

Under the Magnificent Cross



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DEDICATION

To Mom who has borne the burden for the family.

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Foreword

Have you ever wondered if you are truly saved? Does it feel like you are are not very holy if at all? Have you even started to wondered if God and Jesus exists? Wish this book was available years ago when as Christian I pondered these same questions on many occasions. There has to be more to Christianity than Salvation and trying not to sin.

The Christmas before Dad passed away, he asked me to put together this book. It is an accumulation of his life's spiritual work. By studying to organize it, I began to realize it is a treasure chest of spiritual teachings. He described in very comprehensive manner the steps for a Christian to become holy. There are spiritual truths were never considered nor talked about in Churches.

The heart of this book is in chapter 5 and 6. This is our crucifixion with Christ and our reckoning to be dead to sin. It is what transforms us from mere Christians to a holy life under the Magnificent Cross. It is the essence of Christianity as Christ intended. From it, we live by the Spirit and not by the flesh.

This subject is quite abstract. Per Dad's instruction I have added some layman's explanation in the reckoning process chapter. Ultimately, words fail, it is God only, not human words, that gives understanding. He does it at the time of His choosing, not ours. It is only He who gives the all-important faith to make everything possible.

Preamble

As we gaze into the starry sky on a clear night we see the vastness and greatness of the universe which God had created. He is the architect, builder and creator. He regulates the universe and keeps the stars in their courses above; He sustains the universe and keeps everything going; He rules over the entire universe and is sovereign over all. He made us humble human beings in this small planet earth. Our earth is only a trillionth and trillionth part of the universe and we are just a very small creature on the surface of the globe. Would this great God of the vast universe ever care about us?

Imagine yourself to be the president of a large corporation which has over a hundred thousand employees, do you have time to get to know each one of your employee? Or look at the analogy with ants. Even if you love ants do you care what each ant is doing around the house? As rational adults we do not have time to take care of them. If we were to project this to God we would come to the human rational conclusion that humanly speaking it would not be possible that the mighty Creator of the universe would have the time for any of us unless it is for a special purpose. Had it not been for the love of God we human race would have been a lost race living in this vast universe. We see that year after year and generations after generations human beings come and go. Biologically we are no different from the grass of the meadows. Our life pattern is no different from the ephemeral fly that lives for a day and die. Even the Psalmist had said in 8:4: "What is man, that thou art mindful of

him? And the son of man, that thou visited him?" It is because this great God of the universe had condescended to care about us, and that He chooses to speak to us through the Holy Bible and the Holy Spirit that we have hope.

The main purpose of writing this book is to share with you the great things and gifts that this great Creator and God of the universe had installed for us. Just as great as the creation of the universe, God's grace and mercy to us is no less in magnitude. This is God's great news to us and grand design for us. He wants to give us this vast universe and let us rule over it as kings and priests. Also the new universe, which is the New Heaven and New Earth is infinitely much more grand than what we have now. God accomplishes all these by bringing many sons into glory, which is to say, God wants to make sure that the final destination of all born again Christians who had walked according to His will as sons of God will share the glory of Christ.

However before all the above happens there are things which God has to do and things we have to do to bring about this glorious hope into reality. There is so much that need to be done with this fallen and sin infested world that we have to be selective in what we are discussing. In the chapters that follow we shall only dwell on God's way of salvation, deliverance, our response to Him and how we should live.

The key of the whole book can be expressed in a few words: How we should live under the magnificent Cross of Christ. Christians should be living under the obsession of the magnificent Cross.

1 The Divine Ways and Mind of God

Way of God – What Drives God's Plan

As we look at this world of conflict, confusion and injustice we are tempted to ask this question: Is this really the world that God wanted to create, or did he miscalculate? God never makes any mistakes; God foreknows and He forestalls. He created the whole universe and He is sovereign over all. If there is something He did not wish to see it happen, He could certainly change or stop it. As an all omniscient and all omnipotent God He could stop it from happening in the first place. Christ who is in the Father created the world. What was in Christ's mind when He created the world? And what was in Christ Jesus' mind while He was on earth? While at Jacob's well in Sychar of Samaria He told His disciples: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work", John 4:34. Meat in those days meant food. What Jesus was saying was that as essential as it was necessary to eat food because it kept Him alive, doing the will of God was just as essential. Christ is preoccupied with the work of the Father. Christ's mission on earth was to carry out the plan and mission of God the Father.

It can be summed up as: "Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many", Matt 20:28. So God's will for Christ Jesus is the work of redemption, and to give His life as a ransom for the sin of mankind. In the Garden of Gethsemane we see that the will of God the Father is for Christ to drink the bitter cup of suffering and death on the Cross, Matt 26:39-42.

Not only Jesus Christ and The Father thought of it while Jesus was on earth, but God has it in mind before the creation of the world. If we were to look at the time context of the verse in the Revelation 13:8: "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world", we could see that time-wise and predestination-wise, Christ was slain before the creation of the world. God had planned it so that Christ should die on the Cross before He created the world. This happens not only time-wise but also foundation-wise; which is to say, the foundation of creating the world rests on the foundation of the Slain Lamb. It is the basis, the blueprint on which God created the world. I Peter 1:18-20 "...ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for you".

What does all these mean? It means that the slain Lamb, which is Christ's death on the Cross is the prime purpose of creating the world. Therefore we see that God did not err when Adam sinned; he did not miscalculate, because it is all in His plan.

It is that divine preoccupation of having the beloved Son of the Father being slain so that God's creation will revolve round it that God proceed to build the world on the foundation of the Slain Lamb. This sure foundation is to ensure that all those who are His and who has faith in the Lord Jesus has the right to become the sons and heirs of God. So that by Christ's death on the Cross He may bring many sons into glory.

Without Christ's death on the cross there shall not be righteousness reckoned unto man for the faith of Christ. There shall be no hope for man and all of God's creation. God's creation will not be good.

The world was good when it was created by God, as is said in the first chapter of Genesis. When Adam fell and the whole world with it, the world had become no good. However it will become good again when it is redeemed at the moment we become sons of God: this is when Christ comes again. After which the New Heaven and New Earth shall replace the present heaven and earth.

What we have said is what God the Father and God the Son had been thinking about even before the creation. There may be other things that are in God's mind, but as far as what the Scripture tells us and what we know, this is it. The Holy Spirit too brood over all of God's creation and plan (like a mother hen hedging her eggs); this is the old Talmudic rendering of the Hebrew script of Genesis 1;1 where it said "And the Spirit of God brood over the waters". This Talmudic rendering of the old, Hebrew Script is quite consistent with what Chris had said when He wept over Jerusalem in Matt 23:37" ...how often would

I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings and ye would not!". Jerusalem had departed from the original expectations of Christ.

Having understood the intent and main purpose of Christ, we should all now endeavor to seek the mind of Christ. Perhaps we may wonder how we arrive at it because we did not go through the same experience of Christ on the Cross and so it may be very difficult for us to imitate the thinking of Christ. If we read Phil 2:5-12 we could see that the Apostle Paul admonishes us to have the same mind and spirit as Christ. The Apostle Paul tells us that it is that Divine condescension, humiliation, incarnation and obedience unto death, which are the cause of God the Father exalting Jesus Christ. Herein is the secret of appropriating spiritual power before God:

Condescension--It is a great wonder and mystery that Christ as God the Son should stoop so low to mankind and to touch the world. God who created all things by Christ Jesus should now have Christ the Creator become the created. It is just like the potter becoming the clay!

Humiliation--Christ had to be born into a lowly family and lowly birth. He had to live as a poor carpenter; despised by people. Finally He as the God of glory should now suffer infamy, shame, humiliation and death on the Cross.

Incarnation--It is not just becoming a man, it is the omnipresence God being limited by a humble human body. It is just like ourselves being handcuffed and foot-cuffed and is allowed to move only that much. The most unpleasant of all is for the all Holy God to take on sinful flesh because He has to

bear the sins of all humanity. It is a great contradiction and insult to His holiness. It was not a pleasant incarnation: the very thought of taking upon all the sins of the whole world upon Himself and to die for it causes Christ's sweat to become like drops of blood falling down on the ground. The goal of incarnation is the Cross and obedience is its means.

Obedience unto Death--It was because of Christ's obedience to God the Father that he was willing to go through suffering and death. Without obedience there will not be death. Though Christ is equal with God, yet he chose to humble Himself and lower His status.

Christ death on the Cross and the subsequent resurrection is the consummation of the purpose of His "Incarnation as Savior of the world. His death reconciles men to God and secure God's unconditional forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ. Without death there would not be any resurrection out of it. When Christ died and rose again He prove to all creatures of God, including all the angels, principalities and powers of the universe that he is the Lord and master of life, because no death can hold Him captive. That all those who had faith in Him shall also tread the path into the glory of God. It is only when we die with Him that we may experience the resurrection that is in Him.

Commentary: The scripture has said all the above for our human admonition. Christ being of the same mind as the Father did not need to go through the above choices, because the Son and the Father think the same way. There is no need

for the father to reward the Son because the Son has already all the glory of the Father since the world began (John 17:5). The Scripture wrote it that way so that it may be for our admonition. The concept of the Son is the Father and the Father is in the Son is too complicated for the human mind to comprehend. Therefore the Scripture was written in a human way so that we may identify ourselves as the sons of God. Christ being incarnated as the son of man would be our supreme example of how a son of God should think and behave. There is also another aspect: namely, Christ being in the flesh has that limitations of the flesh and subject to the temptation of the flesh, would have to think in the above human terms. So it pleases the Father to limit Jesus as the son of man to think like a human being.

The result

The resurrection--we who are His followers are also the ones who transcend death. Walking out of death with Christ is just like parading with Christ in a victory procession after a Great War. The spectators are the angels and all the principalities and powers of the universe. We can now boast to death. To us death is the gateway to eternity and the entrance into the glory of God. Our fellow Christians will see us who died, as merely "absent in the body and to be present with the Lord" which is infinitely better than life here on this earth.

Way of the Cross – God's Purpose for the Cross

Therefore we see that the Scripture teaches us that the Divine

mind of Christ is the mind and way of the Cross. We who believe in Him are also baptized into His death, burial, resurrection and are under this constant reminder of the Cross.

The revelation of the Divine life in us is echoed in that wondrous passage of Gal 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me". It is because of the Cross that we lose our self, that we have our fellowship of death with Christ. No non-Christian will ever understand the spiritual meaning of the above passage and the living experience with Christ because it is not head knowledge, but a living relationship.

When we are crucified with Christ we lost our self and our ego. A non-Christian simply cannot exist without a self and ego; and he simply cannot replace it with anything else except to go the route of being devil influenced. If he thinks that he can do away with his self he is deceiving himself. But for us Christians it is so different when we lose our self because it is really an extension of Christ's life here on earth. It is motivated by Him and lived for Him. How do we achieve this in our daily life? The Chapters, which follows, will tell us how. For the moment this is what we should know:

- 1) We must have faith in Christ and the reality of the Cross.
- 2) To live daily in conformity to the Cross of Christ, As Paul says: I die daily, 1 Cor 15:31.
- 3) To bear our Cross and follow Him daily, having also denied

ourselves.

Yes denying oneself is the first gate to following Christ and walking with God. The breaking of bread and taking up the cup constantly will make us remember Christ's death and keep us under constant reminder. It is the key to unlock the door of our heart so that the Holy Spirit may work unimpeded in us and fill us with Himself. Christians who live by the Cross shall live under the power of the Holy Spirit.

The reader may find it difficult to understand the forgoing; but please do not be bothered, because we shall explain in detail the what and how of a Christian life. Then having understood it and embrace it our life will be so joyful, wonderful and victorious. It is all because of the Cross of Christ.

All Christians should live under the magnificent obsession of the Cross.

2 Why the Cross of Christ

The Great Divide – God Versus Man

Our God is a great God. He is great because He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, most holy, full of grace and truth. He created the lesser beings that are very powerful, beautiful and wise: they are the angels. Satan was originally an angel, a cherub that covered, which is to say, an angel that stay close to God and cover his face with his wings to shield himself from the dazzling glory of God. He was the angel who was responsible for praise to God; the choir leader of the angels. Unfortunately he became proud and wanted to be equal to God. God then punished him and his rebellious company by turning them into hideous beings that we call Satan and Devils. The prophecy of Ezekiel 28:11-19 gives us a glimpse of what had happened before this creation. He was represented as the king of Tyrus. We would venture to say that there was a great battle between the good angel Michael and Lucifer, which is Satan. The battle was so intense that the first beautiful Garden of Eden was totally destroyed during the conflict, it was a mess and became literally nothing.

The second verse of the book of Genesis refers to its state as "the earth was without form and void" Satan was defeated. Then God created the Garden in Eden mentioned in the second chapter, which is the Garden where Adam and Eve lived.

Though the angels were like gods, God Himself is a jealous God: "I the Lord thy God is a jealous God," Ex 20:5. He would not let any being to be equal to Him. He is actually the only one true God. So there is a great dividing line between God and His angels. Then God created man: Adam and Eve. God had given them also power to rule over all the creatures on earth and they were endowed with an endless life on earth. But unfortunately Adam and Eve had succumbed to the same temptation as Satan: that of trying to be like God in wisdom. Adam tried to be like God by disobeying God and ate the forbidden fruit, which was from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Thus the human race fell and became totally separated from God because of sin God then drew His dividing line between God and man. The divide is so strict that no man can see God. Anyone who sees God will die instantly. The great servant of God, Moses, could only see God's back when God passed by, howbeit God covered Moses still. The high priest could only go into the holiest of holiest in the temple only once a year and still with a lot of meticulous procedures like cleaning, sacrificing and the sprinkling of blood. It was the tradition of the Jews to tie a rope onto the high priest's foot, so that if God consider him unclean, unsanctified, then God would strike him dead. The people would then tow him out by pulling on the rope.

Across the Divide – Predestined Plan

Yet something wonderful happened. God had decided even before creation that man might be promoted into Godhood despite the fact that Adam and Eve committed a great sin which pummeled mankind into mortality. How is this effected? God did not miscalculate and all these are in God's plan and anticipation. The way to do it is by God himself getting into manhood, borne for us the punishment of sin to satisfy God's justice. Thus a bridge was built between God and man.

God to Manhood – Christ Son of God

God getting into manhood is essentially God made man. This is the Incarnation: "the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth", John 1:14. Christ Jesus was born of a virgin, Mary. She became pregnant as a virgin because she was not conceived by man but by the Holy Spirit. So Christ's earthly lineage was through His mother Mary. Nominal father-wise, it is Joseph, who was still of David's lineage.

When Christ come into the world, God proves to man that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. 1John 5:8 Spirit, water and blood.

- **By the Spirit.** The virgin Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit, not by man or her husband Joseph. It was before they were married. So Christ was born of the Holy Spirit- it is a witness to man that Christ is the Son of God.

- **By Water** – When Christ was baptized by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descend onto Him like a dove and God declare to all men that this is the beloved Son of God. John is the witness who bear witness.
- **By Blood** – When Christ died on the cross and His blood flow from His hand and feet and side. The Holy Spirit prove that He is the Son of God by raising Him from the dead. Even Christ's death itself hath the blackening of the sky and darkness, it prove to the centurions that He is the Son of God.

Man to Godhood – Attain Godhood Through Christ

Man carried to Godhood is through Jesus Christ. The way is for us to be with Jesus Christ in His crucifixion and death; in His burial, in His resurrection and ascension into heaven. It is by faith in Christ Jesus that we are baptized into His death on the Cross, burial and resurrection. The Cross is the only way designated by God so that man can attain Godhood. Down through the ages man made religions had been trying to bring man to heaven, to see God, and to be with God. In man's limited logic and expectation in religion, it has always been that man attains some kind of godhood lesser than the god-creator-king. In the Christian faith, God had given us the eternal life, which is the life of Christ in us. Yes we are part of God Himself: this is why the Scripture has said that we are in Christ, and Christ is in God. When we see Christ, we shall rule with Him, i.e. share His sovereignty! All these wonderful goodness is just the tip of the iceberg because the better things

that God give us are something that the Scripture call 'eyes have not seen, nor ears heard what good things God had given to those who love Him', 2 Corinthians 2:4.

Why does God use the Cross? The cross was the instrument for carrying out death penalty; it could have been the gallows or stone to death. If it were the gallows, then we all would end up hanging with Christ on the gallows. But there is significance for using the cross: it signifies God's predestination and prophecy. When David prophesied of Christ's death, the means of death according to Jewish tradition was stoning to death, according to gentile customs, it could have been the gallows. So if David were prophesying on his own human initiative and wisdom, he would not have known that Christ would die on the cross. No one could have anticipated that there will be death by the cross. It was God who had inspired him to depict about Christ's death on the cross when he said in Psalms 22:16 "they pierced my hands and my feet". Even a false prophet in Christ's day would be tempted to predict Christ's death by stoning, because there was a number of occasions that Christ would have been stoned because the Jews considered His claim as the son of God being blasphemy. Therefore Christ's death was the Design of God. No man could have been able to plan it. God chooses the cross because the cross is the most cruel and painful way to put a man to death. The conqueror, the Romans had chosen this form of capital punishment for all to see, to get scared, and to be horrified at how painful it is for a criminal to die. It was a disincentive for people anticipating rebellion; it kept people law abiding.

God's Love

Christ died and suffered on the cross greatly to show us how much God loves us; how God wanted to redeem us, and go through the agony of dying on the cross. If Christ as God were willing to go through all these, what would He withhold from us?

Yes, the Cross of Christ signifies the love of God. The only thing in this world, which draws men to God is the Cross. As creatures out of love with God, there is that inner wish and craving for the love of God. We are like orphan babies craving desperately for someone to hug us, to take care of us, and love us. We are like lost sheep that have been scattered and gone astray, hoping for a shepherd to bring us back to the sheepfold. It is this love and care that we fallen human race are looking for. When we preach the Gospel it is not so much convincing people mentally the rationale of Christianity as showing the great love that God has for us who are lost.

Our Response – Our Task

As is the love, so is the response. We should respond to Him in like manner. This is why down through the centuries the great saints of God died as martyrs, walking in the same path as Christ. No doubt many readers will feel being uneasy at hearing being a martyr, but I cannot refrain from saying it: It is God's way. Even if we are not martyrs, we would still have to get our priority straight. We should not consider ourselves devoted Christians or His follower before we have embrace the following priorities: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and

sister, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple", Luke 14:26-27. If you have not decided definitely on this and live in this light, then my advice is that you must be more humble still; consider yourself a babe in Christ: you have not yet grown into manhood. Therefore you need to go to God's spiritual school (not seminary!) to learn and to seek.

It took me 25 years of struggle to finally yield and embrace my priority. It is also a humbling process, as it invariably hurts one's pride to admit that while one is a leader in the church, secretly one's status is still a babe in Christ. One dare not tell others that one has not yet attained the norm for a normal Christian.

Even after embracing one's priority, putting it into practice is even more difficult still because humanly speaking it is our inclination to pledge our allegiance to someone we can see and touch, someone from whom we can take and give than someone in heaven whom we cannot see.

Some people may ask: does Christ really want me to hate my father and mother like an enemy? God forbids, because His fifth commandment specifically wants us to honor our father and mother. Therefore it really means that we love Christ so much more that in comparison with our love to our parents, even lots of it, it still pales out, as if in comparison we hate our father and mother. An easier way to understand the rendering of the same is found in Matt 10:37: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth

son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me".

The Transformation of Love – Human Love to God's Love

It is because of the Cross that enables us to have that fulfilment of God's love in us and our love for God. This is the ultimate purpose of the Cross besides bringing about our salvation and son-ship with God.

If we study the Scripture carefully, we would realize that God demands of us all our love for Him with our whole heart, soul, strength and mind, Luke 10:27. Notice the word all, it really means everything. What do I have left in my love for others and myself? To understand this question we must understand that we as the fallen man have only human love left in us. The word human is already too kind. The love of a fallen man in sin is of the flesh: it is egotistic, it is selfish, lustful. Sometimes there may be great deeds of love in history, yet it is by God's grace and prompting, other than this it falls far short of God's requirements. It is just like our righteousness, we may be considered honest humanly, yet our human righteousness falls far short of God's standard of righteousness.

So after we are saved, God has to change the very quality of love that is in us. To change our righteousness God uses the Cross as the means to let us died with Christ. After we have died with Christ, the way to change our love is to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind. We hand in all our love to God. God takes it and changes it all to His form of love. It is just like the little boy

with the five loaves and two fishes; there was not much one can do with it; but when it is hand over to Christ then the miracle of abundance came, and five thousand was fed.

Having given all our love to God, God molds it and give it back to us. How does God give us back our love? God gives us a new love through the Holy Spirit: "...because the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given to us" Rom 5:5. Now with the divine love that God has given us, we are able to love our father and mother in a much deeper way; we even love our enemies. Human love is restrictive and quantitative: when we give half of our love to someone only half is left to love somebody else; when we give all our love to someone, then nothing is left for another person. When we give all our human love to God, there is nothing left to our parents, and it is just like hating. In contrast, the love that God gives us is qualitative and endless; no matter how much we give away it is never used up, it never fail or cease (1 Cor 13:8).

We can also look at the whole thing from the standpoint of structured love. In a human society, there is love that is build-in in the social structure. Look at the structure of the family: father, mother and children. Why does the father or mother love their child and not their neighbor's child? Besides spontaneous love, there is often love because of the family structure. Take the case of cousins, uncles, aunts and grandparents, there are exchanges of love and devotion between them, despite of scanty transactions. Why? Structured relationship is part of the cause. In structured love, the ways and means are different for different objects. Ask yourself the following questions and you will understand what the above

means:

Do you love your children the way you love your spouse? Or the way you love your parents? They all differ. By loving your spouse, does it mean that you have no more love left for your parents? The love you have for God is of a different sort: it is the love of a creature to his creator. When you love God you worship Him. But when you love your wife you do not worship her.

Love Could be Worlds Apart – Unregenerate Man's Love

The unregenerate man loves with the love of the flesh, and the regenerated man loves with the love of Christ, which is the love of God. These loves are poles apart. The Greeks call the love of the flesh: erotic love, eros, and the highest form of love, agape.

God makes our love permanent and the feeling and spontaneity will be no less. But a non-Christian's love could be temporary in most cases because it has no foundation. Using feeling as the foundation could be whimsical and fickle.

The unregenerated man says: love must be free the way I like it, it must not go against my feelings; I love someone because I feel like it, and don't try to tell me whom I should love. When I do not love someone, do not tell me that I am wrong: I am entitled to my feelings. When my love is rejected or neglected, it may turn into hate. Human love is so frail and whimsical, it has neither abiding principle, nor rarely does it subscribe to noble cause. It falls far short of God's requirement for love.

The regenerated man says: "I know that my human love is totally inadequate: I cannot always forgive others, I am not able to love my enemies. I need to love people with the love of Christ, because the love of Christ on the Cross never fails. Man may love by feelings and changes a lot, but God is always faithful. I love because I want to respond to Christ's commandment of love, not my feelings. If we are able to love others the way Christ love us ,it is because the Holy Spirit shed Christ's love into our heart. When Christ's love moves in us, it is in turn passed to others.

The Bridge Between God and Man

How is the gap between God and man bridged? First, God must be willing to do it; second, God must pay the price. The Scripture tells us that we have such a wonderful God who cares for us and have so much compassion on us that He is willing to pay any price to save us by bridging the gap. God the Father pays the high price for our salvation by sacrificing His only begotten son Jesus Christ.

Some may ask why the omnipotent God, who is able to do anything, would not command that all sins of mankind are forgiven and so there is no need for Christ to die. We have seen that in the first chapter of this book we have said that this is God's way, and He planned it already before the creation of the world.

Why the hard way? In my limited mind I see it as God's great love to mankind. The fallen man whose heart is hardened will never come to God unless God does something to move his heart and to convince him that God really loves him. We repent

and come to God because we are moved by His great and wondrous love.

A great saint of God once said: "I am a Christian because I cannot be otherwise". And I wish to add: "...because when I see the great constraining love of Christ on the Cross, and that he died for an unworthy "man like me I cannot help but to respond to my Lord and Savior, and to give Him my life. Because of Him my life has never the same and now I cannot be anything else but a Christian".

Only the Cross Fulfills God's Justice

We have seen how the Cross is the means to be transferred, transformed to Godhood, and therefore become the sons of God. In the next chapter we shall see how the Cross deals with the God's righteousness. When God judges us by the law we all are found guilty without exception. There is no way for any of us to extricate ourselves from guilt. But God in His infinite love provides us a way: the way of grace--it is the way of Christ's Cross whereby we may be acquitted and pronounce righteous by God through faith in Christ.

3 Convicted by Law Acquitted by Grace

The concepts in this chapter are progressive, and the explanations are progressive. Each concept is a stepping stone for the succeeding concept. When you have gone through the whole chapter, you keep the last concept and work on it, but for the initial concept you just file it away. When you study in high school, you stow away your grade school books. God's revelation is a progressive revelation, and we understand His revelation step by step. When we have arrived at the second step the first step becomes a shadow.

Our Basic Weakness

There is one basic weakness with the whole human race: it is the inability to overcome corruption and death. This stems from the great basic fault of the whole human race: human race is totally steeped in sin; status-wise and behavior-wise. No one will deny that the whole human race is under death's full control. A man may do a lot of evil and murder and get away from the long arms of the law in this life, it seems, but he can never get away from old age and death.

Many people would admit they did some wrong and sinned a little in their lifetime, but many would resent being called a sinner. Their rationalization is because they had done a lot of good deeds and have been a good citizen, therefore the wrongs and lies would be annulled and made good, and their moral balance sheet would be in the black. So they declare themselves good and righteous men.

Unfortunately they are ignorant of the fact that the moral standard of God is very high; God sees in us the sins which we never dream of or aware of. This is because our moral sensitivity has been annulled, desensitized and blocked by Satan. The Scripture said that the god of this world has blinded the people of this world so that they do not see themselves as God sees them; 2 Cor 4:4.

Hebrews 9:27 said: "...it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgement". All of us are going to stand before the judgement seat of God to be judged. God shall judge us according to His righteousness and His standard; not the standard we set for ourselves! After all we are getting into His heaven, not our house. Even the clubs of this world has its own sets of membership rules. God has His sets of immigration laws for those who want to immigrate into God's kingdom.

In the human world, when we come before the magistrate to be judged by the law of the state or country, we do not tell the magistrate that we are right based on what we think ourselves to be. Instead we have to subscribe ourselves to the judgement which is accordance to the law of the land. Let us not be so naive to think that we are justified by what we think ourselves

to be. God shall justify us by the accordance to His law. So what does God think of the human race? "For there is no difference (between one man and another): For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" Rom 3:22-23. Therefore let us see what we are before God's court of law and what we could be before His throne of grace.

In Man's Court of Law

If I have committed a crime and am brought before the court of law to be charged with the crime, I have to defend myself through a lawyer. If the prosecutor cannot produce any evidence or any witness, then the case is summarily dismissed and the judge will pronounce me not guilty. However getting away scot-free does not mean God does not know it or that God would not judge me in future. For God is the owner of our works, and all our works be it good or bad belongs to God, and goes to God. He is the owner of right and wrong, and He is the only one who has the sole right to forgive. In the earthly court, if the prosecutor produces evidence and witnesses, and if my lawyer is not able to defend me on these counts then I would be found guilty and convicted.

When I appeal against the verdict, I cannot request the court to have someone, for example, my good friend to serve the sentence on my behalf. It is the law of the country that the offender must himself serve the sentence. It can only happen in the old days when kings are the judge and allow substitute for the offender.

Neither can I appeal to the court to do more good deeds to atone or compensate for the wrongs I have done, except for

minor civil offences, not criminal. There are many humanitarian religion which advocate that if we do good it will compensate for the bad sins we have committed. If the court of law in this world does not permit it, how can we expect it from God?

The above is the judicial system of most of the countries in the world which are similar to the English system. Even in the Old Testament God said in Ezekiel 18:4 "the soul that sinneth, it shall die". For God there are no substitutes for those who sin in this world. God also does not allow the good in a man's past to compensate for his evil deeds committed in the present moment, verse 24.

In God's Court of Law

When I sin before God, I shall be judged before the judgement seat of God and be condemned. I have to bear my own iniquity. It is said in Rom 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death..."

God also convict mankind corporate-wise. We are all in Adam, and when Adam sinned, we all sinned with him; hence the theological notion of the original sin--the original sin that is in us. Not only the sin, but also the results which are death and eternal separation from God. Our spirits are dead in sin. We may retort that it is not fair because we were not there with Adam in the Garden of Eden when he sinned. But modern science tells us that our genes came from Adam; no doubt our nature and traits was with Adam, and it pass on to us!

God had provided a way in the Old Testament whereby one could come before God to ask for His forgiveness for sins

committed, and that was by sacrificing bullocks, goats and lambs. These sacrificed animals become his atonement for sins. The man does not have to die for his sins, but instead the animal die for him in his stead. This was God's grace in the age of the Mosaic Law.

However we know very well that these bullocks goats and lambs have no intrinsic merits for taking away sins. In Heb 10:4 "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins". If it is so why does God still tell the people of Israel to do sacrifice? God cannot stand sin, so by doing all these it serve as a temporary covering for sins: as it were our sins were swept under the carpet for the moment until the big thorough cleaning comes. Yes. God was looking at Calvary to ultimately do away with sins.

Let us take an analogy. Most people nowadays use credit cards. When you buy something from the shop, you sign the credit card slip and the purchase is done. Now you did not pay for the goods in cash nor does the shopkeeper receive any cash for the moment. Let us assume that the card account is in the name of your spouse. When the credit card monthly statement arrives, your spouse pays for it by check or cash to settle the account: this is the time that your spouse has to really pay for it.

Now offering sacrifice for sins is just like signing credit card for disposing of sins; someone will have to pay for it later. We are dead broke as far as righteousness is concerned, and we are not able to pay for it. Christ came and died on Calvary, paid for our sin debts and clears all credit card account for sins

committed by men in the past. Moreover Christ also deposited more than enough cleansing blood to pay for sins to be committed by men in the future.

In God's Court (Throne) of Grace

When we were convicted of our sins in God's court of grace, God adjourned the session for the moment before passing the sentence. He is gracious, because He allows us time to find a substitute who would be serving the sentence in our stead. But alas, we are all sinners, where in the entire universe can we find someone who is willing and qualified to serve the sentence on our behalf? It is just like the judge who fines us a million dollars, since we cannot pay we would have to go to jail. In God's court the fine is not money but payment with our life, and that means death! The only substitute is an innocent man who is willing to die for us.

God is merciful and gracious; He gave us the man Jesus, who is sinless to die for us on the Cross of Calvary. As if that is not enough, God as the judge says to us: now I am going to pass the sentence of death penalty, and the only way to escape the gallows is for you to admit guilt and accept my offer of clemency, and that is, to let my Only Begotten Son, the man Jesus, to die in your stead. This is the Gospel of the Cross-- it is the good news of our escape from eternal death by accepting the good generous offer of redemption from God. We can accept it by believing what God says and by having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior who died for us.

Yes, God is still adjourning the court session for many of us who have not yet believe in Christ. He still allows us time to

consider; He sends the Holy Spirit to plead to us through our Christian friends. Meanwhile He may be keeping you safe by not permitting you to be hit by a car or die of sickness. This means time is very limited, and we are in a very precarious position, because Satan do not want you to embrace eternal life. Please do not take advantage of God's clemency, because none of us knows when we will die. Please decide before is too late.

