jesus never compelled any of His followers to do anything. He respected the freedom of choice that God had invested man with.

And so He was the servant of all men, and ministered to them instead of ordering them around.

It is very easy to preach with the spirit of a ruler and a lord and not with the spirit of a servant (*2 Corinthians 4:5*). We can use our soul-power to impose our views on others. This results in people being brought into bondage to us.

A person who is zealous and is ignorant of his own strong soul-power will not even realise that he is winning people to himself and not to Christ. The work of God is not done by human power or might but by the Holy Spirit. And one mark of the Spirit’s working is liberty (*2 Corinthians 3:17*) – perfect freedom given to each individual.

Consider how a servant conducts himself in a home. He serves quietly and having done what needs to be done, withdraws into the kitchen. He does not come in with pomp and show, neither does he tell those at the table what they should do. How many are willing to serve the Lord like this?

As one has said,

“There is only one thing that a servant has a right to rule over, and that is over his own flesh. To the degree that he rules over his own flesh, he can lead others forward in the spiritual life.

A spiritual servant serves only by the power that is given to him by God, and this power is given to him only to minister to the needs of others. If however we use that power to domineer over a person and to force him in any way, he may become discouraged and finally go his own way. The task of a servant is to work in such a way that souls come into a living connection with God Who works everything – and not into a connection with himself (*1 Corinthians 12:6*.)”

Jesus so sought the glory of God that He Himself was quite prepared to pave and prepare the way for His apostles to do something greater than He ever did, after Him (*John 14:12*). This greater work was, no doubt, the building of the church, with the members therein becoming one as the Father and the Son are one (*John 17:21–23*). During Jesus’ lifetime on earth, not even two of His disciples had become one as the Father and the Son are one. They all sought their own. But after the day of Pentecost, many of His disciples have become one as He desired. This was the greater work.

Jesus paved the way for others to do a greater work. He died and laid the foundation and His disciples built on that.

There was no self-interest in Jesus. It did not matter to Him if someone else got the credit for what He did, provided the Father was glorified.

It is this spirit that has to animate us, if we are to minister life to the church, the Body of Christ, today, and if we are to build it, to the fullness of the stature of Christ.

Jesus lived so utterly and totally before the Father’s face alone, that He did not care to be vindicated before those who crucified Him, after He rose from the dead.

In the eyes of the world and the Jewish leaders, Jesus’ ministry was a total failure. If Jesus had been soulish, He would have longed to go back and present Himself before those leaders after His resurrection to confound them and to vindicate Himself. But he did not do that. He presented Himself after the resurrection, only to those who believed on Him.

The Father’s time for the vindication of Jesus had not yet come – and Jesus was prepared to wait. That time has still not come.

Jesus is still misunderstood in the world, and most people consider His life to have been a failure. He began life (as a man), in the ignominy of a cattle food-box and ended His life on earth in the humiliating death of the cross, with two criminals of the worst order. And that was the last that this world saw of Him.

Jesus was quite prepared to appear a failure before men, provided the Father was glorified. He did not live or serve, to be admired by men, and therefore one day the Father will vindicate Him publicly with great glory and honour; and in that day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord – but even that will be for the glory of God the Father (*Philippians 2:11*).

And so the third question that we must ask ourselves is:

AM I LIVING AND LABOURING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD ALONE?

CHAPTER 9

The Bride of Christ

In the closing pages of Scripture, we find the result of the Holy Spirit's work – the Bride of Christ. We also see there the result of Satan's counterfeit work – the Harlot church.

John says,

“I saw the HOLY CITY, THE NEW JERUSALEM, beautiful as a BRIDE, descending from God. It was FILLED WITH THE GLORY OF GOD and glowed like a precious gem, crystal clear like jasper”
(Revelation 21:2, 10, 11 - TLB).

Before seeing this vision of the Bride of Christ, John was given a vision of the Harlot – the spiritual adulteress, who claimed to love God but actually loved this world (*James 4:4*). This is spurious Christianity, having a form of godliness (correctness of doctrine), but no power (no divine life) (*2 Timothy 3:5*).

John says, “I saw a woman, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, and a voice saying “Babylon the great is fallen. See THE SMOKE OF HER BURNING. Her smoke rose up forever and ever” (*Revelation 17:3, 5; 18:2, 9; 19:3*).

