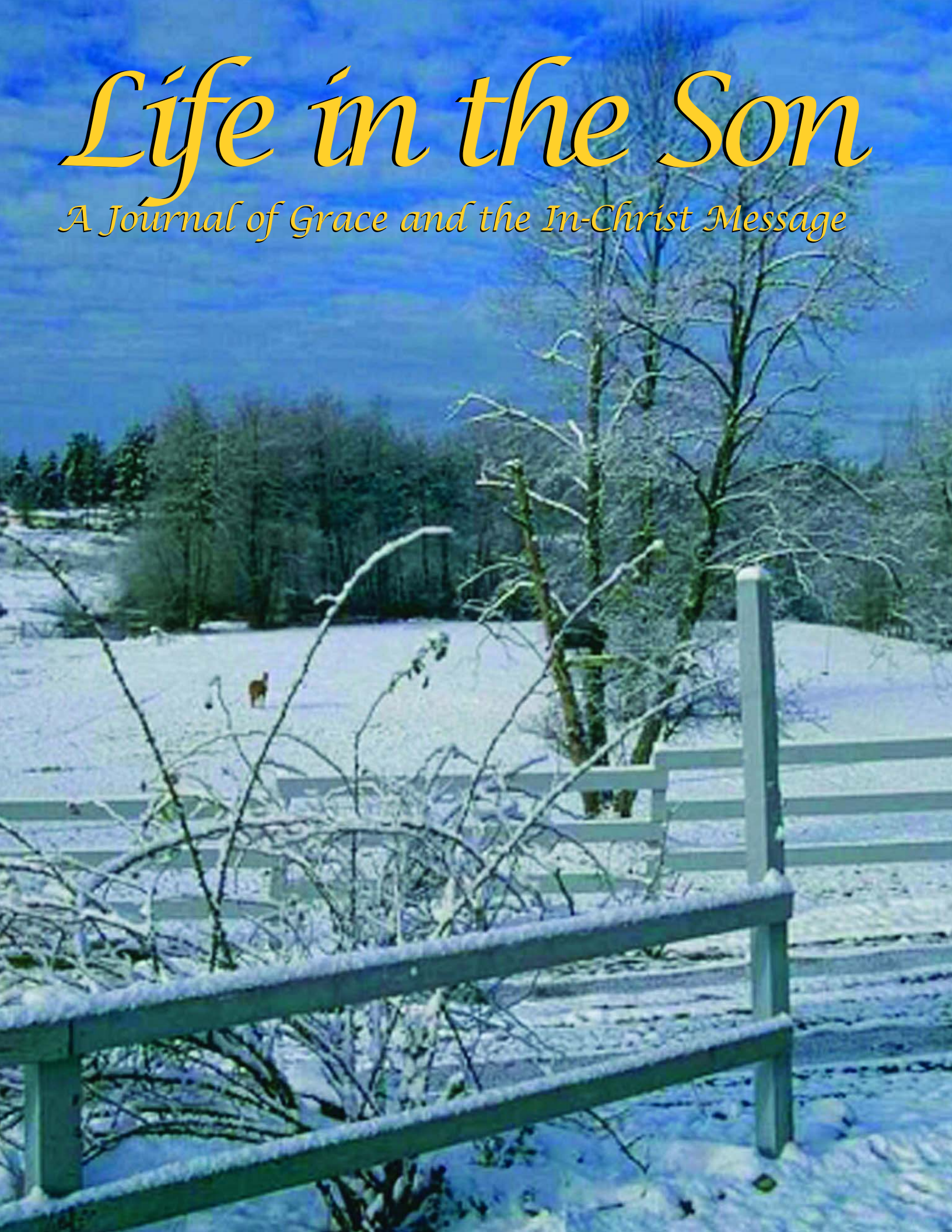


Life in the Son

A Journal of Grace and the In-Christ Message



Life in the Son

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*A Journal Dedicated to the Great Message,
Christ in you, the Hope of Glory*

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EDITORIAL

Christ-life believers are encouraged to follow Paul as He follows Christ. Before Paul strictly followed Christ based on his revelation that Christ lived in him, he went through several human efforts to please God or to please the ones he fellowshiped with. When he was in his Pentecostal period, immediately after he was saved, he spoke in tongues; he healed the sick, performed miracles and even baptized a few believers in water. He was possibly in this stage of his walk when he wrote 1 Corinthians 13:8–12. But even though he was endeavoring to keep faith with those he was fellowshiping with, something in him said this relationship I have now is not perfect, but there will be a perfect work of God in me. Even though Christ was in him, he did not know it. He would know it soon, however, because the Lord would reveal His Son in Paul (Gal. 1:16–17), as Paul's real life (Gal. 2:20). This revelation did two things for Paul.

One, the revelation of Christ as Paul's new-creation life would be "the perfect" that Paul announced was coming in 1 Corinthians 13:10. Sadly, a great number of believers are waiting till they die before they know their perfect condition. Death will be too late (Col. 1:26–27). Believers are to be presented to the Lord perfect at their home-going. What is the perfect? It is simply Christ alive in and as the believer's life, now. Religion cannot produce this. It comes only by a revelation from the Holy Spirit that Christ lives in the believer (Eph. 1:17).

Two, when Paul had revealed to him that Christ in him was the perfect one operating as his life, he knew then that he, indeed, no longer lived, only Christ lived as him. This meant that all his ministries were no longer to be his and the operation of those ministries were no longer to be by him. The logic was simple, if he no longer lived as the old Paul and Christ was his new life, then all the ministries and works

would be Christ operating through him. Now, he had the answer as to the failure of the tongues, the prophecies and the knowledge. (1 Cor. 13:8). The revelation that Christ was his life would do away with that which was in part and allow "the perfect" to operate.