Who is the Prosecutor?

Do you know while you are in God's Court of Grace, who is the prosecutor? The Scripture tells us in Rev 12:10 that Satan is our accuser who accuses us day and night, even when we become a Christian. Before we become a Christian, our situation was even more frightening and precarious. This was because we were dead in sin and trespasses, and were at enmity with God. Satan came before God and accuses us and pleads with God to give us up, so that he would have one more person keeping company with him in Hell! God in His mercy kept Satan off while anxiously waiting for us to repent because He is not willing that any of us should perish. Remember that we were enemies with God, and yet God still showed His great love for us. That is why God wants us to genuinely love our enemies the way He love us.

Remember how Jesus Christ was put to death? Satan was working in the heart of Judas Iscariot, the high high priest, scribes and Pharisees, and even placed fear into the heart of the Governor Pontius Pilate who was the judge, so that he had to put Jesus to death. Satan must have thought that by crucifying Jesus, he would be able to spoil God's plan of deliverance for

the people of Israel. Therefore Satan stirred up the unruly mob and had them shouted: "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!". This time God seemed to let Satan have his way, because it was in God's plan that Jesus should die for humanity by being crucified on the Cross.

Who is Our Defense Lawyer?

Who is our defense lawyer? 1 John 2:1 tells us that Jesus Christ is our defense lawyer. Also the parable of the unfruitful fig tree tells us the dresser of the vineyard pleaded with the owner to give one more year's chance whereby he can loosen the soil around it and put in more fertilizer, then if it still does not bear fruit, it can then be cut down.

Now Christ is the dresser, and God the Father is the owner. When we were a non-Christian resisting the Gospel and not bearing fruit of repentance, God the Father wanted to cut us down. But Christ the faithful dresser pleaded with God to give us more time and chance, and perhaps He may have placed more Christian friends around us and alter the circumstances so that we may repent and believe in Christ.

After we are saved Christ also continues to plead for us day and night. This is why 1 John 2:1-2 says: "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world".

Propitiation

Something happens in God's Court of Law and Grace. When God opens the court session, which book does He open, i.e.

based on which set of law does He judge us? In the human court, if you are in the French court, you have to prove that you are innocent; if you are in the English court, then the court have to prove that you are guilty. In God's Court the whole situation is different: God knows your guilt better than you yourself do; He tells you what you have done wrong; He is perfectly fair, and there will be no jury. All of universes will be watching the court session, and nothing shall be hidden. Christ said that every idle word that we speak shall not escape God's judgement. Therefore how can any of us say that we are good or righteous?

When we are living under the Mosaic Law, and live according to the Mosaic Law, God will open the Mosaic Law book and judge us according to it. When we become Christian and are under Grace, then God will judge us in the light of Grace, because we are no longer under the Law. Since Grace is not a law but a 'granted status of innocence', we do not need to be judged on the matter of sin. Why? What is 'granted status of innocence'?

When Jesus Christ died on Calvary, He bore the punishment of our sin for us; i.e. He paid the penalty of our sin for us. Having paid the penalty, which is equivalent to serving the sentence already, we can thus walk out of the court a free man. Since we did not serve the sentence ourselves, we can only say that we are given a 'granted status of innocence'. In human law it is equivalent to being granted amnesty. Humanly speaking we may say that Satan may challenge the process and say to God: how can a guilty person now walk out of the court? God would declare that we are justified--we have been granted the status

of Righteousness of Christ. The Scripture puts it also as “reckoned for righteousness.”

Those of us who are concerned about timeline may ask: We have Christ died for us on Calvary, but what about those Old Testament saints who lived before the time of Calvary? How did they get their justification? This is where propitiation comes in.

Propitiation is one of those rare words in the Bible: it happens only three times in the New Testament, and none in the Old Testament. Refer to Rom 3:25, 1 John 2:2 and 4:10. However, there is in the Old Testament the word, which is of the same root, and that is the word propitiatory. Propitiatory refers to the cover of the Ark of the Covenant, also called the mercy seat. In the Jewish Temple the Ark of the Covenant of God is a very sacred relic, it is placed in the innermost sanctuary of the temple, the Holiest of Holiest where no ordinary people can see. The high priest can only enter once a year into this sanctuary.

The Ark is like a big long box with an elaborate cover. On the cover are two cherubims who cover their faces with their wings and bending overlooking the cover. A cherubim is an holy angel of God who stays close to God, and always covers his face with one pair of their wings. This cover with the two cherubims on it is the propitiatory, or the mercy seat.

Inside the Ark of the Covenant were two stone tablets, which were the 10 Commandments which were given to Moses by God, Aaron's rod which budded and a can of manna. God had made His covenant with His people the Israelites to the effect

that if they keep His Law, they shall be blessed; on the other hand, if they do not keep the law, they shall be cursed.

Each year the high priest cleanses and sanctifies himself and the people by offering sacrifices for himself and for his people. Then he went into the Holiest of Holiest and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat, the propitiatory. When there is blood on the propitiatory, then God will turn away His wrath from the sin of His people and be merciful to them.

In the New Testament in Romans 3:24-25 it says: "being justify freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God".

Let us stretch our imagination a little and picture what happen in God's court of judgement. Let's imagine that instead of the law books, God judge by the status of the Ark of the Covenant. When God did not see blood on the propitiatory, he decree that the cover of the Ark be opened and that Mosaic Law taken out. He then proceeds to judge us according to the law. Sure enough we shall all be doomed because none of us can be justified by the Law.

On the other hand if God sees Christ's blood on the cover then he would declare that it is enough; justice had been satisfied because Jesus Christ had already serve the sentence of sin for us. God would not judge us according to the Law but according to the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Christ's blood has exempted us from God's judgement of us by the Law. Christ

and His blood are like the mercy seat cover which covers up the Law. This is why Christ is propitiatory like and he is the propitiation for us. Our God thus declares us not guilty, and we can walk out of the courtroom into His Kingdom. The only judgement we have to go through is the judgement for our works, as an assessment of our merits or shortcomings; otherwise there is no judgement for sins. For the good works that we have done we shall be rewarded and commended.

The Verdict

Let us go one more step further and imagine that God the omniscient who knows all past present and future, and He does not need to go through the process of finding out whether we are guilty or not. He already knows it beforehand. Neither does He need any jury. If God knows all, then He has everything written down already, that is to say, he has written down His verdict on every one of us. His verdict is written in two books: the names of the not-guilty, who are saved by grace, are written in the Book of Life; and the guilty, which mean that they had to depend on their works, are written in another book which is for the unsaved. Those who do not believe in Christ Jesus will have to depend on the merits of their works, and the result is inevitable guilt. The end is eternal death. Satan's greatest deception to mankind is to tell us that we are able to justify ourselves before God by our works.

4 The Ultimate Verdict

The Supreme Judge

All that we have seen in the world's court of law is simply court dealing with individual cases and count. No court of law is going to judge whether a man is righteous or not, or dwell into depths of his character. In any event a man is never able to read another man's thoughts. But God the supreme judge is all omniscient, and He only is able to deliver the verdict.

In a human court of law all that the judge is interested is whether you are guilty or not. Unfortunately whether you are guilty or not does not mean that you are a good man or a bad man.

One may be a gangster and commit all sorts of crime and not gets caught. But unless there are evidence to prove him guilty, he still goes free. Going free does not mean that he is a good man. On the other hand, if there is a good man who inadvertently does something wrong and is proven guilty, he is convicted. What is he? He is a good man who is at fault. Whether he is a good man at heart or not does not help him

now.

In the real world we see that there are men who are basically evil and they do bad deeds. We can also see someone who is considered good and righteous all his life. Yet by the high norm of God's high moral standard, they too all contravene the law of God in their heart. Are there any good man in the world who never tell a lie, hate, jealous of someone, never look at an attractive woman and invoke certain kinds of lust and passions in his heart? The world may not see what is in his heart, but God does.

In God's court of law, God sees every man's heart and He sees every fault. Therefore there are no blameless, or righteous man in His sight. This is why the Bible declares that we all have gone astray and sinned. In Rom 3:12 "They are all gone out of the way, they are together unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one". In 6:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". If we were able to look at ourselves as God sees us we would be surprised to see how evil we are. It is not in human nature to see the sin that is in us; we need the Holy Spirit to alert our conscience and to convict us of sin.

Let us assume that there is a man who does not break the letter of the law, which is the outward observance of the law, will God accept this man? The Essenes, Pharisees in Christ's day are supposed to be perfect keeper of the law. But Christ said: "For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" Matt 5:20. The Pharisees said that they did not kill anyone; Christ said that it is not enough,

and hating someone is already murder. The Pharisees said that they did not commit adultery; Christ said that anyone who sees a woman and lust after her even though he did nothing is still committing adultery in God's norm. Yes, keeping the law is not enough, we need to keep, or rather, fulfil the spirit of the law; and heavens, the sky is the limit! Who can do that? It is beyond man's capability to fulfil the spirit of the law.

When Christ preaches the Sermon on the Mount He wanted to show us none of the things He said is within our reach. The standard is so high that none of us mortals can fulfil it. So the Sermon on the Mount is not a new law that Christ advocate and bade us to keep; it is a declaration of impossibility. What Christ wants us to realize is that what God requires of us is impossible for us to keep. This is why none of us is righteous in God's sight.

Yet amidst this hopelessness there is hope because what we cannot do Christ, did it for us--He came to fulfil the righteousness which is of the law. "Think not I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" Matt 5:17. So Jesus Christ is the only and most righteous and perfect man on this earth. God will accept only such. Therefore if we want to be accepted of God, it is not keeping the law the way a Pharisees does, but to obtain the righteousness which belongs to Christ Jesus.

How are we to get the credit of righteousness of Christ? It is by the faith of Jesus Christ: we believe that He is the Son of God, died for our sins, and rose again to be our Lord and Savior. Then God gives us the faith, which is imputing to us that faith;

which enables us to be reckoned as righteous by God. In another words it is "faith imputed for righteousness" rather than the rendering of 'imputed for righteousness' in the King James text. There is a long explanation based on the interpretation of the Greek text. However for young Christians, it is also valid to take it as 'faith in Christ Jesus' and forget about the 'faith of Christ'. It should be noted that throughout the King James Version it is rendered 'faith of Christ', which is true to the Greek text.

The Apostle Paul too, was a devoted Pharisees and he kept the law perfectly as any man could know how. Yet after his conversion he suddenly found that all the righteousness of the law counts for nothing before God. What he really needed was that righteousness which is of God by faith. Whereas he was a devoted disciple of the Rabbi Gamaliel trying to learn more about how to keep it in a more perfect way, now he wants to know more about Christ instead. He especially wants to experience Christ's suffering, death and resurrection in the spirit. What he previously thought to be of great benefit now turns out to be a great deterrent and liability in the matter of knowing Christ. He had written it off as great spiritual loss.

Notice the word reckon for righteousness means that God consider us to be righteous. We are not intrinsically righteous because we still sin now and then. It is just a righteous status God gives to us. One may ask: why can't I be righteous intrinsically? We shall have that intrinsic righteousness in us when we see God; when our soul and body are redeemed and we sin no more. So what God gives us now through faith is a righteous status. If God accept us this way, what more do we

need to ask? Let us be glad and live every day striving towards the goal of intrinsic righteousness by holy living. Every day the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin so that we are holy, sanctified before God, and thus become righteous before God.

As we walk with God in sanctification, God is building up our intrinsic righteousness day by day, by the renewal and regeneration of our heart and mind. God is not like a human examiner who grades our exam papers tit for tit and tat for tats with no free grades. God gives us the full grades first and then tells us to work hard to achieve that grade. When God gives us His Begotten Son Jesus Christ to die for us on the cross, we humanity has still not yet repented to deserve it. When God stipulated that we could have the righteousness, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, we still have not yet embarked on the road to righteous living. He called us a holy people while most of us are still struggling with the what's and how's of holy living. This is why the Bible stress status and not intrinsic. God would rather have us accept the righteousness, which is by faith, and under His guidance live a life which is compatible to that righteousness. By faith we reckon that we are reckoned righteous, and by faith we live in the light of it. This is why the Scripture said: The just shall live by faith Heb 2:4.

Life in the faith has always been believing what we are in Christ, hoping for what we will get and considering that we have already obtained that promise from God. We walk in faith, never doubting God's faithfulness; and live in hope, embracing already what God has promised us.

5 Our Crucifixion with Christ

We understand that at cross atonement was made for mankind's sin. And those who have been saved commit to a life free from sin as much as humanly possible. However, atonement for sin is only part of the purpose for the Cross. Accepting Christ's crucifixion often times is the easy part. It is also under the magnificent Cross that we crucify our own selves. Only with the power of the Cross can we crucify ourselves with Christ. Even more importantly, we are raised with Christ to a newness of mind that is free from sinful habits, and enter into holy living. Without this transformation through crucifixion of the self, all our attempts will be in vain, because we are trying to live a holy life with our own ability.

This chapter and the next will try to put in words our crucifixion with Christ, and our reckoning to be dead to sin. Crucifixion with Christ and reckoning to be dead to sin goes hand in hand to lead us towards a holy life.

Necessity of Our Own Crucifixion

Crucifixion is our death on the Cross. Why must we die? The old must die to make way for the new. Have you ever watched an insect molt? Take for example a bug or a dragonfly: the shell of the dragonfly crack open and out comes the bigger fly pushing away its old and smaller shell. Perhaps in an old building full of cobwebs, no doubt one could notice a lot of spider molting-shell hanging on the cobweb. This process happens not only for insects, but also for shellfish, the shrimp and the lobster in the sea. On land one could also note that the snake does it likewise. If we were to examine ourselves microscopically, we could see that our body cells, our blood corpuscles constantly die off and being replaced by new ones. Even the skin on our body, the epidermis, keeps on sloughing off to make way for the new ones.

God has made this the phenomenon of nature: the old must die to make way for the new. Not only does this happen in the physical world but also in the spiritual world. What do all these tell us?

Spiritual Regeneration Through Crucifixion

We are the descendants of a corruptible ancestor. Adam had sinned in the Garden that was in Eden by disobeying God. Adam had succumbed to the temptation of Satan. From then on man was and is separated from God, and death is the consequence. From then on, not only man is born to die eventually, but also to die spiritually, which is total alienation and separation from God. Since then the human race keep on sinning incessantly. God gave Moses the Law to tell His chosen

people, the children of Israel, what was right and wrong. By keeping the law perfectly, God will accept the person of the man. Yet man utterly failed in the keeping of the law, and man cannot be justified by it. The only hope for man is to die off spiritually and to be replaced by a new man spiritually. Even the old nature that man has must die off in order that it may be replaced by a new one. How does God do it in us? It is by the process of the Cross of Christ.

How does God put our old spirit, soul and body to death? It is by crucifying it on the Cross. How do we go through the process of crucifixion on the cross? We cannot do it by ourselves. God does it by including us in the crucifixion of Christ on the Cross. By what means are we included in the crucifixion? By being baptized into Christ's death: through the means of faith of Christ. The sixth chapter of the book of Romans gives us the full details of how it comes about when we believe in Christ. Not only is our spiritual state completely changed by this mean, but we also can appropriate the effects of this change to live a new life in the new man to achieve deliverance from slavery of sin; and to serve righteousness in Christ.

Before we go further someone may ask how does our body die seeing that we have not seen the death of our body when we receive Christ? This is a relevant question. The answer is that we should now look at the status of life and death of our body from God's eternity standpoint. Without understanding this standpoint we would not be able to understand Christ's saying in John 11:25: "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believe in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live". This we

understand because it is the resurrection. But the difficult part is in verse 26: "And whosoever lived and believeth in me shall never die..." What is shall never die? To get the correct eternal meaning we should look at our body from the standpoint of eternity. To die physically is not death in Christ's definition, but is just sleeping (see John 11:11-13). This is because we have our resurrection to an eternal life with God; therefore physical death is not death. But for a non-Christian, when he dies, his resurrection only ends up in being judged before the Great White Throne of God, which results in being thrown into the lake of fire. That is eternal death. Therefore a non-Christian will die, and a Christian never dies.

What Must We Believe? – The Old Must Die

What we believe has very important bearing on the health of our spiritual life. Whether you are a victorious or a defeated Christian depends on what you believe. The most vital chapter in the New Testament that teaches us how we can be delivered from sin is found in Romans Chapter 6. So what is the problem, why can't we go ahead and appropriate the promises of God? Not yet, it depends on how we interpret it. It is unfortunate that different theologian has different interpretation about it. The key issue is the term 'old man', and whether it is dead or it is in the process of crucifixion with Christ.

Some theologian considers the old man to be dead, others consider it to be still alive, and not completely dead. Still others said it is to be in slow crucifixion and to die eventually.

In order not to drag the reader into a lot of theological wrangling, I shall only share with you my convictions, what I

believe and how I apply it to my life. It has worked wonderfully for me. My criteria is that I first take the Bible literally. The Bible is written for the simple and unlearned folks, and not for intellectuals. Didn't Paul says in Cor 1:37 that "...God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.."? Our life in Christ does not depend on our intellect, but on our faith and trust in God. A life of great power in the spirit is the work of God and not our endeavor. Paul did speak about spiritual wisdom and mystery for the mature Christian, still it is by the spirit, 1 Cor 2:6,7,10.

I believe that the old man is crucified and dead; not half-dead or eventual death, but the person is with Christ at the same time. Many theologian seeing that even a born again Christian still have behavior reminiscent of the old man; has doubts about the instant death of the old man. They have observed that when a person becomes a Christian, there is not that sign of instant change of behavior. Therefore the old man is not completely dead. Others said that it is under the process of slow crucifixion. They take Eph 4:22 as a support for their conjecture: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts". However if we were to read carefully this verse, it is quite different from what it appears. Paul did not tell us to put away the old man. Only Christ on the Cross is able to do that. We do not put on and off our old man like a garment. This verse only refers to the 'former conversation the old man' which means the behavior and walk which is characteristic of the old man in the past; not the old man itself. So it means that the old man is gone, but the old habits and behavior of the old man still

lingers on--which is our corruptible nature, which lingers on in our soul and body even after salvation. But we are to put it away. How to do it? We shall see how in the following sections.

What We are Made of – Body, Soul, Spirit

Before we go into the details of the old man and the process of reckoning, let us dwell briefly on our spiritual and physical constitution: what we are composed of, what we are before we are saved and after we are saved. We are composed of spirit, soul and body as is said in 1 Thess 5:23. This is the tripartite view of man. Some may be theologically inclined to the bipartite view of man: which is to say, man is composed of spirit, body and soul. Body and soul is view as one entity. Some theologians may take the spirit-soul entity and then the body. I am not against that, but as you will see it will be difficult to explain the whole process that I am going to share with you in the tripartite way.

Our body is the flesh that we now can touch and feel; it is our physical body, plus some of the feelings of the flesh such as feeling hungry. Our soul is our feelings, emotions, memory, intellect and physical thoughts. Our spirit is that part of us which cannot be seen, touched or even be conscious of; which when it is alive it can communicate with God. An unsaved person will never be able to realize that his spirit exist; because his spirit is dead in sin: it cannot communicate with God. Before we are saved our spirit is dead, which is to say, we are separated from God and cannot communicate with God. A saved spirit has its spiritual perception and spiritual thoughts which operates in conjunction with the Holy Spirit.

Before we profess our faith in Christ, we are in the state of what the Bible calls "dead in trespass and sin" Eph 2:1. So an unsaved person has a dead spirit and a living body and soul. But alas, living a life of only body and soul only ends in a life of sin.

After we are saved, our dead spirit rises up with Christ from the dead. The spirit now lives. The Bible describes it as the Holy Spirit "quickening" our spirit. We can now communicate with God. The Holy Spirit now comes into our spirit and lives in it. This is called the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is because before we are saved, our unsaved body and soul has only the lust of the flesh and the corrupt inclination of the flesh to follow thus succumbing to Satan's temptation and leading. In the Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit only comes upon God's prophet and saint now and then. The Spirit does its work, and when it is finished, it leaves again. After Christ ascended into heaven, He sent us the comforter, which was the Holy Spirit, to dwell with us forever.

After we are saved we have a new master, the Holy Spirit, to be our master and our guide. Our body and soul can now follow the dictates of our spirit and the 'new man'. This is because our spirit is now the seat of the Holy Spirit--in fact there is not a sharp line of distinction between our spirit and the Holy Spirit. Our spirit is a new part of us, unlike our body and soul which has its inglorious past, it is saved and redeemed, and is therefore perfect. It is also the life of Christ in us: it is the 'yet not I but Christ liveth in me' part of us. When we have this new life in the spirit, we can now live a victorious Christian life.

Difference Between Old and New Man

The meaning of the old man and the new man can be understood easier by their functions rather than their form. It is much easier to understand their status rather than identity. For example, having defined ourselves as spirit, soul and body, the question is: which part of it is new man and which part of it is old man; which are the corrupted part, which was the old man, and which are the regenerated part that become the new man. Therefore we can simplify the whole thing by defining the status. Before we are saved, the old man mode is the body and soul walking after the inclination and lust of the flesh. After we are saved, we are in the new man mode, which is body and soul walking after the Spirit.

What then is the old man anyway? I would define the old man as:

- a) The person that I am when I was in Adam, i.e. before I was saved I have all the characteristics of the man which is like Adam. It includes all the sinful nature and behavior, and the most prominent of all, myself, my ego.
- b) Being dead in sin. Unable to communicate with God and so walk according to the sinful course of this world under the control of the Prince of the Air; fulfilling the lust of the flesh and disobedient to God, Eph 2:1-3.
- c) This old man is crucified with Christ the moment we profess our faith in Christ Jesus. This old man died with Christ, buried with Christ and rose again with Christ from the dead
- d) Having been crucified, the old man is dead, what rises in its

stead is the new man. However, there still remain in the new man the memories, bad habits, inclinations and behavior of the flesh, which we call 'corruptible nature'. This corruptible nature is a token word for Paul's 'the former conversation the old man'. This has to be reckoned with and put away in our daily walk of sanctification, as mentioned in Eph 4:22.

Notice that the old man is an identity and status, but the corruptible nature is a vestige of the bad behavior and sentiments of the old man. A very simplistic way of putting the old man is: The old man was what I was before I was saved.

An Analogy

Let us consider an analogy. Long, long ago, there lived a king and his child prince in a palace. Then there came an overpowering army to the palace to take over it. The king's army and the royal family had to flee the palace. In their retreat they had lost track of the child prince. The lost prince then became a pauper and a vagabond. Many years afterwards, the king came back with a great army, subdued the enemy, and drove them out of the palace. Some of the king's servant had found the pauper prince, and he was brought back to the palace. The prince had recovered all his rights and status; but alas because he had been a vagabond for years he still acted like a vagabond and not a prince. Yes, he had his rightful status, but the old inglorious habit remains. The king had to send tutors to teach the prince princely habits, speech and thoughts.

Before we are saved we are the children of the devil and we act like the children of the devil: we have the old man status. After

we are saved, the old man status is replaced by the new man status, which is the regenerated man in Christ. But alas, the old habits of the old man still linger on. Therefore we need to affirm to ourselves this new status, and try to put off our old habits so as to be consistent with our new princely status.

Remaining Lure of Sin in the New Man

In our new man status, spiritually speaking the old man is dead, so what is there to make us sin? After we are saved God still gives us our free will, and we are still free to do what we like, despite of the restraint of the Holy Spirit. God wants every one of us to be able to have the will and willingness to serve righteousness. God does not create saved robots; He wants us to serve Him out of our love for Him. He is more glorified by creatures willing to serve Him than by creatures which are programmed like machines to serve Him. God wants partners, not servants; 1 Cor 3:9, John 15:15.

Given the free choice, our body and soul can now follow the leading of the Holy Spirit or follow the inclinations of the flesh with our old bad habits, which is to say, we follow the inclinations of our corruptible nature. As we can still follow our inclinations and old lusts, Satan makes use of this opportunity to tempt us. The results are that invariably we succumb to it and sin. James has described this process succinctly by saying: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death", James 1:14-15. So in the new man status there is still the occasion for committing sin. This is why we

should do something about it, and the scripture tells us how. Before we are saved when we want to do something about it and we invariably fail, but after we are saved we can have success doing it. This is why Christ in Revelation chapter 1 to 3 speaks to the 7 Churches about 'overcoming'--which is having success in overcoming sin.

Before we are saved when we are in the old man state, our body and soul have no spirit to follow; we are locked into the slavery of sin. We are under the evil taskmaster, and all that he demands of us is that we keep on sinning more and more. In Romans chapter one the man who rejected God is the one who is locked into sin. The rejection of God by man leads that man into idolatry and sin. Once he is locked in sin, he cannot come out of it; and he keeps on sinning more and more. He is a bad influence to all that are around him: not only does he sin, but he also delights in seeing other people sin!

After we become Christians, God redeems us from the slave market of sin. He has bought us by paying our ransom for sin with His precious blood. He gives us a new life, a quickened life, which is to say, a resurrected life from the dead. We are no longer locked into sin: we now have the freedom of following the Spirit of God instead of continuation in sin. We now have the choice. Therefore it is for every saved Christian to firmly believe that a person has the new status and life in Christ, because the person is no longer that old man. As we are the new man who is born of water and the spirit (John 3:5), we can now live a new life of deliverance from sin. Paul reminds us in Rom 6:17-18 "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine

which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." In verse 19: "...as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, ever so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."

Theologians who think that the old man is not yet totally dead when we become a Christian are conjuring the ghost of the "old man's past" to haunt Christians and burden their conscience with sinful past! Charles Dickens in his book, *The Christmas Carol*, might have meant well and gave us an object lesson on the pang of conscience, but thanks God, we Christians have already gone through that when we repented and accept Christ, and it is God's intent to tell us that when He forgives, He meant it. It is a thing of the past: no more.

Our Crucifixion with Christ

One of the great revelation of the mystery of God is that Christ is manifested in the flesh, crucified on the Cross and raised up by the Holy Spirit as justification and we who are in Him are baptized into his crucifixion, death and resurrection. This is the only way for us to attain godliness.

Paul started out the sixth chapter of Romans with the remark of impatience with those who think they can still sin when they have received the grace of God, which is to say, after becoming a Christian. He retorted quickly with with 'know ye not' which in today's language means 'Don't you know?' Paul's most prominent emphasis is the word death. Nine times in the first eleven verses the word death appears:

Verse 2 baptized into His death

Verse 4 by baptism into death

Verse 5 planted together in the likeness of his death

Verse 6 old man crucified with Him (=death)

Verse 7 he that is dead is free from sin

Verse 8 if we be dead with Christ

Verse 9 Christ being raised from the dead

Verse 10 in that he died

Verse 11 reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed into sin

In the above verses our death in conjunction with Christ is mentioned at least six times. Remember, if we were not completely dead, we would have no resurrection. Calling it resurrection would be a fraud. If Christ had never been completely dead by crucifixion then His resurrection would be no resurrection and all our faith would be in vain. By the same token, if Christ really died but not raised from the dead, then our faith would also be in vain too. If we are not crucified and died with Christ, then we are still under sin and not yet freed from sin, because Paul had said that in verse 7: "he that is dead is freed from sin".

Substitution Versus Identification with Christ in Death

Before we became a Christian we looked at the Cross of Christ as the Son of God who atoned for the sin of mankind. He died

for our sins when each and every one of us should have died for our own sins as due punishment from God. It was atonement and redemption in substitution form.

After we are saved we looked at the Cross as the Cross where our old man of sin was crucified with Christ. Together we were buried with Him and were risen again with Him from the dead. What Christ did was what we did. This is identification; we identified with death. His death on the cross was our death on the Cross. As we had died, we are now freed from sin. When we rose again with Christ we are justified: Romans 4:25. Therefore our life of justification and sanctification is the result of our identification by faith with His death and resurrection.

Escaping Satan's Captivity of Sin

When I was a little boy, there was a big strong bully in school who used to bully the weaker kids and tried to pick a fight with them. After school he was out in the street blocking our way. He loved to play Joe Louis, the champion boxer. We were all afraid of him. Finally, one day I was unlucky he picked on me, and with a few great punches I ended up with a swollen and bleeding nose. After this my only dream was to get away from him. How I wished I could study in another school: just to get away from him. The other kids that were beaten by him had the same dream too.

When we were in sin we were under the power of the Prince of this World. Satan bullies us right and left. While we can get away from a human bully by going to another town, we cannot escape from Satan as long as we are in this world. There is no getting away. But thanks be to God through crucifixion with

Christ, we are delivered from the Prince of this World and from the power of sin. We are really living in another realm.

Before we were saved, we were the captives and prisoner of this world. Not only that, we were also under the principalities and powers of darkness in the air: they are the ones who control the destiny of men who are in sin. Moreover, Satan inflicts on us harm and sufferings because of our sins.

After we are saved our crucifixion with Christ enabled us to get away from it all because we were translated from the power of darkness into God's Kingdom of light. Crucifixion is the means whereby we were delivered from one realm and transferred to another realm. Thus we were delivered from the realm of sin and transferred into God's realm of kingdom of light. Paul in Galatian 6:14 said that: "But God forbids that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world". When Paul says that 'the world is crucified unto me' means that as far as I am concerned the world is nailed to the cross and is dead, so it does not have any power over me or bother me. When he says 'I unto the world' it means that I am crucified on the cross and is therefore delivered from the world as I am translated into God's Kingdom.

In the Old Testament, Enoch walked with God by faith, and he never saw death because he was translated by God into heaven (Heb 11:5). So was Elijah. They were the shadow, the symbol, the example of the translation which we Christians all experienced when we place our faith and trust in Christ and walked with Him. God also gave us eternal life, which means

that we 'never see death', just like Enoch.

What Becomes of Us After the Escape?

When we are crucified with Christ, God has given us an entirely new identity. Our old identity is gone and we become a new man with a new identity. Paul in that marvelous passage of Galatians 2:20 said explicitly: "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me". Yes, Paul has lost his 'I' and in its place is Christ. Therefore our I, the self and ego is replaced by Christ. This is why Christ said in Matt 16:24 "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and pick up his cross and follow me".

The Magnificent Captivation Into Christ

The reality of 'yet not I, but Christ liveth in me' so captivates the Apostle Paul that he has never shifted the eyes of his spirit from it. Paul, because of having Christ in him, has decided and determined to get know more about Christ who is in him. It has altered his whole priority and attitude in life.

Before Paul's (Saul's) conversion, he had great confidence in the work and status of himself in the flesh. He was truly a Jew, God's chosen people; he was a devoted Pharisee; he observed the law completely, he was on fire for God to rid Judaism of Christians, who were the apostates. But after his conversion he realized and considered all these personal achievement as a burden; it was a great loss and deterrent to knowing Christ. Very often the endeavor of the flesh in righteousness has made one feel justified, and through this illusion watered down our urge to pursue the righteousness of Christ which was by faith. Paul then knew that his righteousness in the law counted for

nothing, and he really needed the righteousness which is from God.

Not only this, Paul did not stop short of mental knowledge of Christ but wanted to dwell into the partnership of suffering and death with Christ and to experience the power of Christ's resurrection in order that he may 'apprehend Christ', Phil 3:12. His fellowship with Christ had been so close that he did not want to let go of Christ.