The contrast is striking. Whereas the Bride comes through the judgment fire, “glowing like a precious gem,” the Harlot is reduced to ashes completely, her smoke ascending to the skies, because she was made of perishable stuff.

Jerusalem the Bride, and Babylon the Harlot are two systems – one from God and the other “earthly, soulish and demonic” (*James 3:15* - margin).

Let us look at Babylon first.

Babylon originated with the tower of Babel, which was built according to man’s plan, in man’s strength and for man’s glory.

“They said to one another (FROM MAN), ‘Let us build for ourselves a city (THROUGH MAN) and make for ourselves a name (TO MAN)’” (*Genesis 11:3, 4*).

Years later, King Nebuchadnezzar, having built the great city of Babylon, capital of his great world empire, looked out one day over the city and spoke in the same vein:

“Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built (FROM MAN)... by the might of my power (THROUGH MAN)... for the glory of my majesty (TO MAN)” (*Daniel 4:30*).

The tower of Babel ended in judgment. Nebuchadnezzar’s boast also brought down on him the immediate judgment of God (*Daniel 4:31–33*). The final end of all that has been produced by human wisdom and human power for man’s glory will also

be judgment by God. That which is done through human soul-power will perish, even if it is called ‘Christian work’.

“The wide walls of Babylon shall be levelled to the ground and her high gates shall be burned; THE BUILDERS (‘Christian’ workers?) FROM MANY LANDS HAVE WORKED IN VAIN – THEIR WORK SHALL BE DESTROYED BY FIRE” (*Jeremiah 51:58* - TLB).

Jerusalem, on the other hand, is the City of God (*Hebrews 12:22*). In the Old Testament this was where the Temple of God was. Jerusalem, God’s dwelling place, had her origin in the Tabernacle, built by Moses (*Exodus 25:8*).

The Tabernacle was built exactly according to God’s plan:

“...according to all that the Lord commanded” (*Exodus 40:16*) (FROM GOD).

It was built by men endowed with the power of God:

“Bezalel...I have filled him with the Spirit of God...” (*Exodus 31:1–5*) (THROUGH GOD).

It was built for the glory of God:

“The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (*Exodus 40:34*) (TO GOD).

That which originates in God and is done through Divine power for the glory of God alone will remain forever. It will come through the fire, glowing like a gem, because it is built of gold, silver and jewels.

As we compare the opening pages of Scriptures with its closing pages, we find that the two trees (the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil) have produced two systems, by the end of time – Jerusalem and Babylon.

That which is truly born of the Spirit – from God, through God and to God – remains for ever; whereas that which was born of the flesh – from man, through man and to man – perishes.

Today, we are living between the pages of Genesis and Revelation. And whether we realise it or not, we are being caught up in one of these two systems – one determined to exalt and glorify God, and the other out to glorify and exalt man; one following Christ and the other following Adam; one living in the Spirit and the other living in the flesh and the soul.

Both Jesus and Adam heard the voice of God – the difference was only in the fact that one obeyed and the other disobeyed. So too, Jesus said, it would be with those who hear His voice – one would obey and build on the rock, unshakable for eternity, while another would hear but not obey and thus build on the sand, ultimately to perish (*Matthew 7:24–27*).

These two houses that Jesus spoke of are Jerusalem and Babylon.

There are those today who are truly justified by faith and enter into the new covenant, sealed by the blood of Jesus, and follow Jesus in a life of obedience to God's will (particularly as described in

Matthew 5 to 7), who build on the rock and have a part in Jerusalem. One has only to read *Matthew 5 to 7* to discover whether he belongs to this company or not.

Equally there are others (and this is by far the majority), who hear the words of Jesus in *Matthew 5 to 7*, but having a false understanding of justification, faith and grace, live in a false security, not caring to obey the words of Jesus, and thus build on sand – Babylon – finally perishing forever.

These are 'Christians' in their own eyes, for Jesus said that the man who built on sand was one who heard His voice, and therefore obviously, not a heathen, but one who read the Bible and went to 'church.' His only problem was that he did not obey and therefore could not partake of eternal salvation promised to all who obey Jesus (*Hebrews 5:9*). His faith was not genuine, for it did not have works of obedience to perfect it (*James 2:22, 26*).