Believers will never become who they are in Christ, or manifest that which is perfect, until they have Christ revealed in them by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 1:9–10). Thank God, that which is perfect has come. We still see the supernatural; people are healed today; miracles do occur, but it is never man's ministry. It is Christ alive and working in humans. We have no ministry of our own. It is Christ moving out of the human as God has created them to be. After Paul had his revelation of Christ in him, he could say, Follow me as I follow Christ. Christ alone gave to Paul alone this final gospel.

These are some of the truths we love and stand by in this Christ-life Fellowship! †

TRUE NATURE OF GOD

PART 2

By Don Byrd

In the Pauline epistles, one of the first things I began to understand about God that brought peace and rest to me was that He desires to be Father to all who believe. Before creation, God's desire was to be Father; and from this desire comes the purpose for which He created heaven, angels, the universe, the earth and people. Out of His desire to be Father comes the purpose of the new birth of which Christ speaks in John 3, and of which Paul speaks scores of times.

The birthing was a mystery that had never been revealed to me at this point in my walk in the Lord. Though I had been born again for many years, I had no understanding of the true meaning of the birthing. What a shame to be alive and live in Christ—the glory of the Father—and not know what it means. *“The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all”* (Gal. 4:1–2).

Maturity, or immaturity, is a condition of the mind.

There is a period of time in each believer's walk when he does not know who he is, and it may remain this way for many years. The period of time that the believer may remain ignorant of his identity is indefinite as seen in the phrase *“...as long as...”* This period of time is contingent on maturity (a mind transformation), not the number of years, months or days. The child will remain a child *“as long as...”* He will remain a child until the time appointed of the Father! The Father knows when the child has matured. What is maturity? I believe maturity is when the believer comes to an understanding of the Christ who is in him and begins to live according to that knowledge. This is the fullness of times spoken of in Galatians 4.

Without the revelation of Christ in the believer, there is only one other way to know God: the God of the Old Testament law, bondage and fear. Without Paul's epistles, believers will never know the true nature of God. They will

remain in bondage and fear to the judgmental God of the Old Testament, and even parts of the New Testament. Only Paul's epistle will make the difference when it comes to knowing that God desires to be Father to us. The true nature of God is that of Father!

The God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament, except in John's gospel and Paul's epistles. Then what is the difference? Not until we finally begin to understand the Pauline epistles will we find the true nature of God. His nature did not change from a judgmental God to that of Father; the problem is the believer never knew His true nature until the revelation of Christ in the believer.

The only difference between the God of the Old and New Testaments is the revelation of Christ in the believer. God did not change; the change takes place in our minds. The birthing makes Him our Father, and it is here that the difference is found. It is in the revelation of Christ

in the believer that we find the true nature of this glorious God who is Father. He has the nature of a Father! He loves, cares and adores those whom He has birthed! Do you know that He hurts when you hurt? He is sad when you are sad! He is unhappy when you are unhappy! He cares! He cares! He is totally cognizant of our feelings and our cares in this life.

He is our Father because Christ lives in us. What a revelation! God is our Father, what a glorious nature He has! The glory of it all is that *“ye might be partakers of the divine nature”* (2 Peter 1:4). We are born again of the incorruptible seed, having imparted to us His divine nature! What is this divine nature? Father! Father! Father! He is Father to believers through *“Christ in you!”*

I am confident that in the Pauline epistles I found the truth of the Fatherhood of God in fullness. This is accomplished through His seed, Christ, in you, the hope of glory. Recently, I re-evaluated the use of *Father* in John’s gospel and found an amazing thing. The term *father* is used 139 times. Seventeen times it has no reference to God at all. *Father* is used 122 times referring to God as Father! Jesus uses it 110 times referring to God as Father and 9 times when He is speaking directly to the Father. Though *Father* is

used quite extensively in the gospel, according to John it leaves the believer not knowing that God is his very own Father. In John’s gospel, God is called *“the Father,”* which has reference to Him being the Father of Jesus only. Then He is referred to as *“my Father”* by Christ only. Only one time is there reference to God being the Father of someone other than Christ: *“I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and [to] my God, and your God”* (John 20:17, author’s translation added).

This is the only verse in John’s gospel that refers to God being the Father of anyone other than Christ. John gives us a beautiful insight into the fact that God is a Father, but only to Christ Jesus our Lord. In John’s gospel, we do not learn that God is our Father; but we learn of the Father-Son relationship that exists between the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the first step in coming to understand that God desires to be your Father!

In John’s gospel, it is not our relationship; it is exclusively between the Father and His Son, Jesus. Not until we get into Paul’s epistles (after Jesus’ death and resurrection, when Christ becomes available to the believer) do we learn that God is our Father through Christ in us! If you desire to know God as Father and understand His

true nature, you must turn to the Pauline epistles. There are no options! Though Peter tells us that God has a divine nature, he gives no clue as to what kind of nature it is!

Condemnation

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). As long as I was without the understanding that God was my Father, most of my walk in the Lord was under condemnation because there were times when I reverted back to my understanding of God as the omnipotent, righteous, holy, unapproachable God of the Old Testament.

For many years, Romans 8:1 surely sounded good, but it was not a reality to me. There were periods of times when there was no condemnation, but these were times when I obeyed the letter of the law and thought I was acceptable to Him because of it. The moment I failed to comply with the letter of the law, I felt condemnation rush in like a stormy wind. Periods without condemnation were always short lived.