Paul was so captivated by his pursuit of the knowledge of Christ that his ideals were echoed in many of his epistles. Therefore he said in 2 Cor 2:14 "Now thanks be unto God, which always caused us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savior of his knowledge by us in every place". In Ephesian 1:17-23 Paul unfolded the knowledge of the grandeur of God's doing in Christ: "...the Father of glory may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...that ye may know what is the hope of his calling...". Yes, we find this kind of wish all over his epistles.

The knowledge of Christ which Paul is pursuing is different from our conventional concept of pursuit of knowledge because:

Paul's knowledge of Christ is a mutually exclusive knowledge. This means that if we really want to know Christ, we must sacrifice and discard the pursuit of all other knowledge which results in less opportunity of knowing Christ. Paul goes as far as saying that he counted all things as loss compared to the excellency of knowing Christ.

The knowledge of Christ can only be obtained through total commitment and sacrifice. Paul paid a great price for this knowledge when he said in verse 8 "for whom (Christ) I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." For many of us, when we sacrifice what is the best for us in favor of Christ we still call what we sacrifice to be of value. But Paul goes one step further because he could see the mundane value of what he had sacrificed and label it 'dung'. Paul must have been sitting in heaven looking down and see things from a heavenly perspective to say that.

Christ said in Luke 14:26 "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, also his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"; verse 33 "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple"

This knowledge of Christ causes us to reject our own righteousness, which comes from the endeavor of the flesh and the keeping of the law in the flesh. Whereas before, we are proud of our righteousness. We are satisfied with what we did to be counted as righteous, but now we only want God to evaluate our righteousness in His own way. We are now happy only with what God is happy with. By faith we only want God to give us His supreme righteousness. Before Paul's conversion he was striving for the righteousness of the law, he was keeping it by his own efforts of the flesh and he took pride in it. But after his conversion Paul only wanted the righteousness which is by faith of Christ Jesus.

This knowledge of Christ is to participate in the fellowship of

Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. Therefore it is not merely an intellectual knowledge as such, but far from it, it is a spiritual experience which we go through with Christ vicariously. It is also knowledge based on relationship. Why is it that you know your spouse better than anyone else? It is because you have relationship with him or her. Paul wants to know Christ in an intimate way. The most intimate way is to suffer with Him, bury with Him, and rise with Him to experience the power of His resurrection.

The Magnificent Martyrdom

If we are to examine the life of Paul we will find that there is in him an intense godly wish of suffering with Christ, and to die for him in the hope that he would be resurrected in the same way as Christ. One of the great events that had made a great impact on Paul's life was the martyrdom of Stephen. Paul had noticed that as Stephen was dying, he cried to God, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge", Acts 7:60. What Stephen had said was in the same vein as Christ on the Cross praying to the Father: "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do" Luke 23:34. As Stephen was about to die he said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit", Acts 7:59. Before Christ died on the Cross He cried, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit" Luke 23:46.

In Stephen's message to the high priest and the people, he was relating the history of their forefathers who had rejected God in everything. In every verse of chapter 7 it was an indictment of the stiff-necked Jews who had rejected God and His holy prophets, everything God had given them and even His Only

Begotten Son Jesus Christ. Christ was crucified because the Jews had rejected Him, and rather preferred to release the great robber Barabbas. Stephen was martyred because they too had rejected him and his testimony.

Yes, Paul after his conversion had realized that Stephen died in the same pattern as Christ. Yes, Stephen conformed to the suffering and death of Christ. Paul too can recall clearly that magnificent martyrdom of Stephen in which the heaven was opened to receive him: "But he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up to steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" Acts 7:55. What a glorious reception by Christ. Whereas Christ used to sit at the right hand of God, now He stood up to receive Stephen!

It is not difficult to imagine that before Paul's conversion he considered himself a Pharisees, the vanguard of God's law, and that the Pharisees were the only people who were qualified for heaven: If ever there were any reception by God, it would be for the Pharisees, and not for this heretic Stephen. This heretic claiming to be received by God with honor must have arouse that indignancy and hate that made Paul persecute Christians even more. After Paul's conversion, he craved to pursue this glorious martyrdom for himself. Therefore nothing short of suffering greatly and death would be able to satisfy Paul's desire or martyrdom.

6 The Key to a Victorious Life – Process of Reckoning

A victorious life is free from sin. Not only free from committing of sin, but also the desire to sin. Because, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" 1 John 3:3. The constant thought of sin is gone. Our body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. How do we live a victorious Christian life base on our new spiritual status? Paul has given us the answer succinctly in four verses in Rom 6:11-14, of which the key verse is found in verse 11: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord". The four verses form the key to a victorious life. Crucifixion of self and reckoning work together, and they will free us from the bondage of desire to sin, hence a victorious life.

The foundation of reckoning is based on the important truth of verse 6: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin". We have explained at length the meaning and implications of the old man in the previous chapter. The

only thing we need to explain is the 'body of sin'. There are many kinds of interpretations for this term, just like the term old man. However the 'body of sin' occurs only once in the New Testament and that there is not even a clue to its setting. May we therefore say with due piety that God do not mean to mislead us or to have us spending a lot of effort trying to figure out its meaning the way we do with important doctrines, except to take it at its face value and meaning. Going into far-fetched connotations and implications would only lead to wishful interpretations, which has no Biblical ground.

The clue to interpretation can be found from the context of verse 13 where it says: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin". When our 'body and soul yield to the service of unrighteousness and is being used as its instrument, it is the 'body of sin'. On the other hand after we are crucified our 'body of sin' is dead, and in its place is what I say the 'body of righteousness' which is the instrument of righteousness. As is said in the second half of the verse: "but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Notice that our body and soul is neutral: it is only an instrument. It is like a surgeon's knife, it can be used to save people or it can be used to kill people. So the body of sin is a state of service of the body and not the intrinsic body itself, the whole purpose of crucifixion of the old man is to disannul our relation and contact with sin so that our body will not be used as instrument of unrighteousness. This is why in verse 7 it says: "For he that is dead is freed from sin". Our body is now freed from the obligation of serving sin.

Note that crucifixion of the self from the previous chapter, and reckoning to be dead to sin in this chapter is closely related. Our old self is sin, and to be dead to sin is also to be dead to the old self. For the rest of the chapter, the word reckoning will be meant to be dead to sin, but it also requires oneself to be crucified on the Cross as well. You cannot do one and not the other.

What is The Problem with Most of Us?

Inability to overcome sin

No doubt many of us has been working and trying hard to overcome sin without success. We would query the seemingly simple procedure of reckoning in verse 11, but for many of us it does not seem to work, or we do not know the crux of how to make it work. For some Christians it works wonderfully, for others it does not seem to work at all. What is the reason?

It is easy to confuse reckoning with salvation, but it is not salvation. Salvation is the first step. Crucifixion of self and reckoning is the next step to a holy living. The next step must take place for a Christian to live in the Spirit instead of the flesh. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you” Rom 8:8-9.

It is too easy for Christians to say they have given their life to Jesus. Many of us give lip service even without knowing it. Jesus knows that, so He gave us a simple task. Jesus said to the rich man, “sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me” Luk 18:22. We read this, and our mind has a funny way of

quickly shutting it out completely so we still feel good. The idea of giving things away is unthinkable, so we ignore that verse of the Bible or downplay it. We think somehow that it does not apply to our current circumstance. This is a stumbling block that tripped so many Christians.

What does our worldly possession have to do with reckoning? The word “sin” covers much more than it appears. Because the world and all that is in it is sin. We are told to, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” 1John 2:15. Christians cannot have anything to do with the world because, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” Matt 6:24. Dead to sin is also dead to the world. Wealth of any kind is a hindrance to holy living no matter what social economic status you are. Forsaking the world should be a prayer goal of ours for God to help us accomplish.

Necessity of reckoning rather than determination to overcome sin

Before reckoning, many Christians will try hard not to sin. Overtime Christians develop strategies to stop sinning. For example, one may take a different route home because of a certain billboard advertisement. One church separated men from women during swim time at the church camp, and unmarried men and woman were not allowed to walk by

themselves on forest trails near the camp. There is no doubt you can succeed to a very high level to stop sinning. However, there is a critical difference between using one's ability to stop sin versus reckoning by the Holy Spirit to stop sin.

Using one's ability to stop from sinning instead of Holy Spirit is a serious mistake. Many Christians resort to using their own ability because they are unwilling to crucify themselves or their pride or to let go of the world. I know this because that was exactly how I was.

Why then is using one's ability to stop from sinning futile? It is through the Holy Spirit that we are given power to obey all the laws of God. What then are all the laws of God? "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" Gal 5:14. Fulfillment of all the laws is through love. Love only comes from God. Therefore, crucifixion of self and reckoning brings about the love of God. It is through this love that we succeed in stopping sin. Love is the basis for all the good works we do. All efforts outside of love are from the flesh. 1Cor 13, "and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Living a perfect sinless life without love is similarly worthless.

Reckoning is Within Reach of All Christians

The first step in reckoning is to have the humility to acknowledge and understand the sheer impossibility of it. As long as you think is easy, you will not get there. Chances are you are hiding areas of your life that needs to be crucified. We must humble ourselves and admit our utter weakness. It is

realizing our weakness, knowing the desperate situation we are in because of our inability to accomplish this reckoning, and through this poor in spirit that we will finally rely on God to do the impossible task. Thus we give God all the credit, and none for ourselves.

Humility to acknowledge our weakness is the first step. Jesus gave us an incredible hint for the next step, “verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” Matt 17:20. You are given power to move mountains using only a minuscule amount of faith. Many Christians will have a hard time believing this that only a minuscule amount of faith is required. They imagine gigantic faith like Abraham. But that is not what Jesus said. We are giving this earth shattering power that is accessible to just the average person. This mountain He is talking about is the self that needs to be crucified and moved out of the way. We are so entrenched in this self and sin that we cannot move it out of our way to see God’s love. Jesus’s promise is fulfilled if we have faith only as tiny as a grain of mustard seed. We therefore must have at least that much faith and no more. Tiny amount really is all the faith we will ever have anyway. What is a minuscule amount of faith? This minuscule amount of faith would be defined as the willingness to pray to God to help us. Minuscule means we do not fully believe reckoning is possible, or that it can happen to us in our circumstance, but if we have at least have enough faith to even spend the time to ask for it, that is enough faith for God. With that small amount faith, we pray to God. God takes your seed,

and grows that faith for you.

Is important to realize God gives you the faith for reckoning. It does not come from you. If this faith comes from your own ability, then you can believe anything you want. There is no way to tell if is right or wrong because you made it all up, and you out of your ability gathered up the determined to believe what you think is right. There are too many religions and even Christians in the world where followers believe what they think are right. Several televangelist promoting wealth ministry comes to mind. However, if God gives you the faith, then you know is the Holy Spirit working in you.

The pretext of Matt 17:20 was that the disciples were asking Jesus why they could not cast out the demon in a man. Jesus answered it was their disbelief. If they only had faith like a mustard seed, they would be able to move mountains. In the following sentence, Jesus said, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" Matt 17:21. While we do not consider ourselves to be demon possessed. We are possessed by sin as Paul said, "I am carnal, sold under sin" Rom 7:14. To reckon ourselves to be dead to sin may sometimes require even fasting as Jesus said.

In summary, we need to acknowledge our need to reckon ourselves dead to sin. We are not a complete Christian until we do that. Admit to God we are utterly unable to crucify ourselves and reckon to be dead to sin. Lastly, ask God for help in prayer. Be persistent, God will answer in time. It may take a long time for reckoning to take hold, and it may feel like nothing is happening, but keep praying. Be armed with

knowledge of what is required of you. God promised He will do His work. Be persistent because our time is short.

Commitment to Reckoning

If you have real faith and determination to do it, turn your back to the past and live in the manner of a new man's life, you can achieve it. It takes resolute faith, like the faith of the early church Christians. I have seen simple folks do it. But alas it is so difficult for us modern man to take up faith in a simple way, never doubting. This is because we are bought up in a modern scientific society steeped with rationality, factuality, practicality, and the scientific approach, not the faith approach. We are equipped with too much logic, self-help, defense mechanism, too much common sense which originates from the flesh, and worse of all a long case history of defeated Christian living which robs us of our faith. Our self and ego come out to the forefront and condition every aspect of our life; we must never try to win spiritual battles with the strength of the flesh or we will always invariably fail.

The modern day local church is full of average Christians who only give lip service to their faith; who are not even sure of their salvation. This stems from the fact that many Christians have taken for granted the way a newcomer professes his or her faith in Christ.

When it comes to professing our faith in Christ, there is a great tendency for us to recognize it with our mind but without much serious commitment to God. We make ourselves believe that we are a Christian and go through the motion of being a Christian.

Believing with the mind and not with the heart is like friendship which touches the mind, and not the heart. It is without commitment. In the old Chinese traditional ideal, a true friend is one who is willing to go at lengths even to sell one's house to help a good friend--real friendship sticks like a brother. Alas, we do not see much of that nowadays. Even many people in marriage do not give themselves 100% to their spouse; having seen innumerable cases of divorces, they become protective. In another words there is no total commitment in friendship or even in marriage.

With this attitude today there are so many average Christians in the Church who join the Church with only mental recognition of Christ. They then go back to their work, profession or business acting in the same worldly way and not so honest way. Consequently many such average Christians have lost the real meaning of professing one's faith in Christ.

What is the cure for all these? The only cure is the Lordship of Christ. How is one saved? Roman s 10:9 said, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that god hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved". Notice the Bible put Lord before Savior. One must accept Christ as Lord first and then Savior. Actually in the Gospel those who believe in Jesus accept Him as Lord. Jesus healed the man who was blind from birth. When Jesus met him, He revealed Himself to him as the Son of God. The healed man called Him Lord and worshipped Him. The healed man also stood up for Jesus, and he was persecuted. Nothing was said about salvation in the passage. Actually there was no need to say it if one accepts Christ as Lord; Christ will perfect the

work of salvation in him who accepts Him as Lord.

When we take Christ as Lord, there is no room for perfunctory and superficial faith. It is a test of whether we are serious or not. If we care to spend time and analyze our motives and actions in everything we do, we will find to our surprise how self-deceiving we are. Self-deception is what Satan tries to establish in our life. The externally devoted people are the victim of Satan's deception. Look at the Pharisees in Christ's time: they have gone on the wrong path of serving God. They served God by the endeavor of the flesh, and deceived themselves without even knowing it. As a result they became hypocrites.

Therefore to get back to the right track, true Christian living needs a system of hand holding in faith: Hand holding in faith is just like feeding the babes in Christ. It is better to be a baby in Christ. The wiser and more educated we are, the more difficult it is for us to achieve our result in reckoning. Christ said that if we have as little faith as a grain of mustard seed, we would be able to tell the mountain to move to another place and it shall be accomplished, Matt 17: 20.

It takes willingness to accept Christ by faith, and the Holy Spirit will do the rest. But it will take resolute faith and determination to live a holy life and walk close to God. To enter into His riches and abundance that is in Christ we need to abandon our stubborn will and let the Holy Spirit operate through us. God will not force it on us.

It is only when we are hungry that meals we eat give us satisfaction. If we are not hungry, then a big meal will only

burden our stomach. By the same token, when we do not feel we have a problem with sin or bad habits or little faults, no amount of reckoning will do us any good. In the same way, it is only when we feel sick do we have the need of a doctor. In our following of Christ, whenever we feel we have already attained, we will not have the need to seek Christ as urgently as before; and we stop growing in the Spirit; and our spiritual life begins to shrivel. Who can match the spirituality of the Apostle Paul? He wrote 14 of the Epistles in the New Testament; he was caught up into the third heaven, heard unspeakable words and seen visions in abundance. Yet in his confession of Philippians 3:12 he said: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus".

Process of Reckoning

Reckoning ourselves dead to sin is the key to a victorious life. This reckoning is the most effective weapon against sin. Unfortunately many Christians do not know how to make use of it. Even for those who know, they are unable to put it to work in their lives. The rest of this chapter is devoted to sharing with the reader the process of reckoning. In practice, it takes time to make it work. Therefore, the reader must continue to persevere.

Reckoning is stating of one's priority in the light of being a Christian. It is a divorce from the life of lust and sin that one is married to in the flesh. It is the tearing of our past contact with sin and the ways of the world. There is no turning back. We

live everyday under the reminder that our relationship is severed, and the break of the relationship clean. There is also a new orientation for us. God had shown us through our past life of sin that we are hopeless as far as trying to be righteous before God; we are unable to do the things that we consider to be good, and we somehow are being channeled and thrown in to the trash of depravity. God wants us to say to ourselves; I have really decided not to try to be righteousness on my own, and I have determined to let God do it for me through the Holy Spirit, and I have my faith on it.

Reckoning is that responses to God's grace by being faithful to Him and serve Him like a faithful servant. Serving Him out of gladness and faithfulness because He has paid a dear price with life of His precious Son Jesus Christ, and He has purchased us from the slave market of sin to restore us into His house of righteousness.

I would like to share with you the 6 steps in reckoning according to the 6th chapter of Romans. This section will be the most difficult to understand and to carry out successfully. Therefore the reader is advised to read carefully and thoughtfully, time and again. When you think you have understood it, put it into practice, and it will make you understand better.

First, the step of FAITH

We are saved because we have professed our faith in Christ Jesus who is our Lord and Savior. Therefore we have been reckoned righteous by God through the faith of Christ. If we read very carefully Romans 4:22, the real meaning in the Greek text connotes that 'faith was

imputed to him for righteousness' when describing Abraham. The reader can refer to on the *Epistle to The Galatians* by C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine pp 246-247,

Righteousness is not said to be imputed to the believer save in the sense that faith is imputed ('reckoned' is the better word) for righteousness. It is clear that in Rom. 4:6,11 'righteousness reckoned' must be understood in the light of the context, 'faith reckoned for righteousness', verse 3,5,9,22. "For" in these places is *eis*, which does not mean 'instead of', but 'with a view to'. The faith thus exercised brings the soul into vital union with God in Christ, and inevitably produces righteousness of life, that is, conformity to the will of God

It is faith that is imputed upon us. Through imputed faith, we have righteousness. This is because our faith really is the gift of God in the first place. To those who are willing to believe, the Holy Spirit will impart this 'faith of Christ' to us, so that through this faith we are reckoned or credited by God for righteousness. Many of us have harbored the notion that when we believe in God it is due to our own faith: we think that faith is initiated from us. Ephesians 2:8 has dispelled that entire notion: "For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God". The phrase 'not of yourselves' means that we do not have any credit whatsoever because our salvation is not due to our works; even this faith which enables us to be saved by grace do not originate from us, so that we cannot boast. What do all these imply? It means everything comes from God: so the initiative is from God. We only respond to God's moving of the Spirit. Anything that is not directly dictated by the moving of the Spirit will

result in us going about creating our own know-how for holy living like the Christians in Colossae and Galatia. What other things must we believe? Besides the above we must believe that the Bible is inspired by God; and that it is to the Bible that we look into for guidance; and that whatever it says is true and really works. Without this blueprint of faith, we will really be lost because we do not have the revelation of God to man.

We must believe that we are justified and sanctified by faith; we have eternal life and Christ Jesus is the Son of God and our Lord; when Christ died and rose again we also died and rose again with Him.

The very first hurdle in reckoning is to firmly believe that after becoming a Christian we no longer live in sin and that we are dead to sin. Every one of us must live under the obsession that we are freed from the prison of sin; we are no more chained to sin. Now we can fall in love with righteousness and serve our righteous master with joy and freedom.

Second, the step of KNOWLEDGE

Besides faith we must have knowledge. Paul in Rom 6:3 replied to sceptics (who thought they could continue sinning because of God grace) saying, "know ye not". Imagine that we are living at the entrance to a gold mine and owning it, but we do not know that there is gold inside, we would still be no richer than we were. The knowledge that Paul wants us to know are that:

- We are baptized into Christ's death
- We are buried with Him
- We are raised with Him
- Therefore we had been united with Christ in his death and resurrection

- Because of what we have been through with Christ, our old man, the old sinful self in Adam, is already crucified with Christ: dead
- Therefore we are freed from sin
- Death can no longer dominate Christ, and therefore cannot dominate us

How does knowing all of the above help? Just knowing about it does not help much unless it becomes an attribute of our life, and that is to consciously and decisively apply it to our life in faith. This is exactly what we do in the next step.

Third, the step of RECKONING

This is the most mystical step of all the steps, and the most difficult to understand. What exactly is reckoning? This word appears in verse 11 and has variously translated as 'consider' or 'count'. I like to use the King James and the original translation of 'reckoning', because it is closest to what we shall be doing. My definition of reckoning in verse 11 is, "taking into consideration of what you are and then deliberately acting in conformity to it". What are we to reckon ourselves? Consider yourself as a new man in Christ, the old man being already dead. So we should now act like a new man and not like the old man we used to be. Since our old man who used to serve sin is dead, our new man is no longer obligated to serve sin nor can sin rule over us anymore.

Therefore we reckon ourselves to be dead to sin; but alive in Christ, towards God. This means we reckon ourselves as not capable of serving sin but only capable of serving God in righteousness. Consider yourself as changing your life's moral job: whereas you were working for your old tyrannical and unrighteousness master; now you are working for a good righteous

master. Whereas you were the servant of sin, now you are the servant of righteousness, which is God. What are the conceptual difficulties we are up against when we reckon? It is our present defeated state. What it means is that sin is so near to us by our side every minute when we are in the defeated state. To think that we are dead to sin appears to us to be too ideal.

Someone may even ask are we to kid ourselves spiritually. To overcome this hurdle, we must realize that there is a great difference between our real life and our actual state. For example, when we put our faith in Christ, God reckons our righteousness to be the righteousness of Christ; and not our human righteousness which is the way we are behaving currently in real life. Let not ourselves be delude into thinking God shares our own perception of ourselves based on the currently weakness in life.

Let not the physical weakness in our life delude ourselves into thinking God shares our own perception of us. Similarly before we are saved we may have done a lot of good works, and we are deceived into thinking that we are acceptable if not totally righteous and perfect before God. So we must learn to see ourselves as God sees us as stipulated in the Bible and not the way we see ourselves.

One may ask, is reckoning a concept? No, concept requires no action, but reckoning does. Its existence depends on action. The next two steps are the results of reckoning while the foregoing is the basis of reckoning. All these 6 steps are part and parcel of reckoning.

My experience

How do we do our reckoning in real life? Please allow me to share a little of my experience in reckoning. As a young

Christian I started out the conventional way of reading the chapter, meditate on it, prayed, and reckon myself many times. Then I go into the world and meet with temptation: I held off for a little while and then failed because I succumb to temptation. I said to myself, I have not tried hard enough-- so I worked harder at it: there was a slight improvement. This goes on for a number of years, but I must confess that I am nowhere near the holy living that the Bible demands. A thought came to my mind: I must be more conscious of it. So I went into the world armed with reminders: I said to myself that I am dead to sin, dead, dead, dead! Temptation came and right before my eyes I do wrong again. That was my failure in trying to refrain from doing the things that I do not want to do. I thought that reckoning is a magic word that one could conjure up to resist temptation

Then there are times when it is not that I do what I do not want to do, but the fact is, I sometimes even enjoy doing it. Typically there are two types of circumstances that underlies our sinning: one is that we do not wish to sin but that we cannot stop from doing it; another is that we like to enjoy a little of the forbidden fruit, a little of the lust and pleasure of the flesh, not much, but just a little short holiday from the military strictness and disciplines of holiness! There is that motivation in us of what Paul calls 'another law' which drives us in the opposite direction to being lawful. This is due to the corruptible nature that is still in us and we need to annul it by putting it off through reckoning.

Very often a brief holiday turns out to be a long one, and almost puts us in a state of despair. To make myself look better

I went on a trip to moral cosmetics; I kept up a nice front and sweep everything under the carpet. To cover up my faults I made excuses: but excuses are just moral cosmetics for lying, and even white lies are simply black lies painted white. There are some sins habits which can only be rid of by suffering and reckoning. In a Christian's life suffering enables a person to steer clear of sin. In 1Peter 4:1 "Foreasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."

Finally sufferings came and my reckoning began to work, I was able to put off many of my faults. I was able to get rid of specific habits in a few months when I could not do it in years. I examined myself to find out why. I discovered that much of ego and myself are gone. My self has been the biggest hurdle to reckoning and suffering helped to do away with most of it.

After a long period of suffering I learnt to live with the consciousness of 'Christ in me'. It is with the Christ identity that enables me to reckon and overcome. But Christ identity does not come easily. My problem had been the lordship of Christ in my life. While I took Him to be Lord in most of the area of my life like my service in Christian work, church, and the preaching of the Gospel, I was still afraid to take Him to be my Lord in business because I feared the Lord saying to me: sell all you have, give to the poor, and then come and follow me! I had heard too many testimonies of Christians who gave up everything and went into the Lord's service. To me it was financially frightening! The Lord had been gracious. Where I was afraid to lose, He made me lose! He made my business fail

one after another. He let me experience what it meant to have nothing but simply following Him by faith and not to care about the needs of life. He taught me to transcend the necessity of life, and have the courage to face adversity, holding on to Him through thick and thin. So finally I yielded to Him completely (by His grace). I was able to experience from then on that His providence never fails.

The Lordship of Christ dealt a final blow to the ego and myself. One can also look at it in another way: self and ego must go before Christ can take over your life. This is why Christ said that if any man will follow Him, he must deny himself. Matt 16:24. Self is a hurdle to our reckoning because it always imposes its own method of the flesh to fight spiritual battle, though we are never conscious of it. So it is very insidious and deceptive: those who have ego and self would never realize how self-centered and self-righteous they are--it is frightening and spiritually fatal! It tries to achieve sanctification the human way, and does not yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Pharisees are the example of how devastating the endeavor of the flesh can be in the process of seeking for righteousness.

How does reckoning come about? I remembered that during my period of suffering, I was praying all the time. Then one day the 'spark of the Spirit' came quietly. You can say that it is as if God turn my thinking all around which makes me think and look at things in a different way than before. I suddenly understand 'where I am' and 'what I could do'. 'Where I am' is feeling which make me realize that I am living in a different realm. A realm where I am no longer obligated to sin, where I was fighting to free myself from the sins which entangle me,

now I am freed from it. I feel the lightness of heart of a bird flying out of the cage of sin! 'What I could do' is a grateful realization that I could see sanctification, a holy life being now possible. Though I am still not perfect, I could feel that it is something I could hope and work at. I am out of Romans 7's struggling of the 2 laws in my heart.

Perhaps someone may be curious to know how it feels before and after reckoning. Before reckoning I had always felt that I was a defeated Christian--I tried hard and it still failed. I tried to be holy, and and soon as I feel I had attained it, a cluster of sin arrived and spoilt my gain. I want to maintain a front because I was afraid of people criticizing me, and wanted to show people that I am spiritual. In a way I am a sort of a hypocrite, and I noticed that a lot of Christians around me are doing the same; and that served to make me feel less guilty. When it came to love, it was a matter of sheer duty not out of true spontaneous loving urge and compassion. There was action but my heart was still not touched.

After reckoning came, my heart suddenly calmed down and become serene. That urge to show off and become a hypocrite was gone, I am contented to do everything for God: to see and to seek everything to His glory. Whereas I was looking for credit now I abhor it. With a lot of sin gone, I felt closer to God, and now I could pray with a clear channel to God. There was an inner feeling of bliss in my heart, because I had less spiritual failure to blame myself. I had a feeling of joy, assurance and freedom of the spirit which I had not experienced before. However one thing is sure: I become more sensitive to sin, and the standard I set for myself had risen higher.

As I was brought up in a conservative and ascetic Christian background, I am not used to being hilarious in singing and clapping of hands. So after it worked I feel more like a monk in a monastery, having attained something and yet never rave about it to the outside world. Many of you no doubt will feel differently because God deals with everyone differently.

What I had shared with you is only to be taken as an example for your reference because I would rather prefer to share the word of God than my personal experience. But reckoning is such a personal experience that I feel perhaps a little personal example would make it more tangible to the reader.

Let me put it in a nutshell: our reckoning is the reckoning of the Cross of Christ in our sanctification.

Forth, the step of specific reckoning

All the reckoning procedure we have mentioned above is to deal with our general status in the process of sanctification and deliverance from sin. Many Christians have found that the general reckoning procedure has helped clear them of 90% of their sins problems (humanly conscious speaking). But the last 10% still clings to them. The way to deal with these is to detect then, sought out the specific sin that still clings to the person or even bad habits and inclinations, sought out even those little seeds of it, and then reckon them one by one by bring it out into the light of God's truth and righteousness.

In the process of our general reckoning, we specifically ask Lord to deal with these specific seeds of sin, and listen to the Lord on how to deal with it. For certain sins the Lord will have us to do certain things before He removes that seed of sin.

God wants each one of His own people to do restitution. In Exodus 22:1 it is said that if a man steal an ox or sheep, he shall restore to the owner five oxen for an ox stolen and four sheep for a sheep stolen. Whatever we do that causes damages to another person's property or breach of obligation we should restore. Jesus blessed the house of Zacchaeus, the tax collector, because he repented and restored four times or whatever he had taken from people by false accusation; besides he gave half of what he had to the poor as a restitution for his past evil deeds of cheating and obtaining money through unrighteousness.

Fifth, the step of Determination

Before we were saved we make resolutions and determinations in doing good and failing miserably. This was because we were slaves of unrighteousness and sin; our taskmaster demanded from us sin and unrighteousness. How can we get away from sin? The only way to be freed from the whip and baton-wielding, slave-driving taskmaster is to drop dead. This is precisely the way God employs to pull us out of prison camp of sin. By dying with Christ on the Cross we escape the prison camp of sin.

Now that we are freed from sin we can make good determinations and succeed, because our new master who is righteous demands of us righteousness. How do we orientate ourselves in this new job? Paul tells us how in Rom 6:19 "for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness". Why is it that we can do it now? Verse 14 tells us: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace". How do we do it in real life? By letting the Holy Spirit

work in our heart and setting our will to do God's good pleasure. Let me give you one example. For those of us who have fully yielded to God, all we need to do is to give our heart to God early in the morning every day and let God guide you and have everything that you do be in conformity to God's righteousness and in the purpose of His Kingdom. If you have done this, then you do not need to pray for the fine details in the dealings of this world because God will add in all these as a bonus to you without your asking.

In short it is the determination to seek righteousness, because we are the servants of righteousness: it is the determination to execute the righteousness, which is of His Kingdom. We do it for God because we are in His Kingdom. If you were to ask the average man in the street what is his predominant preoccupation is, he would say that to make money so he can have bread and butter for that family as well as something to wear. If you were to ask a true Christian what his or her predominant preoccupation is, the Christian would say it is His Kingdom as is said in the scripture. What is the difference? We Christians should have God's perspective and not the perspective of the man on the street.