Those under the headship of Adam follow their head in disobedience to God's revealed will, but are persuaded by Satan that they "will not die" (*Genesis 3:4*), because they claim to have 'accepted Christ.' Thus they live in false security in Babylon.

Equally, those under the headship of Christ are identified by the fact that they "walk as Jesus walked" (*1 John 2:6*) in obedience to God's will. These are the brothers and sisters of Christ (*Matthew 12:50*), and are a part of Jerusalem.

The interesting thing about the parable that Jesus spoke at the end of *Matthew 5 to 7*, is that both the wise man's house and the foolish man's house stood for some time, as both Babylon and Jerusalem stand

today – until the rains and the flood came. While the foolish man was only concerned about the external appearance of the house (the testimony before men), the wise man was more concerned about the foundation (the hidden life in the heart, before the face of God) primarily.

But when the floods and the rains came (the judgment of God), it was the foundation that was tested first.

“For the time has come for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it starts with us, what will be the destiny of those who disobey the good news from God? And if the righteous person is saved with difficulty, what chance have the impious and sinful?” (1 Peter 4:17, 18 - Berkeley).

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and in Your Name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you (for “no one who sins knows Him” – 1 John 3:6). Depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness (disobey God)” (Matthew 7:21–23).

Notice here that there will be many who are Christians in their minds (calling Jesus “Lord”) and in their emotions (calling Jesus “Lord, Lord!”), who yet do not yield their wills to do the will of God in their lives. The Lord rejects them as unknown to Him.

The distinctive feature of Jerusalem is holiness. It is called “the HOLY City” (*Revelation 21:2*). Babylon however, stands out for its greatness. It is called “the GREAT city” (*Revelation 18:10*). It is called “great”, eleven times in Revelation.

Those who live in true holiness, in obedience to God and have partaken of the nature of Christ by grace through faith, are built together into Jerusalem; whereas those who are looking for greatness here on earth (the testimony and the honour of men) are built into Babylon.

For nineteen hundred years, the call has been coming to God’s people,

“Come out of her (Babylon) MY PEOPLE; do not take part in her sins, or you will be punished with her” (Revelation 18:4 - TLB).

The call is even more urgent today, as we approach the end of the age. It is truly unfortunate that even God’s people can be mixed up with Babylon and thus share her punishment – if they do not take heed to this call of God which is so clear. Having held on to an evangelical doctrine, or having made a ‘decision for Christ’ will not help anyone in that day, if they have not lived a life that corresponds to the true doctrine, or brought forth works of obedience that are the identifying marks of a genuine faith.

How intense was God’s desire when He made man in His own image that man should partake of the divine nature and manifest His glory.

And when man fell, how great a price God was willing to pay, “sending His own Son in the likeness

of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, condemning sin in the flesh” (*Romans 8:3*), so that a Way might be made whereby man might be restored and brought back to the place where he could once again fulfil the divine purpose.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all together involved in this work of redeeming man and transforming him. And although, many men and women in their foolishness will not respond to God, yet the divine purpose will be fulfilled in a remnant (the few who find the narrow way to life), who submit to God, like Jesus did, and through whom the glory of God will be manifested, not only here in time, but also in the ages of eternity, when God will show forth through them, the surpassing riches of His grace that they were made partakers of through Christ Jesus.

To Him be all the glory, now and forever.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

About the Book

God did not create man because He needed a servant. He created man because *He wanted someone who would manifest His character and His nature.*

If we forget this truth, it is easy to get sidetracked into imaging that *service* for God is the primary purpose of our salvation in Christ. This is the mistake that many believers have made.

Our Father in *heaven* and the Holy Spirit in our *hearts* are both working towards one goal – *that we might become like Jesus.* The more we become like our Lord in character, the more we will live on earth as He lived.

This and this alone is the Spirit-filled life.

As we compare the opening pages of Scripture with its closing pages, we find that the *two trees* (the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil) have produced *two systems*, by the end of time – *Jerusalem* and *Babylon*. One is determined to glorify God. The other is out to exalt man. One follows Christ. The other follows Adam. One lives in the Spirit, the other in the flesh. All of us are being caught up in one of these two systems today.

Ask God to open your eyes as you read this book...



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