Why did Romans 8:1 not work? Because I had not received the revelation of Christ in me of which Paul speaks so many times. Not until I came to an understanding that God is my Father did the condemnation leave. Romans 8:1 is

(CONTINUED ON P. 27)

HE HAS THE NATURE OF A FATHER! HE LOVES, CARES AND ADORES THOSE WHOM HE HAS BIRTHED!

TIDBITS ABOUT CHRISTMAS

By Dwight Davis

“An the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10–11).

This Christmas, I just wanted to informally share with you a few thoughts concerning the people and events surrounding the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ...and perhaps help clear up a few misconceptions.

(1) Angels are all male. It was Gabriel who announced the birth to Zacharias (Luke 1:19), and later to Mary (Luke 1:26–38), and surely led the heavenly angelic host to announce the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. All references to angels in the Greek New Testament are in the masculine gender. There are no references to angels singing anywhere in the Word of God, only saying. We get the other things from songs, Christmas cards, and maybe Christmas presentations, but certainly not from the Word of God.

(2) The shepherds were abiding in the field with their flock at night. Bethlehem sets 2,550 feet above sea level and on December 25, it would normally be too cold for sheep to be out in open fields. Most likely, Jesus was born around late September, perhaps on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:26–32), and was the one who would prophetically fulfill that day as the final sin sacrifice and Savior of the world (Heb. 9:6–14; Luke 1:11; John 4:42).

(3) When Jesus, the Word, was implanted into Mary, it was done by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35, 38). This most likely occurred nine months prior to the Day of Atonement, or on December 25, around the end of the Festival of Lights (Chanukah). For Jesus was the true light through which all men might see God and have life (John 1:4–18). And light was the first thing that God spoke into darkness during the redecoration of the earth (Gen. 1:2–3). I believe God honors life from the time of

conception (Luke 1:38, 42), and today that is still God’s answer to the abortion questions.

(4) Mary is a type of the believer, born again by the Word implanted within by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35, 38; 1 Peter 1:23). We are to allow the Holy Spirit to bring forth the Son from within us as in Mary (Luke 1:31; 2 Cor. 4:7, 10).

(5) Joseph is a type of the local church organization, which houses and provides for the work of God; but the church organization like Joseph cannot give you life (Matt. 1:18–25).

(6) The wise men could have been more than three in number, for Scripture only mentions that they brought three different specific gifts (Matt. 2:11). There could have been more than one bringing any one of the gifts, or many bringing one or all gifts. We have built a doctrine of three wise men based on songs, Christmas cards and man’s ideas.

(7) The wise men probably got to Bethlehem approximately two years

after Jesus' birth (Matt. 2:16). They were looking for Jesus and following the direction where they had originally seen the star (Matt. 2:7). Apparently, the star was no longer visible in the sky. The star, which they saw two years previously when they were in the east, reappeared and went before them and led them to Jesus (Matt. 2:9-10). This is a type of the light of the Word as quickened by the Holy Spirit. It will always go before us and lead us to Jesus (Ps. 119:105; John 15:26; 16:13-15). Wise men still follow after Jesus today. When they find Him, they find life, and the greatest treasure of all!

The Real Spirit of Christmas

One Christmas story that stands out to me as illustrating the real spirit of Christmas was this one as shared by one of my brothers in Christ about a friend of his named Paul. It was shared this way:

"A friend of mine named Paul received a new automobile from his brother as a Christmas present. On

Christmas Eve, when Paul came out of his office, a street urchin was walking around the shiny new car, admiring it. 'Is this your car, Mister?' He asked.

"Paul nodded and said, 'My brother gave it to me for Christmas.' The boy was astounded. 'You mean your brother gave it to you and it didn't cost you nothing?' 'Boy, I wish...' He hesitated.

"And Paul knew that he was going to wish he had a brother like that. But what the lad said jarred Paul all the way down to his heels.

"'I wish,' the boy went on, 'that I could be a brother like that.'

"Paul looked at the boy in astonishment, then impulsively he added, 'would you like to ride in my automobile?'

"'Oh, yes, I'd love that,' the boy said.

"After a short ride the urchin turned and with his eyes aglow, said. 'Mister, would you mind driving me in front of my house?'

"Paul smiled a little. He thought he knew what the lad wanted. He wanted to show his neighbors that he could ride home in a big

automobile. But Paul was wrong again.

"'Will you stop where those steps are?' the boy asked.

"He ran up the steps. Then in a little while, Paul heard him coming back, but he was not coming fast. He was carrying his little, polio-crippled brother. He sat him down on the bottom step, then sort of squeezed up against him and pointed to the car.

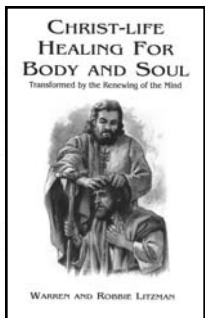
"'There she is, Buddy, just like I told you upstairs. His brother gave it to him for Christmas, and it didn't cost him a cent. And some day, I'm gonna give you one just like it. Then you can see for yourself, all the pretty things in the Christmas windows that I've been trying to tell you about.'

"Paul got out and lifted the lad to the front seat of his car. The shinning-eyed, older brother climbed in beside him, and the three of them began a memorable holiday ride.

"That Christmas Eve, Paul learned what Jesus meant when He said, 'It is more blessed to give...'"

Merry Christmas! †

WISE MEN STILL FOLLOW AFTER JESUS TODAY. WHEN THEY FIND HIM, THEY FIND LIFE, AND THE GREATEST TREASURE OF ALL!