When we do our step of determination we have to be aware of improper motives. When we have attained a victorious and holy life, it is not for us to rave about in church or use it as a means to attain leadership position. Even without bragging, there is still that insidious spiritual pride lurking in our heart, ready to take root when it encounters the slightest dampness. Lucifer the great angel succumbed to pride and rebelled against God. God punished him, and he was turned into the hideous Satan. Our determination must be godly, which

means that it only brings glory to God and none to us. Speaking of all these 'for you' and 'for God' please remember that for a spiritual Christian there is really no 'for you' but only 'for God'. There should not be any consciousness of the 'self' that we once had; it does not mean that we should not be conscious of oneself. I do not wish to make this book out of reach for the young Christians, so I will only say, make this selflessness your goal and Christ is the only person to fill your void when self goes. Remember Gal 2:20 where Paul said that it is not I but Christ who lives in me.

This determination is a 24 hour determination: not only in the daytime when we are conscious, but also at night in your sleep: you must make determination even in your dreams when you are conscious of it. Some people are completely overpowered by dreams and they are not able to distinguish it from reality. Other people know that they are dreaming or it may be either way at times. When I was young my dreams were very real, but I do not blame myself for my wrong doings in my dreams. Then I learned to reckon in the daytime and have driven out my bad thoughts and actions in the daytime; I picked it up in my dreams. My wishful thinking and lust appears in my dreams. As a result I had my holidays from holiness in my dreams. The Holy Spirit convicted me and tells me that I am still wrong. So I have to refrain from it the way I refrain from it in the daytime. I had not had the experience of reckoning in my dreams, but I could do it with 'mind slapping'. Let me explain 'mind slapping'. After I have achieved results in reckoning, now and then there comes temptation. It lasted for a few seconds and the Lord simply slap my mind and shook me up; I recoiled from the temptation, shook my head and practically, say, 'oh,

no'. Then the temptation is gone. It takes a constant determined frame of mind to do it, and no holiday from holiness please! This is why Christ commands us in Matt 26:41 "watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation".

Try to achieve this state of mind all the time. However do not condemn yourself if you could not achieve it, but to bear in mind as your goal. It took me 30 years of Christian life struggle to arrive at something like this, yet that is still far from perfect.

Sixth, the step off REPENTANCE and IMPLEMENTATION

Having the faith, knowledge, reckoning and determination we must now complete the final step and that is the doing of it, implementation of it in your life. Christ died on the Cross to redeem us from sin so that we can be a holy people to God. He expects all of us to live holy lives. If you think you are a Christian and yet do not wish to be holy, then you are deceiving yourself. You must now examine your faith in God, your motives and your repentance. Without repentance, no one is even near the door of salvation. For those who are saved there is that desire and urge to be holy, to get away from sin: This is the spirit of repentance. Paul tells us the way to do it is to follow Rom 6:19, "Even so now yield you members servants to righteousness unto holiness". Many times when we sin and feel sick and remorse about our sin, we repent and determine not to do it again. We come to God in confession and contrition. After this there comes an aversion for that sin. It seems to become our second nature, our spiritual nature. One effective way is to write down a list of sins and bad habits that one commits. As one reflects and finds the specific sin does not come back again, strike it off the

list. This is quite encouraging; we have something to work towards to in our spiritual life; we pray to God that on day before we see Him the whole list will be struck off by His grace. This Christian repentance is a confirmation of our reckoning, and because this sin do not come back again it reinforces our faith in reckoning. If you believe you are saved, and would like to be holy but yet not have the urgency to attain holy living, then I will say that you have not yet dealt with the matter of Lordship of Christ in your life. For many of us it will take time, but let me caution you: work at it urgently, time is shorter than you think. Meanwhile you have missed out on all the heavenly blessings that will be yours if you have done it earlier. Please do it now.

What to Bear in Mind

In order for the above 6 steps in reckoning to work in your life, there are 3 important points we must bear in mind:

1) It can only work by faith. Reckoning is not accomplished by know-how and methods. By faith we mean that we must absolutely believe in it. Modern people are not accustomed to faith as saints of the past. We must not gloss over what faith is; watch out for mere mental recognition. In the 5 steps the first is faith, but actually all the other 4 steps are done in faith. Faith is the crux to reckoning. By faith we mean any kind of work or human efforts, which is the work of the flesh, shall have no part in it.

All that I have said before will not work through human effort! The reason that it works is because of the Holy Spirit. We all need the Holy Spirit to carry us through the 6 steps. A native in the jungle, when he is converted, is able to live such a life with only the help of the Holy

Spirit. Howbeit we have the Bible and vast internet resource, and we cannot carry out the 6 steps. The Bible we have makes Christian living so much easier. The early Christians in the Apostle's times had only Old Testament and no New Testament. Everything in the New Testament was transmitted by word of mouth, especially the contents of the four Gospels. Not many modern Christians realize how fortunate they are. Now with the Bible we can teach and have the same teaching. This is a sure safeguard against heresy.

2) Second: Righteousness is not, and could not be created by our own doing. Reckon for righteousness is a free gift from God. If it were free, then the fulfilment of righteousness which is righteous living should also free. Righteous living comes from God working through His Holy Spirit to bring about sanctified living in us. It may be difficult for a young Christian to comprehend how he could yield himself to the leading and working of the Holy Spirit. Many Christians try to accelerate the process by all kinds of means and by trying to prove that he has it. Do not be mistaken, we who believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God has already the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. The Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost said: "...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" Acts 2:38.

Paul has told us explicitly in Rom 6:3: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" Who is responsible for baptizing us into Jesus Christ? It is the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit dwells in us continually, and we can say forever. So Paul continues on to say that: "But if the spirit of Him that raise up Jesus from the dead dwell in

you, he that raise up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwell in you", Rom 8:11. Which is more powerful, raising with Christ from the dead through the Holy Spirit, or just to speak in tongues?

Therefore it is how we yield and how we may be filled with the Spirit that we are concerned with, and how we could follow and be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our life; also to distinguish that which is the endeavor of the flesh and which is the leading of the Holy Spirit. To completely follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, and to live a victorious Christian life should be the glorious goal of every Christian. If we read in between the lines of what Paul said in 1 Cor 13 we would realize that what he is trying to put across is that all these speaking in tongues, prophesying will become nothing in time to come. Therefore we should get rid of these childish preoccupations when we grow up in the maturity of the Spirit, and instead cling to the love which the Holy Spirit has shed abroad in our hearts, because ultimately it is the only thing that will last. Going back to distinction, very often our feelings can be very wrong because this corruptible body of ours still has its residual corruptible nature. The Holy Spirit speaks and so does Satan and we should learn how to distinguish between them. Satan speaks and our 'corruptible nature/ ego' picks it up, and it becomes our own thoughts. The surest way is to have 'Christ mind' consciousness in us and to live according to that light. It will condition us very quickly to the spiritual skill of distinguishing between Holy Spirit and Satan. Satan has a very insidious way of trailing behind the spirit and then tag on his message. Remember how Peter was led by the Spirit to identify Jesus as the Son of the living

God. This is the greatest revelation of the New Testament and is the core message of the Gospel; because God is telling all humanity that the Son of God has incarnate and that He is the Savior of the whole world. Little could we expect that seconds later he is used of Satan to deter Jesus from going to the Cross.

3) It can only be accomplished when Christ is Lord of our life. Do not harbor the phobia of the lordship of Christ: do not be under the notion that when He is your Lord, He shall make you poor necessarily, or that he will make you a preacher. Do not be unduly influenced by evangelists in crusades who often admonish everyone to go into full time service. I believe that every one of us should share the Gospel to the unsaved, but not everyone should be a preacher. Being a preacher is a gift of God; one must be specifically called of God in order to enter the ministry; God does not call everyone to be a preacher. The early church was practically a lay movement with only the Apostles being the equivalent of full time preacher of today. Even the apostle Paul was a tentmaker who derives his living and missionary expenses from layman tent making, Act 18:3. With a lot of third world countries closing their doors to full time missionaries, and ending the welcome of layman to build up the countries, there is practically no place for the full time preacher in Islamic and Communistic countries. Of the many Christians who go many are lay missionaries who support themselves. Many who did not join missionary societies are essentially like missionaries because of their involvement in the local church and in their place of work.

God's purpose of being Lord in your life is to finish His plan for you. The Lord's plan is wonderful and glorious,

and it is for His glorious Kingdom. His good intent is for every one of us not to miss out in any of his plan and action. No doubt when we are in heaven and look back we will realize how stupid we are holding back our decision of letting Christ be our Lord. God has wonderful plans for each of us and that He does not wish any of us to waste our time in the pursuits of the mundane things of this world. Those who have yields to Christ will find that reckoning will come naturally, and there is no struggle.

All the above reckoning will work provided we mean what we reckoned. Do not give lip service and cheat ourselves. God is not mocked. We must be very serious of what we reckoned. All thoughts of sin must be put behind us and we must be determined to go to point of no return. Do not harbor any notion of taking a brief holiday in the future. We have burned our bridges to sins that is behind us.

What are the Results of Reckoning?

God's grand design and plan for Christian here on earth is for every one of us to live under the merits of the Cross of Christ, and not on the merits of our works. The Holy Spirit has baptized us into the vicarious experience of crucifixion and resurrection with Christ so that we may all live with the reckoning that we are dead to sin. From now on our life is to live to the glory of God. Yes, it is the reckoning of the Cross that enables us to live out that 'Christ identity' that is in us. It is an outward manifestation of the inward grace which we have received.

When I have in a degree of success to rid myself of most of the sins and bad habits, I find that something else has surfaced.

When I was preoccupied with big obvious sins, I was not aware of the smaller ones. After reckoning, most of the obvious sins are gone, but I begin to see more and more of the little sins coming to my notice, because I now become more sensitive spiritually. What does not bother me formerly becomes irritating now. So I have to get rid of those also. Further reckoning becomes easier because you now know the way, but more difficult because it takes more spiritual discipline in the 6 steps. Therefore I have to sanctify myself by claiming the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, which is to say that I dwell deeper into the faith of Christ for righteousness reckoned. It will involve more prayer, watchfulness, devotion, dedication, the abhorrence of sin, and the delight in the things which pleases God. Above all let the Holy Spirit put in more of the awareness of the 'Christ identity', which is to say awareness of 'not I but Christ'; plus a Christian living which is compatible to what we have comprehended. It finally amounts to putting the priority of knowing Christ above all other interest that we have in this world

The more we know Christ the deeper is the imprint of 'Christ identity'. Through this deeper reckoning we are able to get rid of the lower layers of smaller sins. So the spiritual battle of uncovering smaller and smaller sins goes on. It is just like an archaeologist digging further and further down through layers of archaeological finds. For us Christians, reckoning helps us to dig deeper and deeper into our soul in the search and annulment of power of sin in our life.

In all these, our pursuit for spiritual perfection will never end till the day we see God. Therefore it is for all Christians to be

the overcomers in sin and evil. Christ in His command to the seven Churches of Asia Minor has consistently mentioned the word 'overcome'. He said it seven times. In these last days where sin abounds and the love for God waxes cold it certainly behooves us to respond to the call of God to His own people admonishing them to live holy lives and to overcome sins so that His people may be prepared for His Second Coming.

A Refrain

My sins and bad habits begin to cease

When I have forsaken the things of this world and follow after
Christ

When I suffer I reckon I suffer with Christ on the Cross

When I follow Christ

I follow Him through sufferings, crucifixion, death and
resurrection

Therefore I am dead to sin, and all the things in this world
means nothing to me

When I am crucified with Christ, all the things in this world are
dead to me and I am dead to the world

Therefore we must learn to forsake everything in this world

As we reckon ourselves in Christ, we reckon ourselves to be
not of this world; we do not love the world anymore

But we reckon the things that are in Christ and the things that
are of His kingdom

This is why as children of God we must seek first His kingdom
and His righteousness

Having done this, we can reckon ourselves as being detached
from sin

Therefore we have to live in righteousness and serve
righteousness

When we serve righteousness we serve the righteous God

When we realize that our old man is crucified, the self that I
once was is dead: I deny myself.

7 The Cardinal Points of the Cross

Once you have gone through the process of reckoning, and you have been successful, to a certain extent, with victorious Christian living and attain close to what is required of the Scripture, humanly speaking, you will be looked on by God as favored. It may be that you still have not touched upon the heart of God, but you will be given the ability to begin to understand the way of the Cross.

God has a mission that we are unable to understand. Once there was a very rich young ruler who came to Jesus and asks Him what is the way to eternal life. Jesus said that he must keep the Commandment. The young ruler replied that he did it all his life (humanly speaking, of course). To this the Scripture said that Jesus loved him, which means that Jesus accepted what he did. Yet to Jesus the young ruler had one thing sadly lacking, and that is, he still lacked the heart and mind of God. If we were to read between the lines and imagine being in Christ's stead, we would have said, "Yes, I appreciated the fact that you had kept the Commandments. I liked you for it; however you still did not understand what my mission was, and what I required of you. The only way that you could

understand what it meant was to give away all that you had to the poor, so that you could understand what it meant. It is after you had done this that you would be in a position to follow me". Christ had sacrificed all his treasures and heavenly glory so that He could accomplish His mission of saving us poor and depraved humanity. Therefore how could a wealthy with all his wealth be compatible with the poor Christ? How would the rich man be able to feel for the poor the way Christ felt?

God had set a path for us with His sacrifice. What had God been thinking all along? Why did He sacrifice His Only begotten Son Christ Jesus, when He as an all-omnipotent God could have saved us with other alternatives? In our limited human mind, we could only say that God did it the hard way to show us His love and that He cared for us depraved humanity. Christ had given up all His heavenly glory, power, Godhead and left the magnificent realm of the heavens and came down to earth as a humble man with the status of a servant. Therefore unless we gave up all our possessions and followed Christ, we would not be able to understand Christ's mind. No doubt a lot of wealthy "good Christians" would disagree with what I have said and think that they could achieve it.

We are to follow God's path. The only way wealthy could follow Christ is to cease from being the owner of their possessions and became steward of God in what they have. There are really very few faithful stewards of God in this world. Christ's analogy of a rich men getting into the kingdom of God is that it is even more difficult than a camel passing through the needle's eye (The needle's eye in Christ's day is the

side small door on the side of the the big gate to the city). For a camel to go through, the load in its back must be taken off. Then the only way the camel can go through is to crawl like a cat through a mouse hole. But also the camel is not like a cat, it is not able to crawl on its belly!

We have to follow God's path not only in act, but in the heart as well. Followers of Christ must have that all embracing, holistic occupation of what is in God's heart and to do according to the way God would have done. Simply doing it mechanically is not enough; God demands our heart and compassion on it. He demands our love. In 1 Cor 13 we can see the whole chapter of gifts and grand deeds that a Christian can have and yet doing all these without love still amounts to nothing. Therefore doing it with our mind is not enough, we have to do it with our heart. So we must do it physically, with the mind, with our heart, and with all our effort and strength. This is how we definier holistic.

How can we possibly follow such a path? Perhaps those who are frank with themselves would say that it is impossible, even giving away all that we have with grudges is difficult enough; how can we do it in love. No human can do it were it not for the Cross. How do we do it? Reader must continue to keep in mind reading these four points that you never do this with your ability. Ability is given to us by God through asking in faith.

It takes a new life, new personality and mentality, not to mention spirituality to enable us to have the mind of Christ. We must let our whole being transformed by the Cross.

The way to do it is to crucify the old man by being crucified with Christ. This can only be done by faith; that is to say, we cannot by our own efforts crucify ourselves; nor can we change ourselves by hypnotizing. It can only be done by faith in Christ Jesus. It is the faith of Christ.

All faith comes from Christ; Christ gives us that faith which is in Him. We receive it by believing it. Then God will begin His work of faith in us. We receive Christ as our Lord; we believe that we are crucified with Him, buried with Him, and rise up with Him. Instantly our whole being is changed, because we have the faith of Christ and we have a new life in Him. We are born again through the Holy Spirit. The Scripture teaches that those who have not gone through these processes are still not saved.

Before all these happen there is a pre-requisite and that is repentance. God prepares the hearts of His chosen people by sending John the Baptist to teach repentance and to administer the water baptism of repentance. John also alerts the people to the coming baptism of the Holy Spirit through Christ. Therefore our salvation and rebirth is effected through baptism of water and the Holy Spirit. We are born again of water and the Spirit.

I beg the reader to read the foregoing paragraph at least 3 times and read in between the lines. In Christ's days the Rabbi Nicodemus could not understand what Christ meant by being born again through water and the Spirit, and so are to-day's average Christians in the Church.

What God wants to tell us is that a new life in God is an

entirely new totality. God will accept nothing less. First there must be that discarding, destruction of the constitution of the natural man which is of Adam and the holistic recognition of ourselves as being totally wrong and the willingness to have a complete change of mind. It amounts to admitting that we are sinful, wrong and willing to accept what is right and righteous from God. This is repentance. If we want to completely renovate our house we must throw out all our furniture, strip off all old wall panels, kitchen and bathroom fixtures, wiring, piping, and then start all over again. If we want to have the righteousness of God through faith, we must first throw out all our filthy furniture and fixtures of un-righteousness so that our heart has room for the holy furniture and fixtures of righteousness in our heart.

Our faith is in the crucified Christ. If Christ were not crucified, or if crucified and not risen from the dead, we would not have a valid faith through which God can save us. Just like the Apostle Paul who said, "...what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die", 1 Cor 15:32. Christian faith without a crucified and risen Christ is a hopeless faith.

But because Christ was crucified and risen, we Christians have become the most glorious people of God. Our life become vibrant and fulfilled to the brim with love and filling of the Spirit, plus a faith that can move mountains.

Yes the Cross is the cause; it is the means by which we were born the second time; it is the reason of our godly existence, and it is the hope for eternity. If we were to sum up the most

vital characteristic of a Christian who has the mind of Christ, we could say that he is always dedicated to the crucified Christ. There are 4 aspects to his dedication. Like a compass with North, South, East and West, so too his dedication is like the cardinal points of a compass. The Cross is the Christian's compass. The 4 cardinal points are Cross orientated, Cross centered, Cross driven and Cross exclusive.

Cross Orientated

North represents the cross oriented life of a Christian. Just as the needle of a compass always points north to guide a traveler, the north orientation of a compass also represents cross oriented life of a Christian because the cross is the guide. Just as if a compass deviates from the North, it is of no use. The use of it will cause disasters. If a Christian deviates from the cross, spiritual life will too end in shipwreck.

A Christian's 'North' is the Cross, the Life of Christ, Eternity, and the Kingdom of God. If we deviate from it, we would lose sight of God and head for disaster. All throughout the four Gospel we read of Christ promising eternal life to the believer, because eternity is the only thing that counts in this life and in the life hereafter.

What is orientation? It is where we are heading. The purpose of the Cross is to bring us to Eternity; we become sons of God. If Eternity is our orientation and goal, then everything in our life should be heading for that direction. If we were wise we would never waste any time in things of this world which does not count for Eternity. When we were young Christians we somehow feel we have plenty of time. But as we go past our

prime in life, we begin to get wiser; we, suddenly realize that we have to count our days like a poor man counting his pennies. We have no time to waste in a wrong heading.

Orientation is what the writer of the Hebrews who said in Heb 12:1-2: "....let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking, unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...." Cross oriented in a Christian's life is that single-minded, one track, one direction and one goal attitude in the pursuit of Christ eternity and His Kingdom. In our everyday life, our work and play may be multi-directional, multi-discipline, multi-strategy and multi-task; yet ultimately it should come under that single goal in a Christian's life. Paul refer to it as "...the mark for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus", Phil 3:14. The single goal is the cross oriented goal.

As we orientate ourselves to the Cross, we invariably find that the Holy Spirit has much more access and control in our life. Our Spiritual eye begins to open, and we discover the things of God: we are much more sensitive to the beckoning of the Holy Spirit. There is that power in our life; it is not the power of money, political or social influence, it is the power of the Spirit changing things. We have the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. Lest I be accused of encouraging Christians to seek the power of working miracles, let me say that we should not. Wait for God to give it to us of His own accord and in His good time. It is given only to a few that He has chosen, and the rest of us should be contented with what we have. Sometimes for a few rare Christians God give that gift momentarily, and when the

task is accomplished, it is taken away. It is for the occasion.

Many an evangelist tend to yield to the urge of portraying his past experience on miracles, gift of healing or what not; but as far as I am concerned I prefer to keep it between God and I. Humility is the norm. Remember the Cross is humiliation and self-debasing. Christ refrained from calling the Father to send more than 12 legions of angels to protect Him. Instead He chose to weaken Himself and let human being crucified Him, the Son of God. This was why the Scripture said of Christ as being crucified in weakness.

The Apostle Paul was Cross orientated. He said in Phil 3:4 "...I press toward the mark for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus". Mark means goal: destination. He also admonished us, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded...." verse 15.

Cross Centered

Cross centered is like the south of the compass. Look at nature: the birds. In winter they fly south and congregate in southerly lands. No matter how northerly they live, when winter comes they always fly south. Half of their life is in the south: birds are south centered. South is the one thing in life that they never forget in order to survive. God has given birds the instinct of "navigating as they fly. Isn't it marvelous that God has put an autopilot system in the brains little birds? As south is life to birds, and birds are south centered, south to a Christian also represents the cross centered attitude of a Christian. The cross is life to Christians.

God has put in every born again Christian the spiritual instinct, (through the leading of the Holy Spirit), of being God-centered. Christ-centered is the cause, and Cross centered is the effect. Before we were converted, it was the message of the Cross that causes us to believe in Christ. The Cross then was the cause, and it leads us to Christ. When we became a Christian, then Christ let us go through the vicarious experience of being crucified with Him.

Every day we live under that experience and shadow of the Cross. Christians always find their refuge in the cross like birds flying south as refuge from the cold winter. We are always obsessed with the Cross as it overshadows us in every aspect of our life here on earth. We are protected from the evil influence of Satan because we are dead to sin due to our crucifixion with Christ on the Cross. Paul in chapter 6 of Romans echoes the supremacy of God's grace in our life by saying that we are 'dead to sin', verse 2. All throughout the chapter it is 'dead to sin'-centered. How do we achieve 'dead to sin'? It is the Cross.

A Christian with a Cross centered mind would remind himself many times each day that because of the Cross, he is 'dead to sin'. This reminder keeps us from temptation and sin. Christ warning to His disciples to 'watch and pray' takes on a new dimension in this context. When we watch, do we do it by the efforts of the flesh, our efforts and awareness? Never, it is Christ's effort through the Cross, and the reminder is through the awareness of the Cross in our life that we can achieve the state of 'watch'.

We Christians are still very weak carnally--we find it difficult

to resist temptation, bad habits, ungodly thoughts, and unable to do good the way we should. We should always wear the invisible Cross like a necklace around our neck by reminding ourselves of the cross every day. Believe me the nice looking necklace in the jewelry shop won't keep us from sin the least bit! **There must be that preoccupation and obsession of the Cross in us every day to enable us to live victorious Christian life.**

Not only on the aspect of sin, there is an even more wonderful meaning to the Cross--it is the great and wonderful love of God. God's love is the cause and the Cross is the proof. There may be some people who have become a Christian because they want to go to heaven and avoid hell, but by far most people come to God because they have seen the love of God in giving up His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Those who are thus moved shall know how to love because they have seen the love of God.

Cross Driven

Cross driven is like east on the compass. East is where the sun comes up. The sun is where we all get our energy and sustenance. Come to think of it, if there were no sun, there would be no trees, no plants and no food. A car is driven by petrol; and petrol comes from trees in ages past. So energy comes ultimately from the light of the sun. Imagine the earth without the sun, it would be much colder than liquid nitrogen; all that becomes of this earth is a ball of ice. Thus all living being on earth is light driven. Just as physical life is driven by the light from the sun, spiritual life is driven by the Light from

God the Father, who is Christ. John 1:4 describes the light in that "in Him was life; and the life was the light of men". In verse 9: "This was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world". As the life giving light of the sun comes up from the east, east also represents cross driven life of a believer, because the basis of a Christian's spiritual life comes from the cross.

The mission of the Incarnate Son of God is the Cross. Without the Cross men would not be saved; men would not be able to receive that Light. All of Christ's life and ministry on earth is for the Cross. God the Father had the Cross for the Son in mind. It was not an easy route. The prayer, which Jesus made to the Father, has been a subject of debate by theologians through the ages. I had pondered over it for decades. To me it is not a difference of opinion between the Son and the Father; nor was it a bargaining process between the Father and the Son, and the Son finally yield. Long before this prayer, Jesus had rebuked Peter for forbidding Him to go to the Cross; Jesus told Satan to 'get thee behind me'. How then can Jesus now thread the same path of thoughts as Peter? Therefore it is the Father and the Son deliberating together the issue, because Jesus and the Father think the same way. Does the all-holy Son of God have to make himself like a sinner, which in itself is contrary to God's intrinsic attributes of holiness? Christ is more concerned with this contradiction of holiness, the contradiction of sinners much more than the physical suffering of the cross, therefore the deliberation with the Father. Is the all omnipotent God not able to wrought redemption by His sheer power? Finally, God had chosen to go the way of weakness: the way of

the Cross. It was a decision made by way of time, not a difference of opinion between the Son and the Father. The cross has always been the mission of both the Son and the Father.

God the Father is all holy, he is severe, He is all righteous, and He would not let sins be cleansed without blood. Blood in the bible represents life. It takes the life of a being to exchange for absolution from sin. No one in the universe has this powerful and sinless blood, except for the blood of Christ. There are no substitutes. It pleases God the Father to sacrifice His own Son to show the world that the all omnipotent God loves men: His love is even able to fulfil and surpass His severe justice. Without this great love men and women of this world would not be moved by God's love and come to repentance. The cross shows the love of God.

Love is the fountain of a Christian out of which flows love for God, love for his fellowman, and all acts and deeds of goodness in all his life. A Christian must be love driven otherwise all that he has ever done is in vain. Paul in 1 Cor 13 has express it very clearly and even shockingly that whatever you have or does, if there is no love, it is nothing. Cross driven Christians will have love as the basis for all their works.

Cross Exclusive

Having gone through the foregoing Cross orientated, Cross centered and Cross driven, may I now leave the part on analogy of Cross exclusive, and west on the compass, to the reader to figure out the analogy.

All throughout the Scripture God demands exclusiveness

because He is an exclusive God. The first Commandment is God's exclusive claim on His own people, "I am the Lord thy God...Thou shalt have no other gods before me", Ex 20:2-3. The basic problem of mankind is that it refuses to establish exclusiveness with God. Even as early as Adam and Eve in the garden, God has commanded them that they may eat all the fruits in the garden with the exception of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But instead of listening exclusively to God, Adam and Eve choose to listen to the serpent as well, and thus they plunged mankind into catastrophe and depravity.

Down through the ages men have endeavor to establish their own religion, and many are saying that all roads lead to Rome. But the truth is that there is only one exclusive way: it is the way of Christ. Throughout the Scripture there echoes one exclusive message that God has provided us with one and only one Savior. Peter in Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved".

The message of the Cross is exclusive. It is the same for all ages and for all races and societies. Paul in Gal 1:8 "but though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed".

Our service to God must be exclusive. We must not serve God's interest and also our own interest. There should be one goal in life. Many Christians compartmentalized their time and interest: during weekdays they serve their own needs whether

it is their jobs, education, career advancement, financial security or needs of the family, then on Sunday they supposedly serve the interest of God. God will not take part time Christians in their service to God. Christ said in Matt 6:24 "...ye cannot serve God and mammon". Anything not done for God is done for the world. How then will we live? With this commandment Christ also gives us the assurance that if we serve God and seek His kingdom, then God shall provide us with all that we need: food, clothing, housing, jobs, family and any other needs. Therefore there is no need for worrying about mammon in order to take care of our food and clothing or any other daily needs, verse 25-32.

Our love for Christ must be exclusive. The story of Mary who bought an alabaster box of valuable ointment with all her savings and then pour it all over Jesus, stands out as an example of the expectation of God for those who has accepted the Gospel.

The commandment of Christ to the young rich ruler stands out as Christ's challenge of trust to His followers. What Christ is saying is essentially this: If you want to follow me, you should trust me as your Lord who is all sufficient and therefore there is no need for you to keep your money. So let's give them all away. Unfortunately the rich young ruler trusted his riches too much and Christ too little, even when as the Scripture has said that Christ love him. What a great chance he is missing!

In contrast to the rich young ruler, the Apostle Paul did just the opposite. Chapter 3 of the book of Philippians is a chapter on the exclusiveness of a true Christian. In verse 8 Paul said: "Yea

doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I had suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ". What Paul did was that he willing to give up all that he had just to have the excellency of knowing Christ. This was his exclusive wish because he now had nothing to pay for another wish.

In addition to knowing Christ, Paul was discounting all that he had accomplished and all that he had achieved in the law as a devoted Pharisees so that he may be imputed with the faith which is reckoned for righteousness. He claimed nothing to his credit but everything exclusively to the credit of Christ. In verse 9 "And be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith".

In verse 13 "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus". Paul wanted to do just one thing in life, indeed this one and exclusive thing forms the goal of his life. He only runs the path of total obedience to God's call and God's goal that was set for him. He did it with the eagerness of an athlete who runs for the prize that is at the finish line. Paul's life is cross exclusive.

Role for Each of Us

Having read the foregoing chapter the reader may be interested in knowing how Cross orientated, Cross centered, Cross driven

and Cross exclusive operate in Christian work. Since God's role for each of us here in earth is different for everyone, therefore it is not possible to construct a Christian living model for all with regard to one's life work. For morality, love, righteousness, holiness and so on, yes but not what our role in this world should be. However we can dwell on the broad perspective and guideline that we find in the Scripture. No one can really tell us what our life should be down to the last detail. This is why each of us needs the specific guidance of the Holy Spirit. He is the architect of our life: He shows us what God the Father has planned for each if us.

In other religions there is that standard form or model life for the followers to follow. Go to a Buddhist monastery, and you will find that every monk live exactly the same life, the minor variation being that each has different task to fulfil in such a community. This pattern persists not only for current generation, but also for past generations and for future generations to come. In the secular world, for example in the army, we find that everyone conforms to the army's rank, designation and role. In the place where we work, we have to abide by the corporate role designation for each employee. In fact the modern man is so fixed, molded and placed into a niche in society that it is difficult for any of us to place ourselves otherwise

The beatnik and punk revolution is a rebellion against this fixedness and conformity of society. But as history tells us, they go nowhere: their quality of morality and achievement finds wanting. This is because they have no set goal; they have no object of loyalty. It is a revolution without a cause. But

Christianity is different. It has a set goal: a glorious goal established by God because it is the building of His Kingdom. It has an object of loyalty--God is our object of loyalty and allegiance. Christianity goes even deeper. God has given His life to us in Christ. Yes, it is elevation to Godhood that distinguishes Christianity from all other religion. Since there is only one God, it follows that only God can give us His life, so that we can become sons of God.

This wonderful relationship and privilege that we have in Christ can only happen when Christ is crucified on the Cross. There is no other way. Christianity with the wonderful Trinity and holiness of God but without Christ's crucifixion is just as hopeless as no hope: because we will invariably end up in front of the judgement seat of God, invariably guilty, and waiting to be condemned. Therefore we may say that Christian life is Cross orientated, Cross centered, Cross driven and Cross exclusive.

8 The Heavenly Perspective- We Already Sit in Heaven

Our Real Status is in Heaven

Most religions in this world promise their faithful believers that starting from earth, if they are good and gain spirited merits they will go to heaven when they die. Similarly, Christian church today teaches us that if we have faith and are good on earth, we will go to heaven when we die. But actually, this is not the complete picture for Christians. Christians starts out differently, we Christians start from heaven and come down to earth then finally back to heaven.

To clarify the point, let us take a look at a few verses of Scripture. These are the verses that many Christians do not take notice of, or that they only take it as figurative part of speech. One is found in Eph 2:4-7 "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us. Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace we are saved) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he

might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus". Many Christians who read the book of Ephesian take Paul's word of Christ's grandeur and heavenly images merely as Paul's style of writing, or like a pastor's benediction. This is why many Christian missed the point. But God never play around with words. He would not say something just to sound good and does not mean anything. God means what He says. We are sitting with Christ in heavenly places. This is why many Christian missed the point. From the above, there are 3 important points that we should take note of are:

- 1) We are already with Christ in heaven. Christ had been crucified on Calvary's cross and He had completed His mission of the cross. He was resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit; He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God. By faith in Christ we also are crucified with Him, resurrected and ascended into heaven with Him in the spirit and sit with in heavenly places. This is our status.
- 2) God the Father has sent Christ on the mission of the Cross, therefore Christ in like manner sends us down to earth in turn. What is the mission? Our mission is a continuation of Christ's mission—it is the mission of the Cross. Christ started the work of the Cross, created the merits of salvation, and now it is for us to distribute to the entire world the salvation that comes as a result of Christ's Cross.
- 3) As Christ sends us from heaven to this world, we are naturally God's ambassador to do God's work and fulfill His purpose. The message that

we bear is the message of reconciliation with man. It is the good and wonderful news of the Gospel. Our task as ambassador of this world from a heavenly perspective is so clear that we can see where we should be going.

Beyond Mission – A Life of True Enjoyment

No doubt, many Christians who had read the foregoing may not be exhilarated at what I say in the foregoing. Having all the important mission and no fun and enjoyment, no doubt would turn many Christians off.

Lest we may be led to think that mission is our sole purpose of existence here on earth, important as it is, it is not the priority. The priority in a Christian's life is really life itself, and life in the spirit, soul and body. Christ Himself is the giver and transformer of life. This life of a Christian is full, abundant and also loving. It already has its intrinsic value, even without any works. It is eternal, vibrant, it grows, it produces fruit in abundance, it influences, it can shine as a light to the world and it acts as salt of the world. Paul too stresses, “live”, “to live”, “living”. A victorious Christian life is a sweet smell of a life that has already been dead in Christ. Our old life stinks when it was alive; it wiggles like a can of worms and is obnoxious. People would have rather see it dead than alive. When we are dead in Christ, the “worms” die, and out of it come a new and changed life that is full of the sweet savior that is in Christ's life. Out of this new life is where that Christian mission emanates.

Therefore a Christian has a life that is liberated from slavery of bad habits, rut, fear and carnal obsessions. In its place Christians can have the liberty of a life liberated from the

slavery of sin, morose, fear and lust. In its place are clean fun, healthy habits and holy living. What we have really given up is that which we do not want or enjoy in the least anyway.

Whereas we used to enjoy wild parties, sensuous pleasure, greed, dishonesty and full of hatred, now we want nothing to do with them and detest them as we do slimy worms. So we are not really giving up enjoyment in life. It is our taste that has changed for the better.

God Centered Versus World Dominated Life

A Christian life is a heavenly life because a Christian is connected with heaven! New life bears no resemblance to the prior life before we become a Christian spiritually speaking. Not only is life different by way of manifestations and behavior, but also different by way of its intrinsic essence and quality. To understand the above let us compare Christian life to that of a non-Christian.

A non-Christian life is that which is dictated by one's career, family and society, and it is completely under the influence of Principalities and Powers and wickedness in high places, (which for simplicity we call it Satan and its associates). Every day a person goes to work and is under a human superior, even if the person is the chief executive officer, person still has to be accountable to the board and shareholders. A person has no power to overcome Satan because Satan is the Principalities of the world. Person has to conform to the norms and obligations of the society, because that is the order that Satan has set for the world. As there is no God in a non-Christian's heart, there is no higher priority than his or her own

aspirations, hopes and ambition. Satan can rule a non-Christian thru fear and greed. Satan being the ruler does not guarantee that a person's financial or health needs will always be met. There is no security, and no peace. Disaster can strike at any time. Fear drives a person to work for the world. Once a person has enough, greed takes over as people start to compare who has more. There is no end to greed. At end of one's life, some will look back and wonder what has he or she accomplished. All is for naught. Satan has a very strong influence on the livelihood of the unregenerate man through his manipulation. So a non-Christian is world-driven, world-controlled and world-motivated.

A born again Christian starts out differently. God is his first priority. This turns the world order upside down. It changes the manner in which he behaves, thinks and moves. His priority is to serve the interest of God's Kingdom: his loyalty is to God. He obeys the dictates of God thereby fulfilling the will of God. God is actually running a kingdom here on earth composed entirely of Christians. All those who belong to His kingdom obey and do his will. As his priority is God, the dictates of God overshadows all his priority in his career, family and social life. As God is the ultimate power in the universe, He can be and is the guarantor of Christian's wellbeing on earth. Since Christians are going directly against Satan's world order, God Himself has to and does guarantee that all of Christian's needs will be met without having to follow the dictates of the world. Therefore, dedication to God in no way impairs a Christian's efficiency or even achievement in this world. Through Christians, God is able to fulfill His task

on earth as if he fulfills it in heaven. However in case the world's interest comes in conflict with the kingdom's interest, then he will sacrifice the world's interest. A Christian's foremost concern is to fulfil God's requirement of righteousness, love and mercy. In the Lord's prayer we have "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven". Therefore a **Christian's life is a heaven-originated life, heaven-driven life, heaven-controlled (God controlled) life, heaven-motivated (God motivated) life, and if a person is faithful to God, that person is also heaven-exclusive.**

Some of The Merits of The Heavenly Perspective

If we center our mind on earthly things, all we see are big fancy cars and a fat bank account. But if we see things from the heavenly perspective, we can then begin to understand God's sovereignty and His kingdom; to learn to appreciate God's righteousness and follow God's command. Then we would experience and live in God's love and grace. And finally we will be able to respond to God and to obey Him.

How do we look at God's sovereignty and kingdom from the heavenly perspective?

God sits on the throne of the universe and rule over all His creations. There is no other god who is more powerful than God the Father is. Therefore, without God's permission, nothing can harm us. If God wants to do something for us, nothing can stop Him from doing it. How do we get this kind of protection from God? We receive His protection by being in His kingdom.

If we have the all-powerful God of the universe to protect us, we need not be afraid of anything else in this world. As a human being living in this world, we are often bewildered by what happens in this world. But if we lock onto Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith, then we can rest assured that we are safe. If Jesus loves us so much that He gave His life for us, there is nothing that He will not give us. Therefore, we have perfect peace and unspeakable joy in our heart.

As an immature Christian, how are we going to achieve such a heavenly-centered life? Where on earth do we get the power, determination and interest to keep on such a path? How do we stand up to fear that Satan strikes in Christian's hearts with the concerns of the world? As Jesus said, fear and concerns are like "he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." Mat 13:22. Without the life of Christ in us, without the Holy Spirit, we are hopelessly inadequate to fulfil the task. If we were to look at Christ's Sermon on the Mount we would find that none of us is able to fulfil the requirement of being a Christian; even being the children of God: we are simply not equipped or able to fulfil the requirement of being a Christian; we are not able to do the task. Following sections of this book will describe Christian's momentous task of moving away from Satan's world order which we are accustomed to, and into a heaven exclusive life. It is by no means an easy task. It done by the ability God gives us through faith.

The World Through God's Perspective

In the human world, whenever a wrong is done there are the human offender and human recipient. If I do something wrong to somebody, then I am the offender and that somebody is the offended, the recipient. That somebody will judge whether I am wrong or right based on his viewpoint of righteousness i.e. right or wrong.

Things work differently for Christians in Christ and in His kingdom, because all righteousness belongs to God. God is the recipient; right or wrong is determined by Him, not us. Christ in the parable of the prodigal son so taught us this "God's perspective". The younger son rebelled against his father by asking for his to-be portion of the father's estate, and took off. According to the Jewish oral Law, the Mishnah, it is stipulated that the elder son gets a double portion and the rest of the sons are a portion each; what the man's son does was something very wrong to even warrant being disinherited; a son cannot and have not the right to ask the father to divide and give him his portion before his death. There was no rational reason why the younger son should divide his father's inheritance before the father's death. The prodigal son spent all his money and ended up in a dire strait so much so that he wanted to eat pig's food. When he came to his senses, he came home and said to the father, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy name" Luke 15:21. The prodigal son realized that he had sinned against God who was the first recipient and then his father.

What should we do about the wrongs that people do to us?

Christ in John 15:18 "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." Therefore if somebody wrongs you, do not take it personally, but take it as being done to Christ first and then secondly to you. No doubt is easy to say, but when it comes to us, it always makes us mad: we feel that we are the primary victim. It takes me years of control, spirited struggle, and realization to make myself genuinely feel that the wrong is to Christ first then me. This is because our ego always considers ourselves to be the primary victim and then Christ secondary. Now I am able in most cases to detach myself even further and consider all the wrong to Christ and nothing to me. I am just an executor; the owner is God: therefore I am not angry or mad, but feel relieved that Christ takes it and that I have no burden.

In similar vein the process of taking and giving follows the same priority. It is said in Proverbs 19:17 "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." Therefore in my charity whatever we give to a person is never returned because he is poor. But the Bible said that God considers it a loan to God and that God will repay us.

In our work, even if we serve a master whatever we do for him should be considered as being done to God, not so much to the master. Col 3:22-23 said "Servants, obey in all things your master according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men"

Even in our obedience to higher authority, the Apostle Paul speaks out an overriding principle that at the time it was spoken of was not in times of democracy, but under the oppressive Roman rule. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher power. For there is no power but of God; the power that be are ordained of God." Romans 13:1

The Time-Less and Eternal Perspectives

Following the heavenly perspective we have another perspective which is much more difficult to understand and embrace. It is for the mature Christian and not for young Christians. Therefore, if you do not understand some of the paragraphs, do not be concerned because understanding comes with spiritual maturity and experience. The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians is the grandest of all Paul's Epistle for the revelation of God's mysteries because it reveals most of the mysteries of God. Let us glance through the first chapter and note a number of important points in verse 3,4,5,10, and 11. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Accordingly as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.... Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.... That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ.... In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who work all things after the counsel of his own will".

From the above underlined phrases such as hath blessed, hath

chosen, Have predestined, have obtained, being predestined, we note that the most striking point is that it has happened! These words were written two thousand years before we were born, and God has made it happened to us many more thousands of years back. All the above baffle our mind as human beings. How can past action precede the present existence? As human beings we are used to time sequence, cause and effect. If there is no such sequencing in our history, events sequencing and inner workings of science, everything will be in chaos. Our cause and effect reasoning is based on time clock. For example, what happens in hour one is the cause of the effect in hour two. On the other hand whatever happen in hour two cannot alter the course in hour one. We do not see confusion of time sequencing in history. Despite what God does, he wants us to live within the time frame and sequencing He gives us. God never intends for us to understand the mystery of His predestination because our wisdom is so very limited. Can you teach advance calculus and tensor analysis to a first grader? This is why we do not know what happen to us before our birth; neither do we know what the place we are supposed to go looks like.

God lives in a timeless domain. He can see past, present and future at the same time; he can place time and events in any position He wants the same way we place our furniture anywhere in a room. To illustrate this let us take the example of a history book. History is written in the order of time sequence. When we read the book we can choose the recent past or the distant past. Let us imagine this book has the present written, and that we are able to take this history book back into past

history to the Middle Ages. Then people in the Middle Ages can look into the 20th century. Let us imagine that all events in the history book are represented by tin soldiers and dollhouses placed on a very large table in the sequence of past, present and future. We can now alter at will what is in the past with what is in the future just by exchanging placement sequence. Let us further imagine that the tin soldiers are living creatures which move, and things are happening. Further imagine that these soldiers are laced in the past, present and future sequence, and imagine that you can control their happening along with their time sequence. Now do the soldiers have their own free will or are you really in control of their destiny. We can now catch a token glimpse of how God is working.

God is a great God; He is omnipotent: nothing is impossible with Him, He is omniscient: all knowing and if He predestines history He can still surpass all human sense of fairness. Besides he is gracious and loving, righteous beyond, all norms. Who can find fault with Him in His predestination? If we learn to love in the timeless perspective of God and embrace the past perfect finished work of Christ and our being in Christ, then we shall be translated into a much higher level of spiritual living. What does this timeless past perfect spiritual perspective mean to us?

First, what God has promised us is already given to us. If we say to a man who just profess his faith of in Christ to choose between the two alternatives: "believe in Christ and you will go to heaven when you die" and "when you believe in Christ you will realize that you are already in heaven, and even though you are on earth

now, you will go back to heaven again", which alternative will he choose? If the two alternatives represent two kinds of religion, which religion will he choose? What will you prefer? He will choose the latter of course. What the Bible promises is the latter. To the non-believer we tell them the former, and when he has professed his faith, then we tell him the latter. An outsider will never understand the meaning of predestination; it is only when he becomes a Christian does predestination mean something to him.

Second, what we need to enable us to live a holy, sanctified and victorious life has already been accomplished by Christ not only through the work of the Cross, but what we need has already been given to us in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. This means that in our daily walk with God we need not try to use our efforts to achieve victorious living but merely take by faith the victory of Christ, and claim it as our own. Take for example the temptation of Christ on the mount. When he was tempted He did not work a miracle to drive Satan away or cast out Satan the way He cast out devils from whom He heals, but instead He gained victory over Satan the tempter by using the invincible word of the Father and applying it to Himself to defeat the tempter. To claim the merits of Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection, we do it by reckoning ourselves dead to sin, (Rom 6:6,11). This is past perfect tense.

If we were to read the Sermon on the Mount very carefully we would find that it is quite impossible for a natural man to fulfil what is demanded by Christ: like loving one's enemy; surpassing the righteousness of the Pharisees; looking at a woman and having no lustful thoughts; to turn the other cheek to one's enemy and etc.

According to the Sermon on the Mount we should all be condemned. Is there a way out? Yes, only through Christ. In Matt 5:17 Christ said that He came to fulfil law, and so all that is said in the sermon Chris has already been fulfilled. Therefore by claiming the finished work and merits of Christ we can achieve that fulfilment when we are in Him.

In times of great persecution and distress, it is a great comfort to know that we were and are in Christ, and that we belong to God in the first place. Even if we die, God will receive us into His bosom.

Third, in our daily walk with God our past perfect attitude does elevate us into a much higher level of spirituality because of that assurance of belonging to Him before we were born. God has given us the birthright of son ship of God. If we are the sons of pauper we would act as careless and carefree as sons of pauper; if we realize that we are a prince we would act princely; if we realize that we are sons of God by adoption we would live holy lives as befitting the sons of God.

Fourth In my own life, I have found that before I know about predestination I am just a normal Christian; but when I understand that I am predestined by God to be His, my life and attitude changes overnight. I feel myself to be a real son in my heart and not only by reading from the Scripture. The second feeling is that I am so detached from this world, because it is not my real home. That whereas I used to cherish my house, car, hobby, interests and enjoyments (in a proper way), I do not care about it anymore. I told my wife Elaine: we don't belong here at all, let's look forward to our heavenly home.

If we want to walk with God and fulfil His will, we can only do

it by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we can say that a life which is pleasing to God is essentially a life which is lived in the Spirit. It should be the task of every Christian to learn to live a life in the Spirit. Just as a child started out by learning to walk, we born again Christians, as spiritual babes should now learn to walk in the Spirit. It will take effort and trying. In the process of learning we will stumble. Just as a child who learns to walk needs prompting and encouragement from his parents, a born again Christian needs the coaching and encouragement from more mature brothers and sisters in Christ as he embarks on the process of learning to walk in the Spirit. In the next chapter, we shall be dealing with the subject of living in the Spirit.

But alas, there are not too many in the church nowadays who knows how to walk in the Spirit! The modern day church with its busy Christians who are involve in work and programs, church activities, simply do not have enough time and attention to do follow-up work on new Christians. The sad thing is that nowadays the so-called "mature Christian" themselves do not know how to really walk in the Spirit. Their Christian life is simply a rule book affair. The Bible says this and so they do this; strict obedience to the Bible becomes their way of life. This in itself is good, but not enough. They are like the rich young ruler who keeps the commandments, but Christ said that it is not enough. Deep down in their heart there is still not that personal experiences and touches of the fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Howbeit by the grace of God these dedicated Christians after many years managed to slowly learn to walk in the Spirit.

If we read the Bible carefully, we will find that the leading of the Holy Spirit can be a reality which can be embraced (by young and old, men and women. therefore it is for those mature Christians to coach young Christians how to walk. This is the merit of close Christian fellowship in small group and small local churches. In principle the Holy Spirit can teach every one of us without anybody telling us. But in this busy and modern world, modern Christian are so wrapped up in the cares of this world that the small still voice of the Holy Spirit remains unheard. Hence we need the ministry of teaching and prophecy, admonition and edification.

9 Living in the Spirit

The Mystery of the Spirit

The working of the Holy Spirit in our heart, and how it works is beyond human comprehension. Besides what is being taught as the basic doctrines in the Bible, not much has been said of the practical working of it. This is because every true believer has a close relationship with the Spirit as promised by the Scripture: "...Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit", Acts 2:38. Yet in modern times we find so many so called Christians who are not yet born again, and whose heart are still empty that they have to look around for evidence of the Spirit in their heart. The Holy Spirit moves in mysterious ways, "The wind bloweth where it listed, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit", John 3:8.

Despite of what is said above the Bible promises that the Holy Spirit shall teach us in all things and that we do not need others

to tell us: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teaches you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him", 1 John 2:27.

Nevertheless for those of you who are very confused I am trying to analyze and explain the working of the Spirit in this chapter in a way that is readily understood by most of us. I am using the Bible as the blueprint, but the little explanation here and there I draw from my experience, because I can best explain what I have experienced.

Born into a New World

When we become a Christian we enter a whole new heavenly realm of spiritual perception which is so different from the physical perception that we used to know. For some Christians it comes gradually, for a privilege few it is immediate, and for many average Christians it never come!

In physical perception we have eyes to see, ears to hear nose to smell, mouth to speak and our hands to feel. All communications with the external world rely solely on physical perception. However in spiritual perception we no longer rely on our body organs: because we cannot see the Holy Spirit with our eyes, we cannot hear the voice of the Holy Spirit with our fleshly ears. This is the great difference we have to realize when we become a Christian.

Many Christians, not realizing the difference and in an effort to assure themselves that they are in touch with God, imagine

they have heard the Spirit's voice. Then they boast of it to others, who in turn do not want to feel inferior, imagine or try hard to hear the voice of God. Very often those thoughts spoken aloud seem to become a voice, and they ascribe it to the Holy Spirit. For yet others who are skeptical of such charismatically inclined manifestations, deny any of such possibilities. They do not even make any endeavor to learn more about this matter.

When one becomes a Christian, one has to learn to walk in the spirit and perceive the things of the spirit. Just like a baby child learning to hear, speak, feel and communicate with his parents, so a young newly born Christian must also learn to communicate with God in the spirit to perceive the things of God in the spirit. Many a Christian only learns to pray to God, but not to hear from God in prayer. All through their life it is a one-way street.

However it is of vital importance for Christian to grasp the things of the spirit and to learn to live in the Spirit; to respond to the Spirit at all times. To put it in child's language: when we become a Christian we have the Holy Spirit as the guide of our brain, so that we do not have to rely on our own brain of the flesh. This is the most ideal, yet for most of us we end up in letting the Holy Spirit guiding us in important things and use our own head in everyday things. Most of us would rather think that we do not wish to bother God in small things, so we use our own brain; or that we are not yet spiritual enough to be able to communicate with the Spirit 24 hours a day and solicit His help. All the above idea of not bothering God and doing it ourselves is a misconception.

If we read Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." If we read in between the lines we could readily see it echoes: 'who walk not after the manner of the flesh; the self-rationalization of the flesh; the righteousness of the flesh; reliance on the perception and preference of the flesh'.

In the flesh we have the following needs:

- To eat and to sleep
- To work and make a living
- To have a family and fulfil our sexual desires
- To be in a group, society, and country
- We need to have hope, aspiration and reputation, and to rely on a god.

Note that none of these needs is what one would describe as sinning. They are common needs that anyone has. However, when it comes to fulfilling the laws of God, all the doings and endeavors of the flesh to fulfill the above needs inevitably end up in serving sin. In Romans 7:25 Paul has said that with the flesh he serves the law of sin. Therefore this mode of action of the flesh in trying to fulfill the daily need is obviously not the way to follow Christ, not to mention is not how we walk in the spirit.

We all have our physical body; we are in the flesh. Before we are saved we are of the flesh; i.e. belongs to the works of the flesh, obeying the dictates of the fallen man in the flesh. After we are saved, we are no longer of the flesh, though we are still in the flesh. We are of the Spirit: we belong, to God and have

the indwelling of the Spirit.

If we were to put in simple terms the difference between the 'I' that is saved and the 'I' that is not saved, it is the absence of our 'Self' and the presence of the Holy Spirit, with a quality of life of Christ. Before we are saved we are our own gods (yet in reality we are slaves of sin and Satan); we have a strong self which we adhere to and follow. This self after all follows the dictates of sin and Satan. After we are saved this self is nailed to the Cross, and in its place is Christ in us. So instead of the self which rules us, we now have the Holy Spirit taking over the reins of our life.

How do we live a life in the Spirit? How do we start, seeing that the whole process is so different? In Christ's time the Rabbi Nicodemus had a hard time differentiating between life in the body and the new born again life in the spirit. He was so fixed in obeying the letter of the law that he did not realize that fleshly body cannot inherit the kingdom of God. God wants a new man to enter His kingdom. Many present days Christians have made the same mistake and it is pathetic that not many Churches had conveyed this vital message to their congregation. Therefore we shall be using a series of physical and spiritual analogies for the reader to start differentiating and implementing.

When we are a physical baby we learn from scratch. We learn to express our needs by crying, we learn to feed on mom's breast or bottle, to learn to recognize who is mom and who is dad. As we grow older we learn to ask for food by uttering simple words instead of crying. We can say ma and pa. So

spiritually the most important thing is to learn to feed on the word of God, to distinguish between the moving & 'voice of the Spirit' versus that of Satan.

Learning to communicate with our Father in heaven in the Spirit is a must. We start by learning to pray in the Spirit; giving our thoughts to God and receiving God's thoughts to us. Without communicating in the Spirit, there is no "living in the Spirit".

Living in Faith

There is an old saying, "seeing is believing". Life in the flesh, in this physical body of ours all depends on physical senses. We believe in what we have seen and what we have touched. This is not all wrong, because we human beings are made that way. However the biggest drawback is that it is difficult for us to believe what we have not seen and touched. The Apostle Thomas was that way.

But for life in the spirit, it is "believing is seeing". The real sight of things in the spirit comes not by seeing and touching, but solely by faith. This is mind boggling to those who are un-regenerated. They would invariably feel that it is very risky to commit oneself to something one has not seen. If it is by faith then we cannot enhance any of it by physical means, but solely by faith. Things of the spirit work according to spiritual law not by physical law. Before we are saved we rely on the capability of our physical body to accomplish things; after we are saved we rely on the Holy Spirit to accomplish things. Even many a saved Christian will sometimes somehow feel that it is difficult to comprehend the above sayings. Let us review how far we

have gone down the road of faith.

When we receive Christ Jesus as our lord and savior, do we see Him being crucified on the Cross? No. Have we witnessed His burial and resurrection to make sure that it is not a hoax? No. Yet we Christians believe that Christ died and rose again from the dead. When we believe that Christ is the Son of God, did we see Christ's "birth certificate" or any concrete form of proof? When we are told that there are three persons in God, do we talk with them and see that it is so? It is difficult to understand, let alone verify. When the Bible says, "...as many as receive Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." John 1:12. Have we prove to ourselves that it is so? The Bible says that our sins are forgiven when we believe, and believing we feel the burden of sin falling off, and are greatly relieved. Do we then go to the psychiatrist to make a check to see if it is real or that it is a temporary self-deception? The list can go on and on. It proves that we have already embarked on the way to "believing is seeing".

A Step Further in Faith

What we need to do now is to go one step further in faith. Whereas what we have believed is the foregoing are matters relating to status, now we need to further believe that it is the reality of Christian life and that it is working in us. We must believe that we have a living and working relationship with the Holy Spirit. Working relationship includes interaction, which to many mean seeing and touching. However I must stress that this relationship is all spiritual and not physical. It is only after that spiritual interaction that the results can be seen physically

such as the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering and etc. In the paragraphs that follow the reader is requested to read slowly and carefully. It is heavy reading.

After we have faith in the promises of the Bible and we are assured of our status before God, we should now specifically reckon our relationship with the Holy Spirit. It is not that we have to deal with each person of the Trinity individually, but that it is the Father's will that we do it the way He stipulated. God has promised us that when we accept the crucified and resurrected Christ, our sins are forgiven us and that we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not a visitor but an eternal dweller; it is in us. What is the difference between the Holy Spirit being a visitor and being an eternal dweller? In the Old Testament when God wants to speak to his prophet He sends the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit "came upon" the prophet, speaks to the prophet and carries out the mission. When the mission is accomplished, the Holy Spirit left. No one in the Old Testament has the privilege of a permanent indwelling Holy Spirit. In the New Testament, when Christ ascends into heaven, He sends the Holy Spirit, who is the counsellor, to dwell in us permanently, and guide us in all things. It started on the day of Pentecost.

Having believed that we now have this wonderful privilege of indwelling Holy Spirit which were even denied to God's beloved prophet, we should now realize this new living reality; therefore, we should reckon, re-orientate our life in that light.

An indwelling relationship is a very intimate relationship. Yet despite of this we must not suppose that we be looking

inwardly for a voice of the Spirit speaking to us the way another person talk to us. Yes the Holy Spirit speaks to us, so to speak, but His voice is not physical. Without going through the Bible, even by human logic we will come to the conclusion that for our own good there should only be one voice in our heart. If a person hears a voice like a person speaking to him and then he himself has his own voice; he will never make up his mind. If he hears a voice talking to his heart, and then he converses with that voice, and if this takes place very often, what would he become? If he is not a very spiritual man then he is a schizophrenic!

Before we are saved our spirit is dead, and cannot communicate with God. Whatever the Holy Spirit says, we cannot hear. After we are saved our spirit is quickened, which is to say, made alive. Not only our spirit is living because it is made alive, but it is also because the Holy Spirit is in our spirit, and that makes it alive. Our original spirit was a dead spirit; it is dead in sin. When the Holy Spirit resurrects our spirit, He does not do it just to let us go our old way again. He wants to be part of it, otherwise there is no sense having a living spirit which has the essence of the dead spirit.

We are resurrected because our spirit died with Christ and when Christ was resurrected by the Holy Spirit, we were resurrected with Him also. Therefore we have the same life quality and essence as Christ, and as such we have the indwelling Holy Spirit which Christ has promised to give to those who believe. Hence 2 Corinthians 5:17 said: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." Since our

Spirit died and rose with Christ from the dead, it is quite impossible that we live apart from Christ and the Holy Spirit. We are in Christ because apart from Christ there can be no new resurrected life and life in the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is in our spirit. To put it in plain language: **the life of my spirit is the Holy Spirit. This is how we have the life of Christ** in us, because the Holy Spirit in us is also the life of Christ in us. Paul in Gal 2:20 said that: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I lived; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...". Therefore the Holy Spirit in us is not a third party, or a different person from us. We need not strain our ears to hear what the other person (the Holy Spirit) is saying. As a young Christian it may be helpful to think of Christ, the Holy Spirit as a friend and talk to us as a person besides us. As we mature we begin to realize this friend is in us and has become part of us already. This is the mystery of a Christian life.

We need faith to believe and live out all these; we must try to step into spiritual life and go further by faith. It is easier for most Christians to perceive Christ and the Holy Spirit as a person standing next to them and speaking to them than Christ and the Holy Spirit living inside them and speaking to them inside. The Holy Spirit inside them and talking to them would seem to be like "I talk to myself".

The Holy Spirit is in effect working inside our spirit to guide us in our everyday living, and we know precisely what we should do and what we should not do. As a young Christian our decision may be clouded by the influence of decisions of the flesh and so overshadow the influence and leading of the Spirit.

As we walk with God and gradually discard our self and ego, we are more susceptible to the leading of the Spirit. Our life goes the way of the Spirit more and more; not only decision-wise but also ability-wise. This is because the Holy Spirit has power; He gives us the power to overcome temptation, to overcome the weakness of the flesh and to overcome our enemy—Satan. There is one qualification to the foregoing statement: overcoming the power of Satan is usually in the form of God's deliverance; also through the power of the Holy Spirit we are delivered from sin which entangles and burden us. We are delivered from the realm of Satan's influence. This is the general design of God for Christian of this age.

Occasionally God may give us the power to confront Satan, overcome his evil power and shatter his design. God has His way of dealing with Satan, but time is not yet come.

The Spirit also gives us wisdom, not only in spiritual matters but also in our everyday work and professional knowledge. The Holy Spirit also gives us wisdom to think, to do our everyday work, to judge between good and evil and make decisions. It also gives us the power to live a new life with fruits of the Spirit. Sometimes I spend days solving my engineering problems, and still no inroads; then I ask God for wisdom, and He open up my clogged mind, and then solution comes in an instant! As a young Christian I thought that God only cares about spiritual things, and not worldly tasks: I thought that God would say to me, the way Paul said to Simon the magician, "perish with your money"! When I commit my life to God, my eyes are opened: I am living for God. Even when I make money, I make it for God, not myself; I am only a

steward. Therefore I can ask God for anything, without feeling guilty or worldly because it is not for myself, but for God. Nothing is secular anymore.

Not understanding the role of Holy Spirit in secular life can have insidious consequence in both cases where one either under or over ascribes the role of the Spirit. Many Christians ask the Holy Spirit for success in their worldly endeavors whether is business, career or academic achievement. They are asking with the intent of achieving personal success. God will not answer those prayers. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lust." James 4:3. Just as problematic is not believing the Holy Spirit will assist in any secular endeavors at all. That too ends in equally dire consequence. If a Christian does not believe that God will assist them in their secular life, they will resort to "going at it alone". This eventually leads a Christian to depend on their own strength for worldly accomplishment, with the eventual consequence of not living by the Spirit. This leads to worrying and fear of not achieving their goals and needs in their secular life. Fear and worrying eventually drives a Christian further away from God. A Christian's only objective is to live by the Spirit, and not for personal gain. We pray and ask the Holy Spirit for assistance so we can depend only on the Holy Spirit even in our secular work. We learn to live by the Spirit in all circumstance. As long as we live by the Spirit, success or failure is secondary and irrelevant. All else in life will be given to us as God see fit when we abide by the Spirit.

How do we abide by the Spirit? In our everyday life when we do the right thing in God's sight, it is not so much as listening

to a voice, but more as the Holy Spirit moving us into doing it. To put it in plain language, the Spirit manipulates us. As we matures we are used to doing the right thing and we find that the more readily we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit the more we are in that receptive state of moving according to the Holy Spirit. Yielding to the Holy Spirit simply means that we give up doing things our way, the way our self and ego dictates, and let the Holy Spirit has his way completely. With the Spirit in us, He gives us the power to live in new life with the fruits of the Spirit.