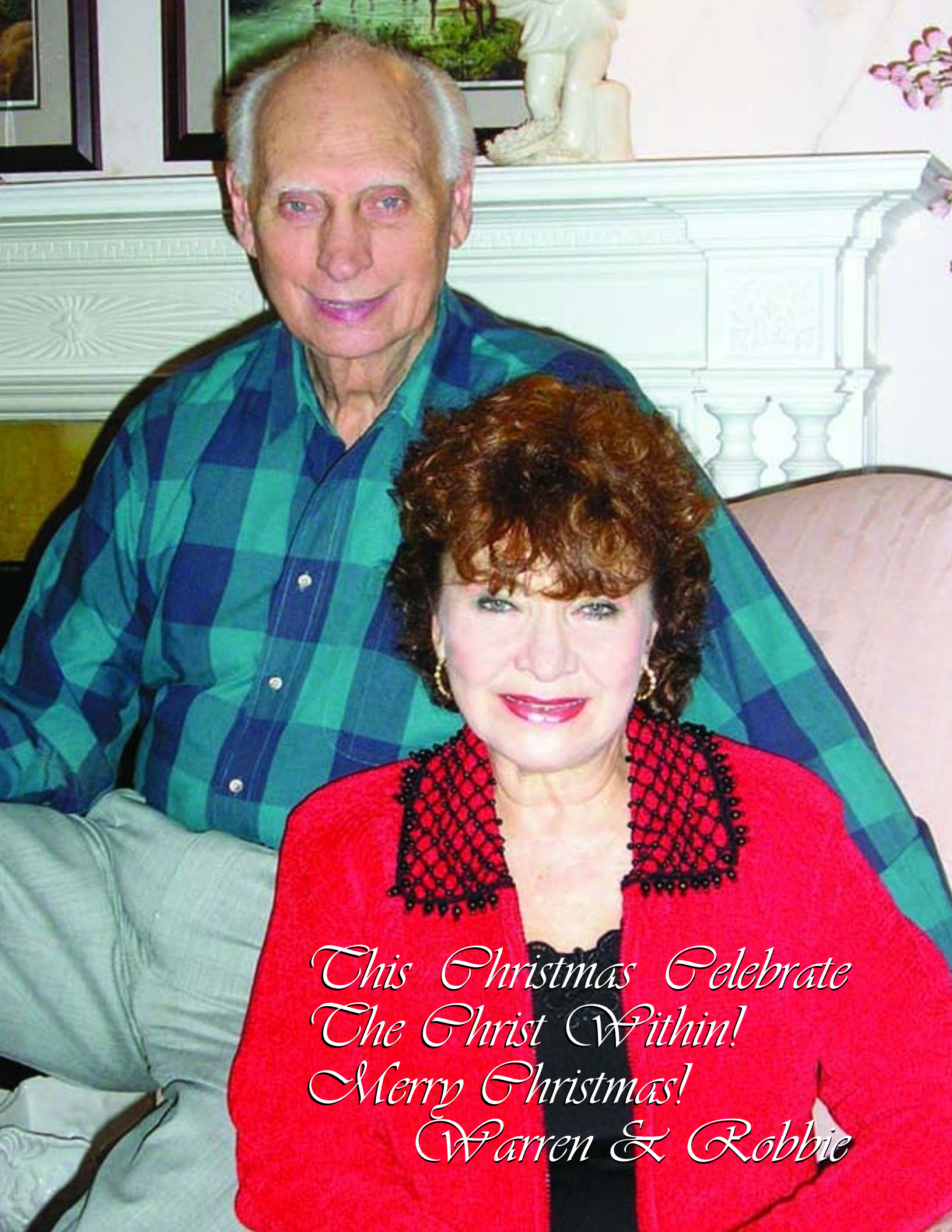


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*This Christmas Celebrate
The Christ Within!
Merry Christmas!
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THE MARY BODY AND THE JOSEPH MINISTRY

By Warren Litzman

“And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS” (Luke 1:28–31).

The strategic meaning for us in this verse is that Mary shall bring forth a son. The Lord prepared Mary to be the mother of Jesus in a very special way. He saw to it that she was in a perfect bloodline, and that she was of the lineage of Abraham. This was so important because she was to be used to prepare a body, a special body, for the Son of God. God never does anything without a body. There was no place to put evil spirits back in the period before creation

without a body called Earth. There was no place to put the spirit of man, except God first created a body. Now, in our verse above, a body, the Mary body, is to be used to create a body for the Son of God to live in. To do this, the Lord will especially use a fourteen-year-old girl called Mary of Nazareth.

One of the most blessed thoughts in the Scriptures is the concept of God having a body ministry. It is one of the best, and farthest-reaching plans, that God has ever shown us. His plan calls for each of us to enter into a relationship with Him whereby we are transformed from the kingdom of darkness, (that is, our sinful lives), into the kingdom of His dear Son. He does this by placing His Son, Christ, in us. This means that there is no restoration or correction of humans in the plan of God. The plan of God calls for our old nature, the old man, to die with Christ on the cross and for our bodies to become the house for a new creation—the Christian.

God Sets the Stage

This placement of His Son in us is what God’s plan is all about. Mary became the epitome of the body ministry when she was chosen of God to bring forth the Savior. She received the highest calling, for her only purpose in being birthed herself was to bring forth a living Savior to a dying world. Had she rebelled, had she failed, had she fallen short, had she done her own thing, had she lived according to the custom of her own day, there would never have been a living Savior to come forth out of her life.