In all the above there is no voice to be heard, it is not needed. The moving of the Holy Spirit is in the spirit, it speaks to our spirit and our spirit responds and then takes it as if it is our own thoughts in the spirit. Our spirit and the Holy Spirit agree. Very often we may not be conscious of it physically nevertheless it takes place in our spirit. One instance is in prayer where our spirit prays and the Holy Spirit prays with us and interceding for us, but what the spirit said and pray for we may not know--Romans 8:26 says that "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered".

Sometimes the Spirit's instruction to us does not sink into our spirit and so we yield to temptation, we repeatedly nurse our bad habits. Again the spirit reminds us, and if we do not amend, the Spirit will speak in stronger terms. If we still do not repent then God will mete out His chastisement. When we take the consequences, we will wake up. For milder offences God in His graciousness may choose to remind us and speak to us.

God deals differently with different people.

The following is my own experience which the reader can look upon it as a footnote, and not part of the main discourse of this chapter. At one time I had an improper inclination in desires. I was aware of it and try to cut it out. Not long afterwards it came back. I tried again to overcome it. It went on for a number of times. Finally I did not make any effort, and let it run its way. I seemed to take a holiday and even seemed to enjoy it. Then one day, the voice of the Spirit came. It was in broad daylight and I was wide-awake. Someone spoke to me in my head; I did not hear any physical voice as such, but it is as clear as someone speaking next to me. It is a man's voice. The tone of which is same as a man speaking to his son, yet there is an immense tenderness like that of a mother. It was a mild rebuke which I could not forget all my life. Then there was a voice, which was my own voice acknowledging it and affirmed that I should not do it. The habit was gone. It was after this that I was able to end the inclination. Also I felt that I would be greatly embarrassed if that kind voice spoke on the same issue again. And I would not want to hurt the feeling of that kind voice by going back into that inclination. After this I learned the secret of bringing other problems to God, and let Him show me how to stop bad habits from making inroads into my life. The above was the only time in my life that I heard the voice of the Spirit.

God wants us to be completely motivated by the Spirit by completely letting go of ourselves and let the Spirit takes over in full control. In this way our thoughts are the Spirit's thoughts. There is therefore no need for the Spirit's voice. It is God's intent for every Christian to be living under the full control of the indwelling Spirit that is within us. When this is

achieved, we are said to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we do not need to look for manifestations of the Spirit. Many Christians who are not filled with the Spirit live in uncertainty and doubt about one's spiritual status. They do not have faith in God's word or feel insecure. Therefore they crave for speaking in tongues to assure themselves that they are baptized by the Holy Spirit. Do you see the futility in all of these? If we read carefully chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians, we will first notice that first sentence: " Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels....", and in verse 8: "... whether they be tongues, they shall cease....". The words of 'they shall cease' echoes in this chapter, and only love remain. Therefore if tongue is to be spoken without any interpretation, people might as well speak to themselves at home.

Having said all the above I do not discredit the place of speaking in tongues where it serves a purpose in the ministry. In the Apostles' times speaking in tongues serves the purpose of multi-lingual translation. Peter in his speech at Pentecost is understood by the multi-lingual congregation even though he only speaks Aramaic.

Many a preacher and evangelist will concede that very often when they deliver a message from the pulpit with a specific message, and yet different audience perceive different messages which are beneficial to themselves. In my preaching experience sometimes at the end of the message some of the congregation comes to me and tell me how they have been blessed, I make it a point to ask them what the message was. Then they tell me what it is, and I realize that it is not in my

message. Another audience comes and tells me a different message! Now when I preach I prepare the points exactly, and I know every word that I said. Even for those words that occur on the spur of the moment, I will remember it and make it a point to make a note afterwards lest I will lose them. Indeed I can say each man has heard it "According to the way they have understood it". The Holy Spirit is speaking to their heart while they are listening, and the Holy Spirit dispenses it according to each man's needs.

A Christian's Initiation

The moment we become a Christian, morally speaking, it seems that we have waked up from a bad dream of sins. We abandon our life of sin and live in a life of righteousness. Nevertheless as a young Christian we find that there are our old habits which comes up to the surface from time to time; we still succumb to temptation, even though not as much as before.

In this new life of ours the Holy Spirit is the master of our life. Yet we have not listen to the Spirit as much as we should. There are two causes: first, we may not be able to recognize at times that it is the leading of the Spirit, second that the preference and opinion of our self which is from the flesh is still exerting an influence in our life. So when an issue comes up there are two voices which result in two kinds of thoughts running in opposite directions, and we vacillate between two choices. However it is still our responsibility to distinguish between which is which. A word of warning: do not use your own judgement please! Go to the Bible and find out which is

the right way, what is God's principle regarding the matter. Now use this principle and apply it to the two voices, and see the right one is which voice (thought). The right one is the voice of the Spirit, and the wrong one is ours. So we must discard our own voice and opinion and obey the voice of the Spirit.

After a while, as we mature in the spirit we will be able to recognize the voice of the spirit. It will take years and our lifetime to progress along this route. What is the fastest way to achieve this end? It is to yield completely to the leading of the Spirit and to discard our own self and ego. This is what Christ said of deny oneself, take up one's cross and follow Christ. Taking up one's cross is taking up the path of Christ's cross which is the way of complete obedience to God the Father even at the expense of shame, suffering and death.

Recognizing the voice of the Spirit also means listening to the prayer of the Spirit which is spoken through us. Usually the Spirit prays for us in silence, yet occasionally the Spirit leads us to pray. Through hearing our prayer, we can catch a glimpse of what the Spirit is praying about: it is usually the things that we need most. It is either when we are downcast or when we are at the height of our spiritual perception or when we are in the spiritual battlefield. For a detail explanation of the above the reader can turn to the chapter on "My Inner Sanctuary" in the section on prayers.

Righteous Living

The Spirit is our guide in righteousness. The greatest distinction between a Christian and non-Christian before God

is that the non-Christian is utterly unrighteous, i.e. a sinner. The Christian has the faith which is imputed for righteousness, which is to say, God consider us having been reckoned for righteousness through faith. So the intrinsic state of a Christian and non-Christian is like the difference between heaven and hell figuratively and literally. However we must note that Christians still need to maintain righteous and holy living. Even with this imputed status, we need to learn how to live in righteousness because we all come from an unregenerate status and are not adept in righteousness. The Holy Spirit teaches us how. At this point many readers will expect to learn to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. Yet the Spirit does not work this way for most of us; in no way does this mean that we should not listen to the voice of the Spirit, but that the Spirit has his way of working in us in this respect. It is in complicated case that the Spirit speaks out.

The way the Spirit works is to lead our conscience. The unregenerate man's conscience does not respond to the leading of the Spirit. After we are saved we are very much aware of righteousness: what is right and what is wrong; where matters are in grey area, what is God's mind? Not only that, our conscience, having been cleansed by Christ's blood, is changed into a sanctified conscience. Some readers may ask, what is the difference between a Christian's conscience and that of a righteous non-Christian? My answer is: non-Christians without imputation of the Holy Spirit has a righteous conscience that is cold. It lacks the type of true love of 1 Cor 13 that can only come from God. Human righteousness is like that of a criminal court; mercy does not enter into consideration except in trivial

matters which are within the powers of a judge. But God's righteousness has an additional dimension, which is mercy and love. The Pharisees in Christ's time was very legalistic: their legalistic conscience did not admit of love and mercy. Time and again Christ reminded them that God will have mercy and not sacrifice. The Apostle John in the first chapter of John speaks of Christ as full of truth, and what's more, grace and love. A Christian's righteousness is not simply law book righteousness, but also the compassion and mercy of God. A Christian knows how to have mercy and love performed within the framework of righteousness, a non-Christian not knowing the norm of God's righteousness will often over exert their mercy which goes beyond righteousness and becomes unrighteous.

Before we are saved our unregenerate conscience is our guide in conduct. It seems to work in the human sense. Yet very often it is not exactly just and good: it can be bribed. There is a saying: "Every man has a price". Every man has a price, and if you pay a high enough price you can have a man make exception in his conscience this one time! When the cost is high, people will find many ways to justify their actions. I will not deny the fact that there is one in a million who cannot be bribed at any price. Even without bribing, how often have we been found telling white lies? White lie means we are already bribed into moral compromise. We are not even talking about perverted conscience and mind of Romans 1 where wicked men are filled with envy, deceit and every form of wickedness including leaving the natural affection for woman to lust after other men. An unregenerate conscience cannot pass God's requirement of righteousness. A man even if he is righteous

99% of the time and miss out in 1%, he is still a failure in God's sight. The principle is that a very strong chain with just one weak link is still a weak chain. Only a regenerate conscience can fully understand God's righteousness.

After we are saved we find that the moment we did wrong our conscience respond and we feel remorseful. We will also find that our conscience is much more sensitive: whereas we were not particular about small faults, now we are much more particular and exact.

Besides our conscience, the Bible is our final reference for our moral matters. The Bible is the ruler by which all moral matters are measured. But following exactly the principles and the commandments which is written in the Bible is still not enough we still need love to go with everything that we do, plus faith. The Holy Spirit is the one who give us the love of Christ; it shreds light on how we should love, and gives us that love. We still need to go further and obey the commandments in the spirit, not just physical endeavor above all.

The Spirit Working Through Our Thoughts

The Holy Spirit also works through our thought process. Our thoughts should be clean and pure; it must be dedicated to God. A man whose thinking has God's interest as well as his own selfish interest is a man who is double minded. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways", James 1:8. Very often our life's priority, motives, plans are the result of our thoughts process. Then we must let the Holy Spirit take complete control of our thoughts. If our thoughts are under the control of the Holy Spirit, He will inject the will of God into our thoughts, so

that when we are thinking we are thinking along the line of God's mind. After we have the mind of God we will find that we are much more inclined to do the will of God.

Thought process in a human being can be very treacherous; it can be perverted to rebel against God and lead a man to destruction. The Apostle Paul in 2 Cor 10:4-6 "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds:) Casting down imaginations, and every high things that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled"

Paul has alerted us that this conflict is a spiritual warfare and not carnal warfare; there is a stronghold that we need to pull down and it is the imaginations, arguments and the thought process which exalts us and make us prone to contest God. All these stop us from knowing God further. Therefore we need to put each of our thought under the Spirit's control and make every one of these thoughts captives in the matter of knowing Christ.

Adam and Eve had erred when Satan prompted them into perverse and disobedient thoughts, and to contest the truth and honesty of God, with the result they yielded. Instead of looking back and remember what God had commanded and forbid, plus some careful thoughts, they dashed off like wild horses and yielded to Satan's temptation. Adam and Eve had been caught in the treachery of their thoughts being perverted by Satan. This weakness of Adam is still the Achilles' heel of sons

of Adam and Eve. We must examine every extraneous thought to see if it contradicts the obedience to Christ. The old Chinese sage Confucius once said: "I make it a rule to examine myself three times a day". Do we as Christians do as much?

The Will of God

As a young Christian, I was obsessed by how to do the will of God as well as what is the will of God for my life. To me the will of God for my life was merely the decision of whether to be a pastor or a layman. At that time, the will of God for me was like a hidden treasure map, I had to expend great effort to find it: pray hard, read more Bible and be conscious of it in the hope that one day I may find that blueprint of God for my life. But now I realized that the will of God was made up of many small steps. While what I perceived in my younger days was not totally wrong, it was far from complete either. If it is a map it is not one big map, but many small maps. When we had done the things in one small map, then God would lead us to another map.

Abraham, our father of faith did not have a complete map from God. When God called Abraham out of the land of the Chaldees, he went by faith, trusting that God would lead step by step. The book of Hebrews told us that: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he would after receive for an inheritance, obeyed: and he went out, not knowing whither he went", Heb 11:8. Therefore in our walk with God, when we obeyed Him and took the right step every day and step by step, we would find that each right step lead us to another right, and bigger step.

Finally we reach our destination and goal. This is why it is important for us to yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit every day. It is very rare that God shows us the complete blueprint for our life. The danger of a man knowing the complete blueprint for his life is that after knowing the blueprint, he is less inclined to wait upon God, to inquire of Him. It is very human to say that now I know what to do, and so I do not need to bother God for the time being. Every time a man retreats from God, he misses that close fellowship with God and strays out of touch with God's mind.

The great saint of God, the Apostle Paul in his last days say to the elders of Ephesus: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there", Acts 20:22. God wants his saints to utterly trust Him and walk after Him knowing full well that God will never let us down or let us miss a step even though we do not even know what lies ahead.

The Holy Spirit Working in Our Heart

Our heart is like a strong castle: in it holds our love, hate, hope, obsessions, aspirations, object of adoration, allegiance and all the manifestations of our heart. The Bible admonishes us to open our heart to Christ the moment we become a Christian. How do we do this? We take Christ as our Lord. He shall open the Chambers of our heart, even the strong rooms that we ourselves cannot open. The Holy Spirit will take over these strong rooms and drive out all the strong occupants who are known as the hatred, the anger, the malice, the envying, the bad will, the bitterness, the liar, and all other evil hosts. After

all the strong occupants are driven out and all the filth flush out, the Holy Spirit will then fill it with the love of Christ. The so called Christians who have hatred in their heart should now examine their salvation carefully. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in Him". 1 John 3:15.

A Christian must let the love of Christ be his controlling force in life. Of all the motives that a man has, no matter how good, none is as noble and acceptable to God as love. All other motives fade away in comparison. If love is so important, how do we embrace that love? Notice that this love does not originate from us; therefore it is no use for us to plan and devise our own form of love. This love must be from God. It is only when the Spirit moves that the love of God enters into and operates in our heart. How does this love come about? When we keep Christ's commandment, we love Christ. Because we love Christ, God's love will come to us when we keep his commandment of love by loving each other.

Human love which originates from the flesh is whimsical, emotional and seems spontaneous; it operates under the dictates of our flesh. This kind of love can become hate overnight. Love which is from God and flowing through us is unchanging; we love because we obey Christ's command and so we love. The dictates and preference of the flesh cannot alter what God has set in our heart. Sometimes when we love in obedience to the leading of the Spirit we may be repelled at first sight: for instance loving our deadly enemy. But once we have started, God shall follow very quickly and give us the grace and the real feeling of love. As we walk with God and

mature we learn to love the unloving very quickly. Our love thus is genuine and comes from God.

Non-Christians stress feeling in love. They think spontaneity is the norm, but the problem with their love is its inconsistency; they cannot control it. When they cannot love, hate takes its place. The flip from love to hate is not a genuine love. With Christian's love, we may seem to start out cool, yet by obedience to God, He will give us that feeling of love and warmth very soon.

Human love is frail. But the love of God is God's attribute and power. The love of God conquers all. Wherever the love of God goes, hatred flees; nothing can stand in its way. Whenever the love of God touches the heart of man and women it melts down all enmity and wins men and women to Christ. Whenever the Spirit of God goes, love follows and works mightily. But the price paid for this love to manifest to man is eternally colossal. It is being paid for by the blood of Christ. The wonder of it all is that God has made us ambassador and dispenser of this love, so that the world can be reconciled to God. A Christian's mission in life is actually a mission of love--the love that never fails and never ceases.

Down through the ages, great saints of God have been obsessed, moved by the constraining love of God; because of this love they are willing to be martyrs of God. They prove to the world that God is Lord and that His love is real, surpassing the most precious treasures of this world. Their God of love is worthy of even death. Whenever there is love of God in our heart, we are not afraid of death because we know that God

loves us, and will receive us into his bosom when we die. For a Christian it is infinitely better to die and be with God than to live in this world of evil and misery. Nevertheless we have our task to complete in this world because God has allotted to each of us His assignments and tasks.

When our hearts are Spirit filled, we are also filled with the love of God. Going back to us being born again: when we profess our faith in Christ we accept Him as Lord and Savior; He gives us the indwelling Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit sheds the love of God into our hearts; through the Spirit we walk with God and do His will. God gives us all the above as a package, and it is not possible for us to take just certain part of it and abandon the rest.

It was the summer of 1958 when I was an ambitious young man. I had my own plan for my life. I believed in Christ Jesus because I wanted a ticket to heaven. Deep down in the secret recess of my heart I loved the things of this life and I had great dreams and aspirations. What I dread most was for God to call me to missionary service in African jungle! Therefore I tried to distance myself from God for fear of getting involved in the ministry. I studied the Bible every day; I went to Church on Sunday; attended Sunday school and youth groups. I looked right on the outside, but the Lord let His servant know who I was even though we did not talk much or know much about each other. So one day, the late Dr. David Adeney of Fellowship of Evangelical Students cornered me and, almost in a prophetic way, confronted me with this statement: "Heili, do you know that there is no such thing as a nominal Christian, either you are a real Christian or you are none at all. You should now be all out for the Lord". These words hit me like a thunderbolt and jolted me out of my mole hole. I was miserable

for a few months because I had great conflicts in my heart: I vacillated between the interest of this world and of His Kingdom. My father had a great business, and he wanted me to succeed. I had great plans in life and going into the ministry would have meant that all my plans would go up in smoke.

But God had confronted me with His Lordship and sovereignty. I struggled and struggled, and finally surrendered my life to God. Hereafter life had never been the same again

10 My Inner Sanctuary

The Temple Then and Now

In the book of Exodus God commanded Moses to make the tabernacle of God. This was the original and portable version of The Temple, as the Israelites were travelling from place to place. When the Israelites reach Canaan, they still do not have a temple build of stone and wood. It was not until king Solomon's reign did God have Solomon build the temple. Even though this physical temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Roman soldiers under General Titus, the spiritual significance and the Biblical and spiritual teaching about the temple still works in our hearts.

The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Church at Corinth rebukes some of the believers in the church for loose and immoral living. There was a case of incest and adultery in chapter 5, which was a sin of shocking magnitude. In the chapter which follows he reminds the Church that, "know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you..." 1 Cor 6:19. We believers make up the corporate body of

Christ. The word "body" in this verse is in the singular, which means that there is only one temple. We believers together make up the Temple of the Holy Spirit. As each one of us is part of this temple, and that the Holy Spirit dwells in each of us, it follows that as an analogy we are part of this temple, say one of the room or one piece of stone. As part of this temple we are to keep ourselves in the state of chastity and holiness the way we did it through the power of the Spirit in the corporate body. Our body is dedicated to the service and worship of God. All the services and sacrifices of the priest in the temple is an object lesson for each of us to learn, ponder and apply.

In the Old Testament the Temple is the dwelling place of God, speaking in a restricted sense. This is because it is not possible for a limited physical house to contain the unlimited great God the Father. The temple is the place where God meets His people, accept their sacrifice and forgive their sins. It is the place where His people inquire of Him; a place of prayer. Indeed it is the Holy Place. In the Temple there is a room which was "the most holy"--"the holiest of all". One point worth noting is that going from the first tabernacle through the second veil is "the most holy", architecturally it is the inner sanctuary; it is a very sacred and holy place. Anyone who walks in would be struck dead by the angel of God. God has decreed that the high priest can only go in once a year, and even then there must be a lot of cleansing of sins of the high priest and of the people. If the high priest does not do a thorough job of cleansing himself, he will be struck dead by God. There is a Jewish tradition of tying a rope to the foot of the high priest, so that in case he is struck dead by God, the

other priests can pull his body out with the rope.

What does the high priest do in the inner sanctuary? Exodus 25:22 says, "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony...". What an utmost privilege, commune with the great creator of heaven and earth, it is more honored than talking with the president of a country. However as there is only one high priest in a generation, only one person has the privilege.

The Second Veil is Rent

However when Christ died on the Cross, the veil that separated the sanctuary from the inner sanctuary, the most holy of all, split from top to bottom. Remember that the veil was a most heavy city curtain weighing in the region of at least a thousand pounds. It was not by any accident that it was split, but the angel of God must have done it. With the veil split and the most holy of all exposed, the way to the Living God was now open. Believers could now go into the inner sanctuary that was once forbidden to commune with God the same way the privileged high priest did it before.

Whereas the people of Israel went to the temple which was built by human hands and dedicated with the blood of bullocks, now at the present time we enter into another temple which is not made by hands. This new temple in us is built by the Lord Jesus who is the foundation and cornerstone, and built with living stones. We believers are the living stones purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ.

The inner sanctuary of this living temple is where God dwells. The inner sanctuary of the previous temple was the place where the high priest could commune with God. We are now the living temple of God. We have the privilege of having an inner sanctuary in each of us where God dwells. We need to be aware of this inner sanctuary that is in us.

Most mature Christian will invariably have experienced God communicating with them in the deep recess of their heart: it is as if they have an inner sanctuary where the Holy Spirit dwells. Put it in another way: it is the throne of our heart, a place that God overrules; it is where we communicate with God, it is the seat of my fellowship with God the Father through the Holy Spirit. What happens at the corporate temple in the Body of Christ also happens in each of us; our individual inner sanctuary add together make up the corporate inner sanctuary. This inner sanctuary is not a theological concept or term, neither is it a place where I can pin point in the same way we pinpoint our spirit, body, and soul. (Howbeit even with these obvious term, theologians still have different viewpoints on the definition of spirit, body and soul. This is why we have the bipartite and tripartite view of man)

Lest the reader is under the notion that building our inner sanctuary is like building a room in one's heart so that one can use it or ignore it, I must say that it is not a spiritual structure. Is not in the same way we would invest in a spiritual structure to be used latter. It is a spiritual function perceived by living experience of Christians. Many a great saint of God had felt the same way. In essence this inner sanctuary is the seat of worship of God, relationship with Him and faith in Him. So if we

withdraw from fellowship with God completely, then we would have no inner sanctuary. The term inner sanctuary is the word I have coined to express my spiritual perception and happening in privacy with God. A lot of Christians consider the spiritual happening to be taking place in their heart and mind. Thinking of it as inner sanctuary enables me to remind myself of closing the door of my inner sanctuary and pray to God in secret and privacy. Our Lord in Matthew 6:6 said: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Praying in the closet not only fulfil our Lord's command of not to show off in prayer, it also has the added advantage of being quiet and conducive to meditation. Most importantly we can freely confess our faults and sins in privacy.

There is a parallel of the inner sanctuary in the Old Testament. God had revealed to the prophet Ezekiel the evil of idolatry among the elders of Israel. In Ezekiel 8:12 it goes "...son of man, has thou seen the ancient of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imaginary? For they say the Lord seeth us not".

When we were a non-Christian, we worshiped an idol in the chambers of our imaginary, but when we became a Christian, we worshiped God in the chamber of our inner sanctuary.

How Do We Begin?

To begin having fellowship with God in the spirit at our inner sanctuary we need to go through the following steps without fail and any one of the pre-requisites before we can build an

inner sanctuary:

1. The encounter with God. The first encounter with God is actually a sinner's confrontation with God.
2. Repentance before God. We come to God for forgiveness.
3. Faith in Jesus Christ.
4. The second encounter. This is after one becomes a Christian, and after which the Lord wants us to surrender completely to Him and take Him as Lord. After one has completed the above 4 steps, then one needs to do the following to keep the inner sanctuary and have constant fellowship with God.
5. Our prayer to God.
6. Our worship of Him.
7. Our altar of thanksgiving.
8. Walking in holiness.
9. Laborers together with God.

The First Encounter with God

As a non-Christian the encounter with God can be a painful experience, speaking from a non-Christian point of view. First of all one has to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the only Lord, God and Creator of all universe. Many people would readily agree that there is a one true god who is the creator. However when it comes to Jesus Christ they will immediately raise their objection. For still others they would think that there is more than one way to heaven.

Secondly, it is against human pride to admit that one is a sinner. More difficult to believe is that there are no good, just

man in this world; how can everybody be a sinner they would ask? Why is it not possible for a man's good deeds to outweigh his bad deeds and so he can go to heaven?

Thirdly, to become a Christian is to lose one's freedom, many non-Christians would say. They love their life of indulgence, lust, covetousness and even evil. In short, they do not wish to forego the life which they have now, and to lose their friends.

If a man does not want to be a Christian he would have a thousand and one excuses, reasons and arguments for not believing.

Repentances

All men of all ages have inherited original sin from Adam. We all have the moral genes for a sinful nature. In order to rid us of this sinful nature the first step that God wants for us to do is to repent. Only when men repent can they turn away from darkness and be released from the grip of Satan. When men repent God forgives. That is the power of repentance.

What are the steps to repentances? First, it is the examination of oneself, realization that one has been sinning. Second, that one is sorry for what he has done, and for his sins. Third, that one does not wish to ever doing it again. Lastly, that one really desires to be forgiven, and be cleanse of the sin. Then as soon as one gets to know God, his heart is enlightened and his repentance has an added dimension, and that is, God is wanted. He then realizes that all righteousness is of God, and everything that is done, whether it is right or whether it is wrong, is being done to God. So if a man sins against his

neighbor, he not only sins against his neighbor, but also sins against God. Therefore repentance is to God; and one asks forgiveness from God.

Faith in Jesus Christ

This is the most crucial step to salvation. But what are the criteria for belief? Or put it simply: what should we believe as a minimum? The Gospel of John has in innumerable passages said that whosoever believed in the Son of God has everlasting life. The beloved Apostle John said in John 3:36, "He that believeth on the son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him". Jesus Christ said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life". John 5:24. The man who was born blind and healed by Jesus in John chapter 9 believed in the Son of God. When Jesus was on the cross the repentant thief asks Jesus to merely remember him when Jesus come into his kingdom.

Literally speaking believe in Jesus Christ seems simple; to some it seems too simple, but the implications and commitments are much more than we realize. To understand the real meanings of believe let us look at the Israelites. Their relationship with God in a practical sense boils down to obeying God's commandment, laws, statutes, and to serve Him. Throughout the Old Testament there echoes the phrases of "serving God", "follow after God" and "serving other gods". This serve to remind us that believe in God is a holistic involvement. To the

Jews it was not just verbal acknowledgement and mental recognition, but total involvement and commitment in every aspect of their life.

If we were to look at the Jews' Second Law, which is the Oral Law, called in Hebrew "the Mishna" we could see that it covers all aspects of a Jew's life. The Law of Moses is the Torah, which is equivalent to the First Law. To make it applicable to everyday life an applied version was devised: this was the beginning of the Second Law. The Jewish tradition said that it existed side by side with the Torah, but the Torah was so sacred that to have anything existing side by side is irreverence. Therefore the Second Law was handed down by word of mouth; this is why it is called the Oral Law. It is not difficult to envisage that in handing down the Second law each generation of rabbi would add in their comments and recommendations. By the time of Christ the Second Law was so cluttered up with added man's tradition that it became a grievous burden. This was why Christ reprimanded the Pharisees. During the first and second century AD, as the Jews were dispersed it became necessary to put down in writing the Mishna and the commentary of authoritative rabbi, called the Gemara. The above together form the Talmud. There are a number of versions of the Talmud. By far the most orthodox version is the Babylonian Talmud

The whole point of relating the above is to show the reader that the Jews had so much zeal for God that they are willing to go through the hassle of the burden of the Second Law. The apostle Paul lamented that: "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge", Rom 10:2.

To give the reader an idea of the size of the Talmud, the Soncino version that I have has taken up one row on the shelf of my bedroom. It consist of 18 volumes, each volume is about 900 pages. To let the reader catch a glimpse of the scope of coverage in everyday life, let us glance briefly over the general contents.

The Talmud is divided into 6 orders. Each order has a number of tracts (equivalent to a chapter). In the 6 orders there are a total of 63 tracts. The major general contents are:

Order 1: Zera'im (Seeds): Benedictions, fruits, Sabbatical Year, Heave Offerings, first tithes, second tithes, first fruits,

Order 2 : Mo'edh (Feasts): Sabbath, Feast of Passover, Day of atonement, Tabernacle, New Year, Purim, Minor Feasts, Mixture of localities, fasting, Feast Offerings, Shekels for the Temple.

Order 3 : Nashim (Women): Levirate marriage, marriage deeds, vows, nazarite, letters of divorce, suspected women, betrothals.

Order 4: Nezikin (Damages) : Damages, injuries, and responsibilities, Right of possession, Court of justice, punishment, oaths, attestations, Idolatry in the sense of commerce and intercourse with idolaters, Sayings of the "Fathers", Decisions.

Order 5 : Kodhashim (Sacred Things) Sacrifices, Meal Offerings, Common things, firstborn, estimates, substitutions, Excisions (cut off from Israel), unfaithfulness, daily morning and evening sacrifices, measurements, nests.

Order 6 : Teharoth (Clean Things) : vessels, tents, leprosy, red heifer, clean things, diving baths, the menstruous, preparers (fluid contamination), person having an issue, taking the ritual bath, hands, stalk.

Just as the Jews serve God and keep Moses Law and Ordinances down the smallest detail, so when they believe in Christ they would pursue their faith with very much the same enthusiasm and thoroughness as pursuing their Judaism.

Not only that Christ becomes the center of their life; they cannot think of it in any other way. It is in this context that the New Testament states the word "believe".

For most gentiles who simply worship idols for gain, subscribe to rites and directives of the religion, their hearts are never changed. They have no personal commitment to the idols: all they want from the idol is to bless their work and make them rich. This is why the Bible equates covetousness with idolatry.

Therefore when gentiles believe in Christ there is very much that sense of using God as a tool and provider of riches. Gentiles carry over their old thinking. James 4:3 has succinctly said, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lust". Therefore most Christian will need a second encounter and confrontation from God to make sure that their faith is holistic.

Second Encounter with God

Every one of us must come face to face with God sooner or later. When Adam and Eve were in the Garden, they talked with God every day. But the moment they yielded to

temptation and found that they were ashamed of their nakedness, they hid themselves from God. After they ate the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, they had knowledge of what is shameful. In a deeper sense, they needed a covering for the sin that they had committed; this feeling of guilt was translated into a feeling of shamefulness.

Today many a non-believer does not want to talk about God, sin and salvation for the very same reason as Adam and Eve. They had rather that God does not bother them because the holiness of God reflects on their sinfulness. Even many born again young Christian have that residual shyness of the flesh. When I first became a Christian, I still held on to my personal freedom. I had my ambition in life and I did not wish for God to alter my plans. I shall give my services to God by serving in the church, I shall go through the motion of a diligent Christian and yet deep in my heart, Jesus Christ was still not my Lord. I wanted spiritual gains, but I also wanted worldly gains. I was trying to ride two horses at the same time. Then one day I had an encounter with God and He confronted me with the Lordship of Christ. It took me a long struggle before I finally gave in.

God as the Creator would also confronts His creatures with His lordship. This encounter often happens when a person leave being an average Christian and begin to grow and mature. If we were to read John 15:1-8 and dramatize it, it would run like this: In Luke 13:6-9, Christ's parable of the dresser of the fig tree describes the dresser pleading with the owner to give him one more year to work on the fig tree. If the fig trees still did not product fruit, then he too would give up and cut the tree

down. Christ has been patient with us for years and if we still refuse Him, what would happen? God the Father, the vinedresser will ask us, do you want to grow and produce fruits. If so, I must do a lot of cutting and trimming on you. I as your Lord would see to it that you would glorify God by producing more fruits!

What is God's first word to the people of Israel? "I am the Lord thy God... thou shalt have no other gods before me", Ex 20: 1-4. God has created us and He expects our loyalty and our allegiance to Him. He has put in the Scripture a vivid term to describe His very feelings: jealousy! "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God..." Ex 20:5. What would happen if a man sees his wife flirting with another man? There will be jealousy and maybe drastic actions to prevent that. In like manner, we Christians are as if we are married to Christ, we cannot be unfaithful. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians in the same vein said, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ", 2 Cor 11:2.

How is the line of faithfulness to God drawn? Christ said in Matt 6:24. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon "Mammon" is money. Christians who devote most of their time, efforts in pursuit of money, possession beyond what they rightfully needed and not enough on the things of His kingdom is in effect serving mammon. Money has become his god. Needless to say, Lordship of Christ frightens them.

Therefore when a Christian is confronted by God, he or she must yield completely and embrace the lordship of Christ. Person then dedicate their life to the service of God. This does not mean that the person should enter into Christian ministry, though in some cases God may call them to enter into full time ministry. Otherwise the person should stay in his profession. From now on whatever person does, person does it for God. Having said all the above, some Christians may think that I have said too much, too dogmatic, and that God do not really demand that much. As a young Christian I used to think of the whole thing as God demanding too much when a dedicated pastor preaches this total commitment to God. As I become more mature and began to see the reality of eternity and the shortness and temporality of the present life, I began to see the futility of investing in this present life. Instead I should now invest in the long future which is eternity. Sometimes somewhere in our life Christ will confront us with His lordship. Christ demands our response and wants our unconditional surrender. Many a young Christian dreads this encounter.

Our Prayer to God

Before we dwell on what and how of prayer, it may be instructive to review some of the common misconception and wrong attitude in prayer. Simply ask ourselves this question: what is God to you in our prayers?

When we pray the effectiveness of our prayer depends on our relationship with Christ. The human heart is deceitful above all things; even we ourselves being immersed in it are not

constantly aware of it. Therefore we should examine our hearts, mind and attitude toward God: we must be reconciled with God, otherwise we cannot pray effectually. Some of the mistakes or improper attitudes are as follows:

- 1) **Treat God like an idol.** For many who come from a pagan background and used to the practice of asking the idol for whatever we want, the idol has become merely our tool and servant. If the idol does not give what one wants, then one would change by worshipping another idol, this is why very often idol worshipper worship many idols. To them the idol is an Aladdin Lamp. When these people become Christians, they carry this bad attitude into their prayer. But Our Lord God is not a servant, and certainly does not work like an Aladdin Lamp.
- 2) **Make deal with God.** Negotiate the way one does business transaction. Many people like to bargain and make deals with God. From a non-believer's point of view God is not obligated to give you anything you ask: therefore there must be some kind of compatible exchange or trade-off. This kind of attitude often carries over to our Christian life even after our conversion. One would say to God, "if you give me riches then I would contribute a lot of money to the church". After all, how can one give if one has no money! Sometimes asking God for healing, recovery or protection so that the result would be that one can serve God more effectively is not wrong. Communicating our needs to God is proper, but do not make it into an exchange. God is the creator and

giver of all things and He does not need us to give back something in return. The only reason we give to God is that we are grateful to Him, and we want to express our gratitude. However, it is not an exchange of favors.

- 3) **Believe that God should answer and fulfil all your prayers.** A lot of people come to God and embraces the Faith because God answers prayers. This is not incorrect, but one must define it more precisely, namely under what condition does God answer prayers. Very often we pray and do not get what we want because of what James said in James 4:3 "ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts". A lot of average Christians left the faith because God does not give them what they want. Besides asking God for things in prayer, people also ask God for answers to life's problems. Very often they ask God for guidance for assurance of personal success, "what should I do?", "which way to go ", "how to solve this problem?" Then there are grudges which results in interrogations like: "why do you let this happen to me?", "what did I do to deserve this mishap?" God does not owe us an answer to all questions. Spiritually we should seek and learn so as to gain an understanding of how God deals with people, history, relationships, work, our lives, and finally the most important: His will in all things and matter.

Why do we pray? Christ in Matt 6:8, "...for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him". Therefore our heavenly father knows what we lack and will

supply us with what we need, because He cares and even takes care of birds and flowers of the field. The question becomes, "why do we need to pray when our God knows all and supply all?" The real reasons for praying are:

- 1) **We pray so that God's Kingdom may come.** Praying for God's Kingdom to come is the priority Christ wants us to pray. Therefore in the Lord's Prayer Our Lord after saying, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name", immediately said: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven". We pray for God's Kingdom to be established here on earth because we Christians are the people of His Kingdom. It is God's will that His own people, by doing His will, hoping for His coming and praying for His Kingdom to come, be the present fulfillment of His kingdom here on earth. Having established this priority, Our Lord teaches us not to worry about our food and clothing, "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; all these things shall be added unto you", Matt 6:33. Therefore, instead of praying for all these everyday need, it would be infinitely more pleasing to God if we pray for His kingdom and righteousness, and then God in His generous promise would supply all that we need without our asking.
- 2) **We pray for Christ's coming so that He will establish His everlasting kingdom here on earth.** (the new heaven and new earth) Christ in His parable of the unjust judge in Luke 18:1-8, teaches us to pray persistently and not to faint. The whole key to the

meaning of the parable is not so much getting what we want in life with the persistency of the widow, as God's elect –praying for the coming of His Kingdom with the same persistency, praying always and not to faint even though the Kingdom of God is long in coming. Verse 7: "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though he bear long with them?" is related to Rev 6:9-17. Finally, the consummation comes in Ch 11:15-18. Note that verse 17 which says that God has great power and has reigned: this is His Kingdom. Verse 18 says that God then avenges the death of His saints. All the above is to come when the saints of God pray, and when He establish His Kingdom here on earth.

- 3) **The prayer of saints of God is equivalent to a fragrant incense offered to God.** "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before His throne" Rev 8:3. If prayer of saints is a fragrance to God, then we all must pray in such a way that it is compatible to fragrance. Some prayers of Christians stinks because there are lots of murmurs and blame, ungratefulness and bitterness against God.
- 4) **We pray so that we enter not into temptation.** Christ in the garden of Gethsemane caution His disciples to "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak", Matt 26: 41.

- 5) **We pray because Our Lord is the one we can turn to in everything that we need to obey.** While in prison the Apostle Paul exhorted the Church of Philippians to cling to God in persistent prayer. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known unto God. And the peace of God, which passed all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" Phil 4: 6-7. No doubt many young Christians must have felt insecure because they pray all for glory of the Lord, and nothing by way of food and clothing. What happen if they do not receive them? They may blame themselves for not mentioning about food and clothing in their prayers. This verse is a blank check for them to write on for what they need and feel comfortable with their prayer.

There are volumes and volumes of books about prayer written. Therefore we shall not dwell on the subject of prayer except to share with the reader certain aspects of prayer which have been of great blessing to me:

1) **Praying 24 hours a day:**

As a freshman in college being thousands of miles away from home, I felt very lonely. Then I remembered my father said that grandfather prayed non-stop every day between actions. This was what I did in a day. When I woke up in the morning, besides morning prayer, I add in very short prayers. When I wash my face I said: "Lord, I am washing my face"; when I shaved I said: "Lord keep me from cutting

my face"; when I have my breakfast I said: "Lord, give me good health". Before I go out of the door I pray God to keep me safe, and to order the events of the day. At the bus stop I thank God for the bus I got on. This kind simple non-stop prayer lasted the whole day. At night when I slept, there were times when I woke up for a few seconds, and if I am conscious, I pray one line of prayer. I felt as if God is holding my hands while I sleep. After a few weeks I felt that I was no longer lonely because I felt that God was with me. It continues for about a year. When I prayed, I pray in my heart, never moving my lips, my prayer sentences became flashes of thoughts; this is why it never affected my studies even though academic competition was fierce especially at M.I.T. As time went on the short prayers in my heart merge into my thoughts, and so I began to pray in the form of thoughts. So for the whole day I was thinking with God. This was how God took over my thoughts. That was the time I felt closest to God in all my life.

After praying frequently for a long time, my thoughts become my prayers and my prayers become my thoughts. After a few days later, when I recall what I prayed I am not sure whether I thought my thoughts to God or whether I pray to God. For those who are particular about details they would be interested to know about how to be sure that "pray in Jesus's name" is attached to the end of the prayer or thoughts. Thoughts can be brief and can always forget to put "pray in Jesus's name" at the end. The solution is before we begin to think say (think) first "pray in Jesus's name" and then go on. Or alternatively we can have a lot of short

prayers in the day time, and at the end of the day we can surely say that all that I pray today I pray them in Jesus's name. The Psalmist in 19:14 had similar experience "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer". Notice the word redeemer; it is Jesus Christ. The Psalmist is calling upon Jesus name.

2) **The aftermath of a prayer:**

Used to be when I pray I meditate for a moment and then pray. After finishing a prayer, I will simply get up and walk away. After all, I have finished praying; what more should I be saying. Then my father told me that the aftermath of a prayer is just as important as the praying time. He said that after a prayer, one should be very quiet and still for quite a while, tune in oneself, and wait for God's answer. Very often God give us the answer not during our prayer, but after our prayer because we are too occupied with what we want to say, and could not hear the small still voice of God. So the only opportunity for God to speak to us is after we finish praying. Hereafter I keep still for a while after my prayer to tune myself for receiving God's reply. It is the waiting on God after a prayer. My father said that he wouldn't get up from his seat until he got an answer from God! Yes, he was in his eighties, and he could afford all the time to wrestle in prayer the whole day. As for me, I wait for 5 minutes or sometimes meditate for 15 minutes and then conclude the session.

3) **The race in prayer:**

When we pray the Holy Spirit is also making intercession for us, but Satan too is also working to disrupt or stop our prayer. One vivid example in the Scriptures is found in chapter 10 of Daniel. Daniel saw a vision and God sent an angel to Daniel to tell him the meaning, but he was deterred by "the Prince of Persia" (Satan) for 3 weeks. Very often in our prayers there is that blockage of prayer by Satan. No doubt many Christian had the experience of feeling their prayer never pass through the ceiling. The two main problems for myself are disruption and distraction.

Whenever I have an important matter to pray for there is always some disruption whenever I have something important to say. It may be a telephone call, not on important matters but on mundane affairs; then family members would call on me: and having realized that I was praying, they would say sorry and withdraw. Nevertheless I was already disrupted. All these did not happen by chance. Take for example the ringing of the telephone; there are very few phone calls in my house. It does not ring in hours, but when I sit down to pray, it rings. To do it the other way around I will say to myself, now I sit down to pray and the telephone will come. It comes more than half of the time. Then I try to start my prayer very early in the morning (I pray in a sleeping position), yet at that morning my wife woke up and nudge my shoulder to remind me of something. Down through the years, I choose not to respond and she realizes that I am praying; nevertheless I was disrupted.

Distractions come from within me, and yet I feel that it is

not all from myself. Early in life I have trained myself to do two things the same time. For example in college when I do my homework in engineering I would also read my bible, yet I made the grades. In business very often I would answer two telephone calls at the same time. I wrote two proposals at the same time. My mind never stops thinking. In my childhood days I do not like to sleep; my mother would push me to bed. I lay in bed wide-eyed looking at the ceiling and think, my mind would wander in to the world of imagination and fantasy. Around three o'clock in the morning I told myself that for responsibility and health's sake, I should sleep. So I snooze for say three hours and woke up for school. When I pray, my mind would wander off to something else, and then I come back again. I consider this irreverence. So I punished myself by starting all over again. Very often it took more than twice to keep me on track.

One way to solve the problem of distraction was to make my prayers short and to the point, and not trying to put everything into one long prayer. In organizing a long prayer one has to pray as well as think what to say next, thus exposing oneself to distraction of thoughts. By making specific requests in short prayers, one can meditate and organize between prayers. After all Christ teaches us not to be repetitious and making our prayers long.

Another approach is to set aside my time and place of prayer. If I am in the house I would shut myself in a room to keep out all the noise and distractions. Often during weekends I take the whole day off in the hills, read the bible

and pray. I also find that fasting for a day really does wonders because it is effective in keeping away distractions and calm my mind. Having removed most of the distractions I find that by far the biggest hurdle is that of the exertion of self.

A life that is not yielded to God produces a mind that is not subservient to God. A mind that is not subservient to God can never converse with God freely nor is it able to hear clearly what God wants to say. Our prayer and fellowship with God can only go that far and then stops. Even Christians who has yielded find that there are degrees of yielding: most Christians yield most of it, and the little that remains takes a lifetime to yield completely. The evangelist exhortation of yielding completely never happens in real life: it is just like Christian perfection, one is not able to attain it in one step.

However I also see distraction as the indication of my spiritual state. If the distraction seems to bother my mind, then I should examine and see if I have any grudge against my brother; if I have wronged my neighbor; if I have improper thoughts; if I need to reconcile with someone or if I need to confess my unconfessed sins. If the distraction is an aspiration or vision to do a great ministry, then I should put it as another matter to pray about in another prayer.

One habit that I find very helpful is to pray at the first opportunity. In the morning when I wake up I grab the first opportunity to pray: to pray before another kind of worldly care and thoughts comes into my mind. All the extraneous

thoughts and care saps our concentration in prayer. Satan meanwhile is beginning to pile up road blocks to slow us down. Therefore it is a race to prayer.

Personal and church revival starts from prayer. Every Christian should take time to pray. Can a child not speak to his father? Yet many Christians do not wish to really pray to the Father. Finally, please do not forget to pray together as a family.

4) Prayer partners:

Christ has ordained that He gives priority to two or more people praying together with the same heart and mind, agreeing: Matt 18:19-20, "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Need to communicate with our partners. In our laboring together with Christ, our communication is by means of prayer. Besides Christ is also our Lord and master, and we need to bear His directions. For more details, the reader can refer to the next chapter in the section "Laborers in prayer".

5) Obedience in Prayer:

Our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane yet our Lord's final word was' "nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou will" Matt 26:39. In Hebrew 5:8 it says, "Thought he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered".

God had given the apostle Paul many visions; and in order that Paul may not be proud of himself, God gave him a thorn in the flesh and the messenger of Satan to buffet him. Paul prayed to God three time to remove all these, and yet the Lord did not allow it, but comfort Paul that His grace is sufficient for him. Through this, Paul learned obedience and would only glory in his infirmities that the power of Christ may rest on him.

In the sixties, my fiancé was in China and I prayed for her to come out of Communist China so that we could get married. She applied for exit permit three times and she was refused three times. The authorities' direction was that all single young people should be dispatched to remote province to do pioneering work. The hardship was no different from a labor camp. So she had to get married in a hurry and had to marry someone else. I was broken-hearted. Years of praying resulted in nothing. I cried day and night; I had a great shake up of my faith. There are two ways to go: either not trust in God anymore and rely on myself; or trust God just the same and keep my suffering. I struggled and vacillated between the two choices. Finally I chose to continue on and have faith in Him still. Three years later, God gave me a very good wife, Elaine Mark. And to this day 30 years later I still feel that I do not want any substitute for her, and I do not think I could find anyone better. Lord never gives us anything that is second best for us.

Our Worship of God

Many Christians are under the traditional thinking of worshipping God on Sunday service. It seems that to institute worship service one needs a pastor, choir for praise, the congregation and some even feel that it is incomplete without a chapel. It is just like a Catholic's notion that there can be no mass without a priest. The Brethren has been more open minded in that with a gathering of Christians breaking bread, taking up the cup, and praising, there is already worship. In the Old Testament Jacob when he was dying, worshipped God while leaning on the top of his staff, Heb 11:21. Jesus healed the beggar who was born blind. When he met Jesus again he worshipped Him. John 9:17. There was no pastor, no choir, and no chapel.

There can be personal worship of God in our everyday life. I learn of it when I was in dire circumstances in my forties. My business failed and I was desperate. Every morning when I woke up the thought of facing another day of ordeal haunted me. It was then that I said to myself; The Lord is with me, all would be taken care of if I commit everything to Him. I remembered Watchman Nee said that when one is in great difficulties one does not pray and ask, instead one should acknowledge God. Let me cite examples of acknowledgement: "Lord, you are the omnipotent God", "You are in control of everything that happen". "Lord, you are my shepherd".

I have realized and experienced that worship is the most inspiring, enlightening and near to God when I am most poor at heart. It is what Christ call "poor in spirit" in the Beatitudes

of Sermon on the Mount. What exactly is “poor in spirit”, how does it happen in real life? In those days past when I was poor, I had nothing. I had to be humble and totally dependent on God. Every day when I woke up, my only thought was to look to God for provision. Not only that, I felt as if I was a nothing creature before Him, I had to hope for, to elicit mercy from Him, otherwise I could not survive. At the time I had to hang on to God’s coat-tail. All my worship was inspiring, enlightening and satisfying.

As I began to be well off, that sense of desperately dependent on God began to fade. I was more confident of my provision in life. I felt I was able to get on by myself more. It was then that I began to feel the sense of inspiring, enlightening and satisfaction began to fade. Whereas when I was poor, I felt desperate, but when I was well off, that sense of desperation vanished, and I felt further from God in my worship. Feeling sufficient by ourselves has always been a human trait, and it is human race’s Achilles Heel. This is how we stray from God. Little wonder that Christ wanted those who follow Him to sell all that they have and give it to the poor; they being poor could be better able to follow the Master.

For most Christians, it is quite difficult humanly to divorce his heard from the attention of his riches. A rich Christian always tries to serve God and at the same time take care of his riches. He knows quite well it is either God or mammon. Unwilling to part with mammon, person tries to be a victorious Christian by not being sinful or drag down by his riches. He hopes to be in the exception among the rich Christian. This God or mammon confrontation creeps up in his worship, and it is very difficult

for the person to be poor at heart and poor in spirit.

What then is the solution for getting out of this conflict? I have seen time and again many rich Christians who professed to be detached from their riches and yet they are not. I myself came from a rich Christian family in my younger days, and I tried to be spiritual and yet rich; I may deceive myself into thinking I had achieved it at the same time. Now when I look back and scrutinize myself, my conclusion is that the portion of time spent on concern and care of riches is a total loss to spirituality.

What is the solution? In this real world, one cannot live without money. The question is how much, how much should it be, so that it will not affect out spirituality? For myself, my norm is that amount which is enough for a modest retirement. All surplus should be given to the Lord's ministry and charity for the poor. I must say that this is a compromise, and it still falls short of Christ's requirement of perfect discipleship. I am looking forward to the day when the Lord will show me how to abandon everything and yet solve my retirement in the Far East. Remember there is no social security or retirement pension in Hong Kong.

Perhaps the Lord wants us to look at the perfect goal of total abandonment, and each one of us is to do the best in achieving it. It will depend on how much faith we have. By the same token, Christ spoke of perfection in Matt 5:48 "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect". None of us will reach this perfection, but it is the ultimate and perfect goal for each of us.

In normal prayer there are supplications, requests, ask God for

forgiveness, praise, thanks and tell God how we feel; but in worship we acknowledge God, praise and thank Him only. We worship God for who He is, and because we admire, adore, and feel so grateful to Him. Many Christians have discover that there is great joy in worshipping Him, and it is so elevating to our spirit.

This was what I do every day: to worship Him early in the morning. So in the early hours of the morning, usually around 5 o'clock when I am first awake and feel conscious for a few minutes, I would lay still and worship Him in the deep recess of my heart. Then I fall asleep. At around 7 o'clock I get up and have my regular morning prayer. I usually wake up a few times at night, each time a few seconds, and then fall asleep again. Even with a few seconds I could utter in my heart words of worship. The whole key is to learn to pray in a sleeping position, without moving one's body. One does not get up and kneel down to pray because the waking consciousness last for only seconds and getting up would cause insomnia.

Sometimes the only thing that I can do in time is to fold my hands. To me the night belongs to God: I commit myself to Him. We are in the weakest state at night; because we can never know whether we can wake up in the morning. It is my wish that in my old age, I will be found worshipping God the night I die.

What exactly do I say in my worship? Allow me to share one of my prayers of worship in the morning. When I wake up I open the eyes of my heart and behold the whole universe and its vastness, and the smallness of myself, then I will prostrate my

heart before God and exclaim in wonder His greatness. This is what I say, "Lord God my Father, you are the great Creator of the whole universe; you oversee all things, sustains all things and rules over all things. All dominion and glory belongs to you. You sit on the Throne, and all creatures come prostrate before you in worship. Your glory fills the whole earth, and we offer up our praise and give glory to your name". Then when I think of His righteousness and His kingdom, I will say, "Your kingdom is above all, and you shall establish your kingdom here on earth, and nations shall rest in your righteousness and judgement. You are gracious to those who fear You and trust You". When I think of His saving grace and how much I am indebted to God for His salvation, I will say, "Lord, I thank you for your graciousness and mercy towards us, because you have given us your only Begotten Son to die on the cross for our sins. Your body was broken for us to make atonement for us and to reconcile us to the Father. Your blood was shed for us to take away our sins so that we may be justified and sanctified. May my offering of thanks and praise be acceptable in your sight, O Lord. Praying in Jesus' name"

Sometimes when I wake up with a grateful heart, I will simply praise Him and exalt Him. When I am sad the verse in Habakkuk 3:17 comes into my mind: even when nothing turns out right, yet I will still rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation. What I look forward to in my worship is to see His glory and His kingdom.

Worship is more of an attitude of our heart than what we say. There are times when He cleanses my heart, and I am as a baby fed by my mother and I fall asleep on her breast. Then when

my heart is as still as still water waiting on Him, I can feel the Holy Spirit leading in worship. Whereas when I myself worship, I think of what I should say and then say it to God. Now when the Spirit leads my thinking stops, someone is saying it for me; I only know of what I say after saying it. In another words the words does not come from me, and I am just a listener. When the Spirit says it for me the words are out of this world: what I can say is that it is a wonderful inspiration, I have never seen the like in books. I would like to write them down, but I cannot because when it is through I fall asleep; when I wake up again all is forgotten. I have to conclude that it is for my own edification. Each person has to come before God himself to receive from God what God will apportion to him and what he needs.

Do not forget about abundant praise to God in our worship. One of the merit of praise, besides pleasing God and give glory to Him, is that it causes Satan to flee. Why, you may ask? Satan was originally a Cherubim, the angel that covered; he was similar to the cherubim that overlooked the Ark of the Covenant. He was full of beauty and wisdom, but unfortunately became proud and rebelled against God. Then God punished him by turning him into the hideous Lucifer who is also called Satan. (Ezekiel 28:11-19, Is 14:4-15) If we were to read between the lines in Ezekiel 28:13 and Is 14:11 about the king of Tyre, who is Lucifer, we would see that before his fall, he was in charge of the choir for praising God: he is the choir master and conductor. After the fall he was of course deprived of this glorious post.

Therefore afterward, he could not stand hearing any praise to

God, because praise reminds him of his glorious past which he was deprived of. Whenever we praise God, Satan will flee because he will not want to hear any of it. Praise is a powerful weapon against Satan for Christians. Our praise may be in the form of singing, speaking, praying or thoughts. We should first praise God with our worship in the morning. Then even in the daytime as we go about doing our work, we should put our heart in the state and attitude of praise and thanksgiving to God.

I have found that if I do not proceed with my worship immediately, then disturbances will come in. It is not so much distraction, but blockage of the fast access to the throne of God. This is because Satan the accuser of the people of God will come to the throne of God early in the morning and accuse us. Revelation 12:10 tells us that Satan, the deceiver, accuses us before God day and night. Whenever I am late in worship in the morning because I am thinking of other things, then my worship will not go well, which is to say, there is not that peaceful feeling and assurance in me. That day will not go well spiritually, especially in temptation. So for me there is always that race to the throne every morning.

More than that, the truth is that there are spiritual battles every minute of the day in our life. Satan poses spiritual threats every minute of the day to trap us, to cause us to sin. The Apostle Peter who has been attacked by Satan time and again in his life is very well aware of the attack of Satan. This is what he said in vivid terms, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walked about, seeking whom he may devour", 1 Peter 5:8. As we walk closer to God, we will realize

that Satan works 24 hours a day, and that we are fighting a spiritual battle. Had it not been for Christ and His blood, Satan would have taken us captive in the first round.

Besides personal worship there is the family worship which is very important. A family which worship and pray together stays together. However as there are many good books on family worship written, I shall not go into detail here.

Our Altar of Thanksgiving

Christians who are conscious of God's grace will feel very much indebted to God for His mercy and love. If we examine very carefully the difference between God working in our life as Christians and not having work of God in the life of non-Christians, we will readily see the difference and the marvel of His relentless care. It is not money and prosperity that we are comparing, but victory over sin, overcoming temptation, living in love and righteousness, and enjoying the peace of God and the fellowship of brethren in the Lord.

How does one acquire the spiritual attitude of being grateful to God for all His goodness? The simplest way is to give thanks to God every day. Giving of thanks should transcend mere benefit. We give thanks to God not only in times of prosperity, but also in times of adversity and even calamity. We give thanks to God because of what He is. If we think of God as what He is, we will suddenly realize the qualities of God means a lot to us. For example, God is omnipotent, omniscient, Holy and gracious. Since we have the all omnipotent God to be our Lord, he is powerful and larger enough to protect us from our enemies. If God is omniscient, then He knows our heart. He

knows what we want and need. We have an all-powerful God who understands our want and need; therefore we feel safe and consoled because of what He is. Isn't that something to be grateful and thankful for?

When we give thanks all bitterness, blame, and grudge in our heart vanish. Satan always wants to separate us from God. This he does by sowing discontent, skepticism, murmuring and doubt in our heart, not to mention hatred, malice, envying and adulterous thoughts. Adam and Eve succumbed to temptation because they were led to doubt God and not be content with what they had. Had Adam and Eve gave thanks constantly and were content with what they had, Satan would not be able to get close to their hearts.

As we walk with God, thanksgiving becomes part of our everyday life. God is a very generous God. He will not withhold that which is best from us. It is just that we do not see God's intent and purpose that we begin to feel discontent. Therefore if He does not give us the good things now, it is because it is not yet the time to give us the good things He has prepared for us. We also do the same thing to our children. Will you give your 10 years old an automobile? Definitely not, because it is dangerous for a child to drive at this young age; rather you will give him a bicycle instead, because it is what the child can handle at that age. If you give an automobile to him, you are giving the right thing at the wrong time. If God gives us what is best for us at all times, then in prosperity or in adversity whatever we receive will be the best for us, and we should therefore give thanks to God.

God also gives us things that are not good for the moment, but it turns out to be the best in the end. David had said in Psalms 17:3, "Thou hast prove my heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shall find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." Down through the ages, God had tried men and women who were after His own heart like David. Job was the man of God whom He had put through the most trying time and circumstances. Job lost all his wealth and children in one day. God allowed Satan to try him and prove him to be true to God. Christ in John 15:2 said, "and every branch that beareth fruit, he purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit"

In every Christian's inner sanctuary, there should be an altar of thanksgiving. On this altar of thanksgiving, the offering that we offer to God will be the sacrifice of thanksgiving. The Patriarch Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all had built their altar of thanksgiving. Even before this Noah built an altar to God to give thanks. As early as Abel, sacrifices were made to God. When we built an altar in our inner sanctuary, which is also our heart, we should remind ourselves that the fires of sacrifices would burn perpetually. It is thanksgiving that keeps the fire burning. The more that we give thanks, the more we will receive; our cup of joy will always overflow.

In addition to what is in my inner sanctuary, I also have an actual place where I can go to for giving thanks at times. It is the intersection of Argyle Street and Sai Yee Street in Kowloon, part of Hong Kong. In days past I used to do all the typesetting and printing for my business here.



Corner of Argyle Street and Sai Yee Street

Unfortunately my business failed. Therefore this place should be called heartbreak intersection. Years later when I recovered I decided to call it “my thanksgiving square”. You see it is not a matter of location or history, but a matter of attitude and viewpoint. We Christians see things that non-Christians cannot see; we thank God when a non-Christian will murmur against God instead. This is because our God lives and there is no telling what wonderful things He will give us tomorrow! How much a person thanks God can tell us how much he loves God. His attitude of thanksgiving is not because of what he expects God to give, but for what He is. “But as it is written, eyes have not seen, nor ears heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God had prepared for them who love Him”, 1 Cor 2:9.

When there are thanksgivings I would go to the square, stand at each corner in turn and give thanks. Not only in Hong Kong, in other parts of the world where I frequent there is a place of

thanksgiving. Passer-by who sees me must have thought that either I am broken hearted or else a bit off because I look up to heaven at each corner. We Christians are fools for Christ in one way or another!

No doubt in much of our everyday life there seems to be not much that we can be thankful. Most Christian's thanksgiving is invariably short, and they do it just for courtesy to God. This is because we usually take for granted the things that we have. So we must cultivate, so to speak, the skill of looking at things from the God-sent perspective. One good exercise is to write down all the things that we should be thankful. Come back the next day and try to recall and write some more. Try this over and over again and try to be exhaustive. It is not only what you write down that count, but what we have learnt and felt in this exercise. After a while one develops a sensitiveness for sorting out things for thanksgiving. Going through the list we suddenly realize that God is working in our life without ceasing. With this realization, how do we feel? We feel the ever presence of God in our life; He cares about what we do; He will not withhold anything good from us. When good things are withheld, it is because it is not the right time to give.

Walking in Holiness

God is a holy God, and he demands of His people holiness and righteousness. Christ in His sermon on the mount tells us that we must be perfect like our Heavenly Father, Matt 5:48. Almost all true Christians will not commit adultery, murder or steal in our everyday life, but almost all of us had at one time or another committed them in our heart. Our Lord tells us that in

thinking of it we are just as guilty as doing it. Therefore our motives and attitude also count.

Very often there is in our heart an imaginary image of desire and lust. It is a small seed. Every time one craves for it it suddenly grows, and if go unrestrained, it will bloom and then we fall into temptation and sin. If we suppress it in time it will subside. Very often it is difficult to eradicate this seed of lust. As a seed it lay dormant and innocent, but when it blooms it grows at explosive pace.

Take a concrete example of a married man who has a happy family. It is human for the man to have memories of past dating with girlfriends who are still in friendly terms. However when he has bitter arguments with his wife, he will be tempted to compare his wife with his old girlfriend, who will now be perceived in a more favorable light. He may even be led to think that he has made the wrong choice in marrying his wife. He will sometimes even hope that when his wife dies, he will marry his old girlfriend. If the relationship between the husband and wife deteriorates, he may begin to pick up the old friendship, start talking and even occasional dating to tell his girlfriend his woes. This seed will grow and hasten divorce between husband and wife instead of trying to reconcile; it is simply because there is another choice out there.

There are innumerable instances of misgiving and hatred in not only business and politics, but also in the church, unfortunately. There are no monetary gains or interest involved, but it arises from misunderstanding and grudges. With this grudge and misunderstanding even good intentions

can be looked upon as bad intentions and revenge. Many a dispute starts out from self-assertion, ego and face. It is quite surprising that many Christians are not aware of their ego even when it has become obnoxious. More unfortunate still is that out of politeness nobody dares to correct the Christian, or even alert the person on the weakness.