To make sure that the Son had a perfect body to be born in, the Father properly set the stage. For four hundred years the world had been without a prophet. In that time, God prepared Mary. She was of the proper blood line; she had the proper family tree, dating back to Abram; she had the perfect history. It was God’s choosing, for she was not the highest and the mightiest of girls, she was not the most learned, she was not the most

famous. She became all of these after she had performed the work of God. She was a simple and calm, everyday fourteen-year-old Israelite girl. She fit into the plan of life for a young girl of that age. She was betrothed to a man much older than she, but she was to have a great control and power in his life. She was to be a spiritual woman chosen of God. Joseph's role was in keeping with the plan of God, but he wasn't chosen; she was. Her mission was to fulfill the Father's plan in bringing forth a living Savior to a dying world.

Mary epitomizes the true body of Christ. She is the clearest picture of what the true body of Christ is today. The greatest truth of the body of Christ today is that every believer is pregnant with Jesus. Regardless of who we are, our only purpose in existence is to bring forth the living Savior to a lost and dying world. As Mary did, we are to bring forth the Son of God. This is to happen in every one of our lives; for this is the purpose for humans on this earth.

Dear friends, time is short. God alone knows when the end shall come. Still almost half the world is without the knowledge of who Jesus is. It is necessary that God divinely intervene and do something about His great cause. It is not movements and organizations or men who control the ultimate plan of God.

One thing, I believe, God wants is this Mary story to be the example for all born-again believers. We, too, are to allow the Christ in us to be delivered out to the whole world.

It All Started on the Day of Pentecost

That night in Bethlehem, angels announced the birthing and shepherds came to see the baby that had been brought forth, born of the Spirit. Likewise, the true believer of Christ has brought forth the Savior without man's help. So, the Holy Spirit came to those 120 waiting in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost for the sole purpose of bringing forth Jesus in their lives. On that day, a new body was formed. That was the plan of God from the beginning. That has been the way God has always moved since the birth of the Christian church. It all started on the Day of Pentecost, and though it has wavered and waned on many occasions and at times become almost extinct, the Holy Spirit has always brought forth the Son from that new body formed on the Day of Pentecost. Note, it was not "a body of the Holy Spirit," even though He had much to do with it. It was the new body of Christ.

Today, that new body of Christ is the Church. It started on the Day of Pentecost, still under a Judaistic cloud; but finally, in God's perfect timing, the

Apostle Paul was raised up to clarify and design the true body of Christ so that it perfectly fit God's eternal plan. Just as God did at Bethlehem with the Mary body, and just as He did with the new Christ body on the Day of Pentecost, it was all done without man's help. God alone births and brings forth the Son. As the Son begins to come forth, a world, even a religious world that has become corpse-like—indifferent, pathetic, non-spiritual, intellectual and denominational—comes alive. In the midst of all this, God sends the Holy Spirit to be the teacher who causes men to sit up and learn; and suddenly the life of Jesus begins to come forth from the body of Christ and His life is manifested upon the earth in a new and living way. All of the needs of humanity begin to be met as humans see that Christ lives in them. God elects that this move of Christ alive should go to the ends of the earth, still without any man touching it; and, just as it was with the Mary body, Joseph is not used in any supernatural way.

A new move of God we call the *Christ-life message* has begun to encompass the earth; and a pure Christ has begun to come forth. Little people, insignificant people, unimportant people, common people just like Mary, just like that hundred and twenty in the Upper Room, have begun to bring forth

THE GREATEST TRUTH OF THE BODY OF CHRIST TODAY IS THAT EVERY BELIEVER IS PREGNANT WITH JESUS.

the Son. Always, every move of God goes in cycles. For God to accomplish a greater thing, He must move from a lesser thing.

Do you see the picture? God is doing it the way He has always done it. He never really does anything new. He has already written His plan for eternity. Everything we need is firmly fixed in His eternal plan. True works of grace will always be produced by the same God. Nothing is in vain; no story is in vain, no truth in vain. All things are working together faithfully in the plan of God. And so, the Lord is raising up the body of Christ, bringing forth the Son in this day. The great burden grips our hearts that we might preach this Jesus as we never have before and enlighten humanity as to what God is doing.

The Joseph Ministry

Did you ever wonder why Jesus stayed thirty years in Nazareth? At the age of twelve, He was growing in stature physically, mentally, spiritually and socially. Why did God keep Him there for that training for such a long period of time? Before the Savior actually came forth to die and save the world from sin, the Father had seen to it that He had entered strict training. Those are the years the Father used for the training of a Son.

Now we come to the all-important point that is

necessary to Christianity, which opens up the factor of Joseph's position. He wasn't a relation by birth; he wasn't an important factor supernaturally. He was strategically important in providing for raising and supporting the Son. And that brings us to the very important place all believers hold in the plan of God.

Not all will sing or preach or do great visible things in their Christ-service, but each one can carry the gospel in some way. It is at this point that Joseph begins to minister to the body. He is an intricate part of God's plan. The Joseph ministry is to take care of the body of Christ, the Mary body. He does the work necessary by providing the natural needs. He pays the bills, provides the house (the meeting place). He takes charge of all the natural needs of the household of God, even as Joseph provided for Mary and Jesus as a good husband and step-father.

Today, multitudes still do not know Jesus; and they will not know Jesus without the body ministry of Joseph. He is necessary, you see. The people who meet in hotel rooms, living rooms, restaurants, or wherever, without the true ministry of Joseph, must begin to consider this truth. Now we must intensify the move of God for the sake of those who have never heard. We must settle the question of what we

will do with this great ministry and message of God in Christ. I feel like a voice crying out in the wilderness, for I've always so strongly believed that in the ministry of any group of believers, regardless of where or how they meet, there should be no problem with the meeting or the meeting place because there are those placed in the body to see that all goes well. The local church is where two or three gather together in His name.