Every person of God should be watchful, and examine his heart every day. He should nip the bud of lust, ego and hatred. Yet it is easier said than done. I am a man of feelings and imagination, and I have many seeds and buds. I do my house-cleaning almost every day, but there is one or two which lingers on in my heart for a long time. I could not get rid of it or rather I like it in a way! One day I bought the seed out in the light of the Scripture, examine it and ask myself, "What is so good about this that I have to cherish it? What will it bring me if it explodes? Am I ready to take the consequences, or do I have to have this happen to my life?" Then I confessed my fault and asked God to take this foolishness out of me, and it was gone.

There are also good aspirations and good seeds, but there are also some which are on the borderline. In this case try asking yourself whether you dare to bring this before the holy God and ask Him to bless it. Ask yourself whether God is honored and glorified when it becomes a reality.

Every night before I go to bed I confess my sins. I will try very hard not to let the sun goes down on my anger. I often make confession of sins for my wife and my children, especially the errant ones.

Temptation not only starts as a seed, it can also come in a torrent. The fearful thing is that our spiritual state is no guarantee that we could be immune. We all remember that the Apostle Peter made the greatest revelation and declaration in the New Testament, when led by the Holy Spirit, to declare that Jesus is The Christ, The Son of the Living God. It was based on this that God saved us mankind, and on it He builds His Church; this man Jesus is the promised Redeemer. Yet the surprising thing is that the next minute he was used of Satan to restrain Jesus from going to Jerusalem for His crucifixion.

David, a man after Gods on heart was very careful and strict in discipline, yet one day in his leisure on the rooftop of his house he notices the beautiful Bathsheba bathing. Then adulterous thoughts rushed into his mind. That day and the days that followed he got his foot stuck in horrible deeds. He used one sinful deed to cover another sinful deed. The moral of the story is that no matter what we are now, there cannot be a guarantee of what we would be.

A moment of spiritual success does and will not enable us to rest on our laurels. Therefore, even at spiritual heights, we must always be on guard for the sudden attack by Satan. Very often when temptation comes it comes like a torrent which overwhelms your mind. It is just like the waves of a stormy sea carrying you towards the shore and dashing you against the rocks. It is like cooking food which boils and overflow the cauldron and the flames cannot be turned off. As we live in the flesh and walk with God we must constantly remind ourselves of the weakness of the flesh which succumbs easily to temptation. Very often when small temptation comes, recalling

the word of God and prayer will enable us to ward it off. But big temptation can often strike suddenly like a lightning. What can we do to remain holy?

We must not forget that holiness comes entirely from God. It can only come to us by faith. There is both holiness in the Spirit and holiness in deeds. For holiness in the Spirit, when we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, God imputes to us the faith which is reckoned for righteousness. Because of this righteousness we are said to be justified. How can this come about?

The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. In God's sight we are sanctified. Every day the process of sanctification goes on because our sins are washed by His blood every day until the day we see God. This is how we attain holiness in God's sight. Since we are clean and holy at all times in the spirit, we can be labelled "innocent" before God. This label of "innocent" is similar to the judge in the court pronounces us "not guilty". In the Bible this label of "innocent" is called "justified". This is why in theology "justification" is called "positional sanctification": position-wise and status-wise we are already sanctified.

Because we are clean and holy in the Spirit, our walk in life, our deeds and speech must also be compatible with our holiness from God. Hence it is for every Christian to keep himself from sin and away from temptation so that he may be count worthy of the calling of God. Holiness is an inseparable package of holy status and holy deeds.

How does Christians obtain holiness in deeds? Christians keep themselves from sin and temptation by the process of dying

with Christ through reckoning. Christians are already holy in the Spirit because of blood of Christ, but reckoning must happen before one can not only be holy in the Spirit, but also be holy in deeds through walking in the Spirit. As long as a person walks in the Spirit, he will be immune from the desires to sin. Reckoning like salvation is done through faith that God gives us. Please refer back to Chapter 6 on specifics of reckoning.

In the book of 1 John, the Apostle John put it with a very strong emphasis in 1 John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God". Average Christians take care, because you are farther away from salvation than you think.

11 Laborers Together with God

When we walk with God we labor for God and with God. God do not have physical hands here on earth, therefore we are his hands, and we do His bidding. We are His servants, whether we like it or not. Paul in the third chapter of the 1 Corinthians talked about the correct attitude of work in God's kingdom. We are all co-laborers. He also talked about the foundation building and for our place he asserted, "we are laborers together with God" 1 Cor 3:9. The prophet Jonah in the Old Testament is an unwilling servant: when God sent him to Nineveh to tell the Assyrians to repent, he fled from God, and instead took a boat to Tarshish. What happen afterwards was that God had to go through at lengths to keep him on track. The Apostle Paul, the faithful servant of God, had a different attitude. He said in 1Cor 9:16-17: "For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel. For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the Gospel is laid upon me".

What I wish to share with the reader is that addition to

obedience, we need to have faith, we need to have the attitude and assurance that we are doing all of it together with God. God will not leave us alone. We are laborers together with God. Otherwise we cannot perform the task that is entrusted to us. Let me share with you two instances that I have experienced.

It was summer of 1964, and my cousin's father-in-law was dying of leukemia. He was in a coma. His wife, even though she was not a Christian thought that it would be good to have her husband baptized. There was a Catholic father in the hospital who baptized him, but he was unconscious during the baptism. My cousin said it would be best if he could hear the Gospel in a conscious state. I told him that whatever I said my words would fall on deaf ears. But time was running out and his father-in-law had only a few days to live. My cousin was desperate and persuaded me, "I don't know how you do it, but please do something somehow: pray to God". So I fasted and prayed. My worry then was that if it does not work, then they would consider my God to be no better than Buddha. I pleaded to God, "Lord, you must not let me down". When I finished praying, my heart felt much more confident. I said to God, "Lord, you are in command of the entire situation, Let me just run errands for you, be with me in this matter!

I went to the hospital and the entire family was by his bedside. I asked God to give him fifteen minutes of consciousness, so that he could listen to the message and pray with me. Then I told everyone in the room to be silent and still. Do not greet him even when he became conscious until I said so. I then prayed at his bedside. After which looked steadfast into his eye and said: "In the name of Jesus Christ, wake up Mr. Leung". He

opened his eyes and blinked. So I preach to him about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and we can have salvation by having faith in Him. I asked him if he was willing to accept Christ, and he nodded his head and move his lips. I prayed and had him repeat what I said. He moved his lips and spoke in a mumbling way. After finishing praying I told his family members to quickly greet him before he lapsed into unconsciousness. He remained unconscious till the day of his death three days later.

My afterthoughts on the matter was that it could not happen by chance, because the time slot is too exact and narrow to admit of usual chance, and the probability is too low. Therefore God worked. Then I asked myself whether it is the gift God gave me. I was inclined to think that God gave me that temporarily for the occasion to fulfil a certain task. In the paragraph that follows I would like to relate a similar occasion.

My wife's uncle, Dr. Reader Chan Yung Ming, head of the Department of Mathematics in The University of Hong Kong, was a Buddhist. He had a severe stroke in Sept 1985, and was in a coma in the hospital. My mother-in-law Mrs. Mark Chan Mei Wah was a devoted Christian, and had witnessed to him and prayed for him for over nearly two decades. But unfortunately he still resisted Christianity. So she said to me in earnest, "Now it is your turn and responsibility to lead him to Christ!" In desperation I prayed, "So help me God, my mother-in-law could not convert him in two decades, who am I to convert him in twenty minutes? Besides my hands are tied he is in a coma!

Again I fasted and prayed: I considered the Lord the master and I am the apprentice, I shall do what He leads me to do. The next morning I went with my mother-in-law to the hospital. His maid, Kong King Chai had been watching over him for the last few days. She was an unusual woman: she was the sponsor of the Buddhist temple and she led him to Buddhism. Uncle was a confirmed bachelor. Even though she was a housemaid she was like a sister to him, and she did not draw any salary from him!

On seeing us coming into the room she frowned and muttered these devilish words, "No sense preaching to him about Jesus at this time, he was unconscious for a few days already and he won't be listening to you now, why don't you let him have a break, leave him alone!"

That evoked a fire of zeal which started to burn in my heart. I gestured to her to step aside. My mother-in-law and I prayed together. After praying I said in a loud voice, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Uncle Yung Ming wake up." He did wake up, but he stared at us with a furious eye and said, "Don't talk to me about Jesus at this hour, I won't listen". I sensed Satan was pulling him back, so I said in a loud voice, "In the name of the Lord Jesus, Satan come out of him." Suddenly there was dead silence and Uncle Yung Ming was attentive. I said in a tone of warning.

"Uncle Yung Ming, this is the most crucial moment in your life because it is your last chance to believe in Jesus Christ. If you do not accept Jesus Christ as your Savior you will certainly go to hell. Jesus Christ is the Creator of heaven and earth; He is the

only begotten Son of God the Father. He came down from heaven to earth and became man to die on the Cross for our sins. He rose again from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father. If you accept Him as your savior, you will surely see Him in heaven very soon."

By this moment he was not able to move his lips, though quite conscious. "Are you willing to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?" I said. Uncle Yung Ming nodded, but mother-in-law wanted to make sure, so she grab his hand and said, "If you accept Christ, squeeze my hand." So Uncle Yung Ming squeezed. She had asked him three times, and three times he squeezed. So we all prayed together. We went home exhilarated and praising God. Uncle died two days later.

In the above incidents I just consider that God gave me the gift of waking people up from coma just for the occasion. However on this occasion my mother-in-law was with me praying all the time. So I could not tell who was more effective or had the gift. Here I realized Christ sent His disciples to preach the Gospel two by two. In addition to prayer effectiveness, it also served to take away the ego of the individual. The work of God is most effectively done by Christ's corporate body, working and co-operating, so that every member of the body will reap praise and recognition from God. Therefore I am not sure whether it is a long term gift the Lord had given me, however, I believed that even if I did not have the gift, but the occasion aroused, and God wanted me to do it again, He could give me the gift for the occasion.

In both the above cases, the work was thrust upon me. God did the miracle and I did the legwork. I am a laborer together with God.

There are more dramatic happenings in my life, but I do not consider it edifying to the reader to share with them those miracles as I consider miracle to be not the main emphasis in a Christian's life and ministry. Miracle has its place in preaching to the remote tribes of Africa and South America. Some tribes need to see a miracle to believe. There is a basic weakness in human beings in that humans are addicted to seeing miracles. The Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees all seek miracles from Christ. But Christ refused to do it. Many times because of need, God heals our family and us through prayers, but we should never overtly practice it like a physician or try to change things. What God has ordained, let it be, King Hezekiah was in his deathbed, and he pleaded to God for longer life. God gave him 15 more years, having the results that it did not fare well for him and his country. Had he died as was, he would not have had the opportunity of making a foolish move of showing the Babylon his treasures, and there would be no invasion. For us the emphasis in life is love, faith, and a lot of hard work and due diligence. If we read church history in the life of saints, it is always these.

Laborers in Prayer

As we pray, Christ is also praying for us in that He as a faithful high priest is making intercession for us to the Father, (Rom 8:34). The Holy Spirit is also making intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered, (Rom 8:26). In prayer our

relationship with God goes further than the above. It is our prayers prayed in Jesus's name. However it is not easy to understand the meaning of praying in Christ's name. We simply put it at the end of every one of our prayer. But what does it really imply?

As we all pray with the ending "praying in Jesus's name" and we wonder why the Lord's Prayer does not have the "praying in Jesus' name". Yet it is there. If we look very carefully at the sentence, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" when we pray in this way, we are really praying in Jesus' name because praying in Christ's name is doing God's will. When we run an errand for a king, we are doing it in the king's name, thus we are fulfilling the king's will.

Our prayer takes on a new dimension we are praying for the things which are already in God's mind and we pray that God will accomplish His purpose through us. Someone may remark, that we have become His predestined puppet. This is the perception of the outsider, but for those who walk with God, they are not a puppet because they think like God. The thinking of the Holy Spirit is in him: he has the mind of Christ and thinks like Christ. His initiatives and endeavors are Christ like; this is why he can fulfill the will of God. He fulfills the spirit of the will of God. A puppet can only fulfill the letter of the will of God!

To make things simpler: since Christ is now sitting at the right hand of God the Father, talking to Christ is just like talking to the Father. Since Christ has said, he that had seen me had seen the Father. So that whosoever talks to Christ also talks to the

Father. Therefore, we can say that all we need is to pray to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father will hear our prayers.

The most difficult passage to understand in the New Testament for me is John 16:23-27 "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye ask nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full". Then Christ goes on in verse 26-27, "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself love you, because ye have love me...". I had ponder over these verse for years, the puzzling thing is, "ye shall ask me nothing", "I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you". Christ is supposed to be the intercessor for us. In this verse what is it?

Let us ponder over the above with a few illustration. When a king sends his men on an errand, his men obeyed and go about doing the work. When someone question why are they doing it, then the king's men would say that they are doing it in the king's name. Thus it also meant that it is the king's order. When they arrive at the strong castle, the guards do not want to let them in before they finish their questioning so as to make sure they are not enemies. The king's men would say, "We come in the name of the king". But how does it apply in our prayers?

It is not easy to explain the process because "in Jesus's name" involves relationships. Let us illustrate it with a series of questions and answers:

Q: Who tells us to pray to God the Father?

A: The Lord Jesus.

Q: No human beings can see God the Father, nor can he Approach Him. Therefore is there any way to pray to the Father?

A: Only His beloved Son Jesus Christ who is in the bosom of the Father can see him at all times. No other mortal can approach God, let alone see Him. So the only way is to go to the Father through Jesus Christ.

Q: How do you go through Jesus Christ?

A: We cannot go to God directly, but go to Jesus Christ and He goes to the Father. This is a two-step process. Since we are in Christ, He has simplified it into one step by having us pray to the Father directly by praying in “the name of Jesus Christ”. This has the same effect of, “We are in Christ praying directly to the Father”. In childhood language, we are hiding behind Christ when we talk to the Father.

Q: What are the implications or the things that we should be aware of when we pray in Jesus’ name?

A: Christ wants us to do His work. When we run errands for Him we are doing things in His name. God the Father’s purpose is to have all things in heaven and on earth gather together and put it all into Christ so that Christ owns all things. Christ in turn also put it under the subjection of the Father.

Q: What does all the above implies when we ask something from God?

A: From an eternal perspective, when we ask something from God and God gives it to us, what we have received belongs to Christ. All that He ever gives us goes back to Christ again. Therefore, our motives should be that when we ask for something for our own need, it is really for Christ, not only eventually, but also even now. When everything goes back to Christ, we are also the owners, because we are in Him and inherit what the Father gives to Christ!

Q: In all the above process what are we doing?

A: We are praying in Jesus Christ's name, doing things in Jesus Christ's name. We are laborers together with Christ and hence also the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The Name of God

In the physical world, we can see a person and touch a person, and so our relationship uses real physical contact, sight and sound. But in the SPIRITUAL world, there are no physical body, sight and sound, so the only thing we can lay hold of is the NAME. God chooses to make Himself human by his name, not His physical shape, not His sound. The only time He chooses to reveal Himself, His revelation to mankind is through the person of Jesus Christ on earth 2000 years ago. Though Christ's life on earth, we are able to catch a glimpse of God's personality, the way He lives, walks and talk. Most importantly, we have a glimpse into the mind of God. When Christ goes back to heaven, we are left with no physical God-person with whom we can talk to or touch. So what we are left with is a God whom we cannot see or touch in the physical world. The only way we can get hold of Him is HIS NAME.

His name is not a like a human name. A human name is a name not much more than a word on paper. But God's name is different. He back up His name by His person. He acts on it. So when we talk to "God's Name" we are really talking to God personally through the person of His Spirit, who is the Holy Spirit. He never leaves us because His Holy Spirit dwells in us forever. In human terms we are obsessed by the Holy Spirit, who is God, forever. What is the original cause of this Obsession? It is the Cross.

Since we cannot see God, touch God or hear Him talking the way we hear a person talk nor can we locate where He is or even in what direction, we are left without anything tangible or comprehensible. In today's scientific definition, we are dealing with a concept, the concept of God. According to most scientist, we cannot offer any proof on the matter of God.

But thanks be to God, our dealing with God is more than a concept because God chooses to stand behind this concept, and act on it like a person – it is a living and dynamic concept. What is more, it is God's own name that He has given us – the name of "Jesus Christ". Though we cannot see, touch or talk with Jesus Christ physically, He has promised that whenever we call on His name, the name Jesus Christ, he is ready to answer us and act on it. It is just like Christ giving us His business card and saying to all of us Christians, when you need me or just want to talk with me, just call this number. The number is Jesus Christ.

When we call upon the name of Jesus Christ, He is there to act immediately. When we cast out demons in Jesus Christ's name,

Christ drove out the demons. When we pray for the sick and call upon His name, He is there to lift His hand of healing on the sick when it is His will that the sick should live. When we are tempted, in trouble or in difficulties, we call upon His name. Christ name is really a LIVING NAME. This is why we must pray in the name of the Lord Jesus.

But how do we talk with Him, what is He like and how does He think; what are the things He like and hate? How do we talk in a way that does not offend Him? All you need to know about the personality of God is found in the 4 gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

My Progress in Prayer

When I was young, I prayed to God because I wanted Him to fulfill my wish, and help me with my work. My belief was that whether God hears my prayer or not depends on how I pray and how effective. However, I was dismayed because very often God did not seem to answer my prayers. Looking back now I realized that I was self-centered: I just wanted God to fulfill my wish and all the while I never thought of God's will.

As I grew spiritually, I learned that there are things that I could pray for and that there are things that I should not pray for because it is for my lust.

After 40 years of Christian experience, I gradually learned that the sole purpose of my existence is to fulfill the purpose of God and nothing else. Therefore, when I pray, I pray that His will be done; when I ask God to use me to fulfill His purpose, not my

purpose. I am doing errand for God, and so I do things in His name and I pray in His name.

When the spirit is moving in your prayer, you will feel that your prayer really has the attention of God. It is going up to Him. When you have reach the height and begins to drop off, it is time to stop. Why stop at 80/100? Leave time for aftermath mediation and reception. The last 20 is an anti-climax. By going to 100 you lose that sense of inspiration. You stop your prayer when it is cold, and there is no period for reflection and meditation.

Prayer is not what you say to God, it is also what God says to you! Stop a prayer when you have passed the topping point, and then let God speak to you. Sometimes it is helpful for you to pause for a few moments in the middle of a prayer, and meditate, then goes on to pray again. Christ's prayer in Gethsemane is split into 3 prayers with even action in between.

Give time to listen to the Spirit. There different versions in which I hear from the same voice of the Spirit. The Spirit spoke to me once, but I perceived 3 different versions:

- 1)What I seemingly hear in actual words.
- 2)What I perceive as its real meaning.
- 3)What I should write down for posterity. For this it will be more explanatory.

LIKEWISE THE SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED DIFFERENTLY

The Vision of His Kingdom

If we are laborers together with God we should know what the objective of our labor is. Christ in His analogy of the vine and the branches in John 15 said in verse 15, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I call you friends; for all things I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you".

What we are laboring for? We know it is for God, but what is the purpose and end? We are laboring for the establishment of his kingdom. Where is it? Many Christians nowadays are still not sure about what exactly the kingdom of God is and where it is. The Kingdom of God is in heaven, and at the same time it is also on earth: it is the Church of Christ, and hence it is in every one of the believer's heart. To the world it seems to be separated into two places. But we must not let space limit our thinking. Since it is a spiritual kingdom, locality cannot separate it. The idea of location does not exist in the spiritual realm. The Kingdom in heaven and on earth is one and the same thing to God. To people of the world, we can tell them that the Kingdom in heaven is the headquarter and the one on earth is the field operation.

Time wise the Kingdom of God can be looked upon as a continuum. Heavenly Kingdom is tied together with Earthly Kingdom, and yet the one on earth continues into the future as the Kingdom in heaven. The Lord's, prayer shed light on the main operation of God's Kingdom in heaven. In Matt 6:10 it says, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven". This verse already stipulated what the attitude of

Christian in everyday life should be. We should be acting and doing things with the same obedience to God as if we are now in heaven in front of God. What we are doing now continues into the future kingdom. Right now the Kingdom of God here on earth seems to be far away from the Kingdom of God in heaven. However when the New Heaven and New Earth comes, then there will be no separation. Both are in the same place and the same thing. If we look at the New Jerusalem coming down onto the earth in Rev 21, we can see that the throne of God is in the New Jerusalem. How do we define heaven in the spiritual sense? It is where God is. Physically it is where the sun, moon, and the stars are. However at the end of time this physical heaven will disappear, (Rev 21:1, 2 Pet 3:10-13, Is 65:17).

Christians who love God, whose heart is not in the possessions and things of this world, will always look forward to the things of His kingdom. Whatever he does, his thoughts and his aspirations are kingdom orientated. He eats, sleep and dream on the Kingdom of heaven. He is laboring for God and with God on the things of His Kingdom. He is looking forward to the second Coming of Christ every day. It is a reminder to him to be watchful, faithful and diligent. He has the vision of the Kingdom of God.

Therefore let us step back and examine our life from the Biblical perspective. We ask ourselves these questions: Are we spending a lot of time which do not count for eternity? Are we spending too little time on things which count for eternity? Have we done God's will? Have you ever reminded yourself that you came into the world naked and empty handed, and

when you return you will also be naked and empty-handed? There is no luggage rack on a hearse, and there are no storerooms in the grave. Even if there is no one can see God holding something in his hands. The righteous God cannot be bribed, nor can corruptible earthly money be of any value in heaven! All that you have now is for you to look at for a few decades, and then there is none. When will "rich" Christians wake up? "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" 1 John 2:17.

Rely on the power of God. To be prepared means depending on the power of God. If we rely on the power of God, every battle is a sure win. The world and Satan cannot resist the power of God. We will be helplessly weak if we rely on our power or the power of this world. The winning of this world counts for nothing in eternity. It is just like hay and stubble, burning out in no time during God's trial. Rely on the power of the Spirit is to do things in Christ's name. In 1 Samuel, David said to Goliath, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts"

12 The Ways of Christ on the Preaching of the Cross

Having considered the mind of Christ in the first chapter, let us consider the ways of Christ in the preaching of the Cross in this last chapter. When Jesus stood with His disciples on the Mount of Olives during His last days on earth before His Ascension, He had already shown His disciples that the work which the Father gave Him before the Creation of the world had already been accomplished. The mission which the Father had given Him on earth had also been completed. Yet there remained the even greater task of preaching the Gospel to all creatures so as to bring many sons into glory. Christ had told His disciples in John 14:12 "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believe on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father". This is because he had gone unto the Father in glory, he now wants many more sons to go into glory with Him and he commissioned us to do more works than what he had done on earth so as to achieve that end. That continuation of Christ's purpose which was planned before the beginning of the world was

encapsulated in Christ's great commission in Mark 16:15 "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature".

When Christ had paid for our salvation so dearly with His life, He would certainly not want to miss any of us. His mind and Divine wish of embracing all humanity could be seen in 2 Peter 3:9: "...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance..." I believe that it is God's wish to save all mankind; I believe in the predestination of God; but I also believe that God is able to do both at the same time without contradiction. It is only in our limited mind and rationale that we think it is a contradiction. It will be presumptuous for us to judge whether God is fair or unfair to predestine men. God was angry with the three comforter-friends of Job because they presumed God to do and be what He was not. What God does is His sovereignty.

Getting back to our present day Church we will ask ourselves whether we have or are fulfilling the commission of Christ. Sad to say, we come far short of God's demand. Let us see what happens to the world and the church:

1) Let us look at the world's population--the present day population explosion happens among the third world countries, among the poor. People who die of starvation are the poor; the rich never have population explosion. More and more poor people are populating the world.

2) Let us also look at the church in general--the present day church in developed countries that are able to give to missions. These churches spent most of their manpower and efforts to evangelize a small sector of the population, which are the white

collars and well offs. But they spent a small part of their manpower and efforts to evangelize the masses, which are the poor and the blue collars.

3) What is wrong with the above?

Since God wants us to evangelize every creature, the church should now try to catch up with the population growth pattern by evangelizing more and more to the poor. Instead it has gone the opposite direction.

Seminaries are competing to become more and more theological and academic. What it means is that their graduates are trained and equipped to evangelize to the intellectuals. When these graduates are left standing in street corners, they are at a loss on not knowing how to preach to the poor in a way which captures their hearts.

Whereas there should be more and more grassroots-Christians joining the church, instead more and more of them are leaving because there are no green pastures for them to feed on. The grass in these pastures is so tough theologically that they find it difficult to chew on. Besides, there is a deep canyon of class gap that they find difficult to cross.

When will Christ come again? He shall come again when all His will on earth is finished. What are some of it that we know of in the Bible? First, it is His will that the gospel be preached to all the world and then He comes. Second, that His own servants who are numbered as martyrs died. Unless the number is fulfilled, He will not come and avenge the blood of His servants. Rev 6:11.

The Remedy

What is the remedy? Let us go back to the Bible and see how Christ and the early church did it. The Old Testament prophecy which Christ quotes when He enters into the ministry is found in Luke 4:18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He had anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and receiving of sights to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord".

Yes, preaching to the poor is the foremost priority of God. Let us see the Incarnation identification:

1) When Jesus was born, the news of His birth was not revealed to kings, nobles, high priests, rich man, or Pharisees, but to poor lowly shepherds.

2) Jesus grew up as a poor carpenter of a small town, Nazareth. As he grew up among the poor He understood the poor and went through the same experience, Hebrew 2: 17: "Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like His brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people". God could have made Him to be very well off on earth and still go to the Cross, but God choose to make Him poor so that He could be identified with the poor.

3) When Christ started His ministry he did not call on the scribes and Pharisees who were well versed in the Scriptures, but instead He called the poor and uneducated to be His

disciples. In Acts 4:13 "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled. This is echoed by Paul in 1 Cor 1:27, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise..."

4) Jesus's ministry was mostly with the publicans and sinners, so much so that the Pharisees murmured against Him. The publicans were the government commissioned private tax collectors who were often dishonest. They extort money from people. The sinners are the prostitutes.

5) For those who wanted to follow Him, He commanded them to sell all they had; give them to the poor, and so become poor, then follow Him, Mark: 10:21. Many would think of this as giving away all of one's possessions to charity, as giving away money for the sake of getting rid of money because it is a hindrance to following Christ.

If we were to read between the lines it is more than that. It is the quality of life that He was looking for when He chose His disciples. The great spiritual implication was that to be a follower of Christ we must:

a) Be concerned about the poor. We must touch the poor, seek the poor, and be friends with the poor.

b) Love and care for the poor, so much so that we are willing to sell all that we have and give it to them. When we are willing to give all our treasures and what are the most precious to us, then we would be able to give ourselves to the poor. It is only in this way that we are able to be compatible with the heart of

God: giving His most precious and only begotten Son to us. God had already shown us His example by giving His supreme gift to mankind. We must likewise give ourselves to those whom we want to reach, whom we want to evangelize.

c) Be like the poor: to be identified with the poor. The great saints of God had always been living in frugality and lived among the poor and the sick. The great missionaries to Africa's Congo eat worms the way the natives eat. Actually the way the natives lived was no different from the animals in the jungle as far as hygienic conditions were concerned. Paul in 1 Cor 9:22 said: "To the weak became I as weak that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some".

I have often marveled at the sequence that Christ put it: Christ did not say: follow me and I shall teach you how to part with your treasures by selling them and giving them to the poor. No, it is the other way around. This would mean that unless we have love and concern for the poor; unless we are determined to do what we should be doing; be convinced that we can store up treasures in heaven, we will not qualify as the followers of Christ. The rich young man who wanted to follow Christ was a good man who kept God's commandments and Christ loved him too; but unfortunately he could not part with his wealth or understand his mission to the poor. No doubt many of the 'Prosperity-Gospel Christians' would want to persecute me for saying all the above, but I cannot but be true to what I really perceive from the word of God. Please do not ask me why there are no easier alternative routes for Christians; at least I have not yet found any escape out of this poverty dilemma.

How does the Gospel become the "power of God into Salvation to all that believe"? What makes the preaching of the Gospel effective? Does it depend entirely on what we say and how we preach it? Real effectiveness depends on the moving and working of the Holy Spirit in people's heart. It is really the Holy Spirit that touches lives and our speech is only a vehicle. We are only the typewriters, and the Holy Spirit is the one who does the typing.

In whom does the Holy Spirit move? The Holy Spirit will work through those who yielded to God and obey His commands. If we walk according to the ways of God the Holy Spirit will fill and work through us. People who seek the sensation of "spirit filled" session to prove what they are should go to the basics first, otherwise they are deceiving themselves. The Holy Spirit will anoint those who have compassion for the poor, give themselves to the poor, because it is compatible with the heart of God. Even preaching to rich men, one still needs this kind of spirit and motivation to do the work of witnessing and preaching. It is only then that the Holy Spirit will till and plant in men's heart the seed of the Gospel.

Mary broke her precious box of perfume ointment and poured it over Christ. God is looking for exactly the same kind of people who will pour out their life, their most precious on Christ. This is the true spirit of preaching the Gospel. This is why Christ wanted all those who preached the Gospel to preach about her acts. Judas had commented that it was a waste. Actually the real goal of the Gospel is to produce men and women who will lavish and "waste" their life on Christ. Yes, we often see men who are at peak of their professional

career giving up their good pay jobs and go into the ministry. Many of the men of the world would comment that it is a waste.

It is only when our faith causes us to love Christ and touches the poor that the heart and mind of God is satisfied.

Besides spending her precious ointment, Mary had the mind of Christ. She responded to His heart's desire. Christ loved Mary. He forgave all her sins, cast seven devils out of her. Mary too loved Christ, howbeit passionately, yet Christ understood her and she knew Christ's heart. She knew what will happen to Him when the day of the cross is near. She knew Christ is going to the cross (Mark 14:8) while all Christ's disciples still did not know. Christ death was the most important event in all history. He is the savior who gives the world life and hope. Without His death, all humanity was, is and will all be dead. Yet no one gave our Lord a farewell acknowledgement nor did anyone celebrate the salvation of mankind. But this woman Mary excelled them all. This was why in Christ's resurrection, He choose to reveal Himself to Mary. Christ wanted all people in all ages to come to acknowledge her death. She was to be the example of a sinner saved by grace and enter into God's glory.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Heili Lee (1937-2015) was born in Wuhan, China, and earned engineering degrees from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. In the thirty-five years living in Hong Kong, Lee has been involved in student work, youth ministry, the rehabilitation of drug addicts, workers evangelism, the training of Sunday school teachers, and work with seminaries.

Conventional wisdom says holiness starts with determination to end sinful habits after salvation. Work hard to get away from sin, and you will achieve holiness. That parallels our society's admiration for achievement. Work hard and you will be rewarded with wealth.

Kingdom of God does not operate by worldly principals. But we fear God's way because His demand for sacrifice may leave basic needs unfulfilled, and strip us of our identity. In using determination to resist sin, we continue to struggle with sin, and sometimes with disastrous consequences.

One does not conquer sin in order to achieve holiness. Rather, holiness is granted when God leads us through the process of reckoning. We reckon ourselves to be dead to sin. The Holy Spirit removes the appeal of sin, and ends sinning without effort.

This is the beauty of the Magnificent Cross in that Jesus Christ helps us crucify ourselves Under the Magnificent Cross. Crucifixion of the self is a fundamental step towards Holiness of God.



Heili Lee
1937-2015