We must get it instilled in us that a move of God is no stronger than your desires to provide a channel to reach those who have never heard. Seeing what Christ is to this body of believers, the Christ-life believers, there should never be a hesitancy to fulfill God's purpose for our lives. Your children must be involved, your teenagers must be involved, and every hour of your day and life should be planned, prayerfully, as to how you will release the Christ that is in your body. That is where Joseph comes in.

Behold the Lamb

The great ministry that God has given to the body of Christ this day is to bring forth a Savior. This great body is to make known to all men that a Savior has come. I believe that the Christ-life ministry can be likened to the ministry of John the Baptist. Just as God had a man to proclaim the first

THE JOSEPH MINISTRY IS TO TAKE CARE OF THE BODY OF CHRIST, THE MARY BODY. HE DOES THE WORK NECESSARY BY PROVIDING THE NATURAL NEEDS.

coming of Jesus, God now has a body to proclaim the coming of Jesus for the Church. Just as John the Baptist was trained by the Holy Spirit, so is the body of Christ trained today. It must be trained to bring forth the message of Jesus.

John's message was simply, "*Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). We must skim off and we must cut down, we must pare everything that hinders us from having a true message in these closing moments of time. I don't believe the world needs any other message in these last moments of time except that Christ's life in human beings is their only hope of glory. In Christ is our healing; in Christ is our food; in Christ is our restoration and salvation; in Christ is our new nature; our everything is in Christ. That's God's perspective. We have that message now, and that is the message we should be preaching and declaring to all men everywhere.

The Simplicity of Mary

It isn't all the little details of what we believe that will get the true gospel out. We have seen so many beautiful things in the Mary body. It isn't her great wisdom, her great social status or her prestige that is important. It is her simplicity. We've seen that in the Christ-life Fellowship. You can get together four or five

Christ-life believers in a living room and have as great a meeting as if five thousand were there, because now, it's a Christ-simplicity. It's a different move of God, you see. It has its own personality, and that's why it is beautiful. We do not worship Mary anymore than we worship this body of believers. Jesus is the gifted one. I have Him in me. God doesn't give me gifts; He gives me Jesus. The Holy Spirit brings forth Jesus out of me, and the gifts are His ministries. We never had anything important before the Christ-life.

In the Mary simplicity, the Holy Spirit is now bringing forth the Son in places we never dreamed before, and that is the beauty of it. Who would ever have thought that Judea would have been the birth place of a king, or Bethlehem, that most despicable of all cities? Who would have thought Nazareth would have been the hometown of the Savior. Most of all, who would have thought that Mary would have anything to do with such a great ministry. That's what we are seeing today in the body ministry. I'm seeing, in very unimportant places and among very unimportant people, as far as the world is concerned, a mighty move of God's Spirit. God is bringing forth the Son where He wants Him. No man has ever been able to touch or

have anything to do with the true body ministry of the Father. Once the Spirit begins to bring forth the Son, it's not a man's teaching ministry, not a healer, not a great preacher, but only Christ. God used no man when Christ was birthed. It must always come through the simplicity of a Mary body.

The Father's Mission

There were several individual groups who knew the Son was coming forth two thousand years ago. There was Mary, as well as Zacharias and Elizabeth; there were angels, wise men, shepherds, all who knew this event was taking place. The Father didn't send any man through the country to say, Now everyone of you wake up; there is going to be a Savior born down in Bethlehem and we are going to have a great commemoration day. No, God never used any man. He always did it Himself because, you see, the birthing of sons is finally the mission of the Father. And, since He doesn't tell us who they are and where they are, He brings forth the Son in us everywhere we go.

Do you see the picture? We're coming into a new faith, His faith. We're coming into a greater hour where men have not heretofore taken spiritual responsibility. God is moving in the world, in believer's lives, awakening an urgency in our spirits to bring about His intention.

(CONTINUED ON P. 28)

JESUS IS THE GIFTED ONE. I HAVE HIM IN ME. GOD DOESN'T GIVE ME GIFTS; HE GIVES ME JESUS.

EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE SON

HAVING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

PART 3: CULTIVATING CONNECTION WITH OTHERS

By Alice Scott-Ferguson

I remember when I lived in Scotland, looking out over the wild waters of the North Sea and asking the Lord to help me see people the way He saw them. His voice eclipsed the crashing waves as He replied, “Then you must love them the way I love them.” Well, that was back in the days of trying to be like Jesus and such a pronouncement seemed impossible. It was, and I failed. If there was only one good reason to realize that Christ is our Life, this would be it: to enable us to tap into His power to love in order to have healthy relationships with the people who populate our worlds.

As we look at the last in this series on relationships, we will examine and extract effective ways to relate and connect to the people in our lives using the elements of love, truth and acceptance as we did in the two previous articles that discussed the Father’s connection with us and making peace with ourselves. This short article cannot look in depth at significant relationships such as marriage, but sim-

ply serves as a framework on which to fashion harmony, wholeness and freedom in connections that are often fractured and failing, that are complex, complicated and can drive us crazy. But, this is why we are left on earth—to learn to live out Christ in the crucible of life.

Letting Love Rule

Exercising even extreme natural love will never make it when the going gets tough. Only the unconditional love of God—that now resides in us—is adequate to meet the demands and the vagaries of every association.

Love is usually the first casualty when we disagree with one another, especially in the family of faith. While we are entitled to select preferences of assembly, worship and liturgy, we are not free to become critical, self-righteous and alienated—not if we value love as the sole medium of exchange in the Father’s family. I have just completed a book with a co-author whose views are diametrically opposed to mine. The

whole point of the endeavor was to show that love and unity are more important than whatever strong opinions we espouse—in this case gender roles. My friend’s face was not the focus of my attention as I formulated my response to her outrageous opinions! While refuting her arguments, I still loved and respected her and it proved a unique and wonderful opportunity to let love rule. Though our opinions were even stronger and more established at the end—our friendship was more cemented as well.

Natural affection appears to be evaporating from familial affiliations. We are aware of increasing reports of abuse, neglect and abandonment at every level—parents betraying the children they were meant to protect, and children in turn spurning parental standards and neglecting them at the close of their days. However, because we know that the knowledge of both good and evil inflicts causalities, the other end of the spectrum is equally unacceptable. What looks

USING THE LOVE CHAPTER MODEL, WE CAN TEST TO SEE IF WHAT WE ARE OPERATING IN IS OUR OWN FLAWED AND FEEBLE LOVE OR GOD'S PERFECT AND POWERFUL KIND.

like the enviable alternative to the many faces of evil—affection, involvement and attachment—when these suffocate and control, they are as devoid of agape love as overt abuse.

The working model of God's love is described in the familiar thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians where the hallmarks of the love-life are patience, kindness and longsuffering. The opposite of this is what is sometimes referred to as toxic love—that which pollutes, poisons and imprisons rather than sets free. Malcolm Smith describes this in his little book entitled *Toxic Love*, "Counterfeit love can be very impatient and even unkind to the person who does not respond to its manipulations; it shows itself as jealousy if it perceives that another is capturing the praise it seeks. Above all, it seeks its own...remembering, sometimes for years, the wrongs done against it." We can all relate to adopting some of those attitudes some of the time.

Using the love chapter model, we can test to see if what we are operating in is our own flawed and feeble love or God's perfect and powerful kind. For example, if our happiness and emotional meter is directly influenced by the kind of response we illicit from the object of our affection, then we know that it is human love at work: if our mood and day are ruined because of how someone

does or does not respond to us, then we can label it toxic. It could be co-dependency. I heard an apt definition of this condition: when a co-dependent is on their deathbed, it is not their own life that passes before them, but the life of the one with whom they are unhealthily entangled.

However, while over-involvement is not healthy, neither is withdrawal from significant connections. When we have been wounded in relationships and are both weary and wary of close encounters, withdrawing is the welcomed line of least resistance. It feels like a safety zone, but in truth it is a shell of selfishness molded by fear. The exit route from this suffocating cocoon is signposted—love, love and yet more love. So, in His strength we sally forth into the fray of human affairs once more, although they are always fraught with the possibility of hurt and failure. But the love of the Father knows no giving up, hoping and believing all things.

Nor does He leave anyone out. The lepers, the untouchables who were banished in their communities in biblical times, are still among us. They no longer look like lepers from the outside yet they are often shunned and avoided because of our perception of their lifestyles and the blemishes they bring to our gatherings. The divorced, the addicted and the homo-

sexuals are among those who comprise our modern day misunderstood and marginalized elements of society. A dear friend who suffers an addiction wrote this to me recently. "I truly feel like a modern day leper. Nobody reaches out to me; and if I did not make the first move, I would be totally alone." This ought not to be. The perfect love flowing out of us will never discriminate among our dinner guests. That is the truth of the matter and love is always twinned with truth.

Telling the Truth

When we tell the truth, we risk being misunderstood and acquiring a new foe. But remember, the wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of an enemy (Prov. 27:6). We are all familiar with Paul's exhortation to speak the truth in love in order that we may all grow up into Christ (Eph. 4:25). If there is one thing harder than telling the truth, it has to be finding the right time to speak straight. I heard a disturbing account from a friend who was taken to task by a group—not one on one as is the biblical principle—for behaviors they deemed destructive. What could have been an act of caring was lost on a widow of but a few months whose broken heart could not handle another perceived onslaught of rejection. Both the telling and the timing have everything to do with love.

Because I am pretty impulsive and have been known to walk in where angels fear to tread, I am slowly learning to go only when I get the Father's green light. My plea to safeguard me from blundering is, "Lord, make them ready to hear what I am ready to say." A close cousin to timing is motivation. We only have the right and privilege to speak into someone's life if we have their trust and their best interests in mind. When we pause to examine the why of what we are about to say, we have time to assess whether the reason is to satisfy our needs, showcase our own self-righteousness or out of genuine concern for our friend's welfare. We can be powerful agents for redemptive change in a person's life if we first examine the log in our own eye and acknowledge our own fallibility and proclivity to failure. Then, the likelihood of being heard and being healed is much higher.

I highly recommend the reading of Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend's book, *Boundaries Face to Face* if you have a difficult situation into which you must speak truth. In the case where we may have been seriously offended and must address the breach of a relationship, they write this. "There is something very powerful about the one who was hurt being the one who wants to help. It is this humble approach that

Jesus brought to the world. Our taking this same approach has a powerful melting effect on the offender. It is humbling in the best of ways, because we submit to love, not to our tendency to get even."

Finding balance in our interactions is the task of a lifetime. Sometimes we are strident and accusatory because we are too lazy and self-centered to formulate a plan of engagement and we opt for blurting out truths sans love or, because we are both lazy and loveless, we adopt the ostrich posture and put our head in the sand—in classic denial of the aching need for the light of truth to stream into the world of our darkened relationships. Truth is an indispensable component in nurturing healthy connectedness to others.

Honoring Sacred Spaces

Despite our most valiant efforts at loving unconditionally or telling the truth in a timely and tireless manner in order to improve our relationships, some of our connections may continue to be cold, strained and disappointing. Now is the opportunity to relinquish all our sadness and disappointments to our God—a place of repose that trusts the Father of the family to complete the work that He has begun in each one of His beloved children. And He will.

If we feel that our love has been spurned, it is help-

ful to reflect that not everyone has the same capacity either to give or receive overt demonstrations of affection. This has proven most freeing for someone like me who has no trouble demonstrating affection. But, if we have taken up cudgels on behalf of another and are feeling unappreciated for our interference, then the greatest gift we get from this "no-no" is—never again! Recognizing the sanctity of each individual to deal with their own relationships is the greatest gesture of respect that we can bestow on another. Honoring the sacred space of another's soul is the ultimate act of acceptance because we recognize the Life that dwells there: we respect this space as inviolate because it is the womb of God's wondrous workings—the place of intimacy that He alone, the ultimate lover, has a right to live and work.

Hear this wonderful scriptural injunction as we assess how to let go and accept others: "You all have a single Teacher, and you are all classmates. Don't set people up as experts over your life, letting them tell you what to do. Save that authority for God; let him tell you what to do. And don't let people maneuver you into taking charge of them. There is only one life-leader for you and them—Christ (Matt. 23:4–10, *The Message*). When we remember that

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BOTH THE TELLING
AND THE TIMING
HAVE EVERYTHING TO
DO WITH LOVE.

ENEMIES OF THE CROSS

By Warren Litzman

In Philippians 3:17–19, Paul very bluntly and forcibly says that anyone who does not follow him as he follows Christ is an enemy of the Cross. It is obvious to me those he is talking about are professing believers who have not accepted the Cross as their only way of salvation. Even to this day, there are many professing Christians who have not followed Paul in making the Cross of Christ the center of God's plan of salvation. It seems the longer Christianity continues, less and less the miraculous way that God intended to save humanity by Christ's death on the cross is preached.

Some religions have substituted water baptism, church membership, good works and many other things as necessities for salvation. We forget the importance of timing when the Father saw that humanity had made such a mess out of their lives on earth that He said, It is time to put into action my final plan (1 Peter 1:20–23). I'll take my Son and offer Him as my sacri-

fice to save this pitifull people. With His death I'll kill out their old way of doing things (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6), and His death will be their death. His new resurrection life will be their life, and finally, my home will be their home. It was clearly established when God killed His Son that the death of His Son would be the only way of salvation. It was further carried out by the Apostle Paul when he said he was determined to know nothing save Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). God's plan was clearly established, but many became enemies of the Cross, because they did not like it.

Paul states again the fact, if anyone preaches any way to salvation other than that which I preach, let him be cursed (Gal. 1:8–9). A curse was put upon ministries that did not preach what Paul preached. Paul considered these enemies of the Cross. This is one of the greatest problems in Christianity today, for many that are preaching bear the reproach of Paul's curse

and the fruit of this has denied believers the in-Christ message.

Then again, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:20 that humanity was bought with a price, the price was the shed blood of Christ. Now, if anyone thinks that they can work for what is already dearly paid for, let them be cursed. If any think that paying money (tithes), or doing good works, or putting forth any good effort on their own will in any way influence God to giving them salvation or blessings, let them be accursed. These are enemies of the Cross.

Paul is not finished yet. He says if any man preach any other gospel than that which he preached, let them be cursed. This is Paul saying that anyone that changes the Scriptures in any area having to do with Christ's death on the Cross, or having to do with changing any part of the in-Christ message, is cursed. New translations are available today, and many of them make crucial changes in the final gospel Christ gave to Paul. The enemies

of the Cross will always be with us; but every believer, filled with the Holy Spirit, will always have the Cross and its attributes, like Christ living in believers, in clear focus.

There are some things in the gospel of grace that cannot be changed and it remain the gospel Christ gave to Paul. These things constitute the final gospel that without which there cannot be an effective work wrought by Christ at the Cross. There are probably hundreds of truths that could be listed, but I will list just a few to give you an understanding of how the enemies of the Cross work.

1) The enemies change what the Cross is all about. They say the death of Christ, His crucifixion, is to be only figurative, for there is no reality that it can mean anything to an enlightened person. Often they go on to say that His death was caused by something he did against society, and if he had obeyed the law he would not have died. The closest they get to the Cross is the one on the steeple or the one around their neck.

2) The enemies have no concept of the human being dying in Christ at the Cross. Scriptural areas such as Romans 6 are complete fantasy to them. This idea that our old man was crucified with Christ would utterly destroy their concept of the kingdom message. Their religion teaches a man how to live a reli-

gious life, especially by being under the control of some religious hierarchy. They think that if Christ's death was also the death of the sinner, then they would have no legal right to be over them. They do not accept sin as a problem, it is merely a short-coming in human life and can be corrected by sound judgment.

3) The enemies hate the very idea that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses believing sinners of all their sins (1 John 1:9). In fact, they criticize basic Christianity as a bloody religion. They long ago detached themselves from such songs as the "Old Rugged Cross" and "Nothing But the Blood of Jesus." They want the sinner to remain a sinner so that their doctrines can be enforced to make believers one of their own followers not involved with the fantasy of the Cross. In 1 John chapters 1-5, John says at least three times that a blood washed believer cannot commit sin and will not commit sin. This is a strange gospel to the kingdom preachers.

4) The enemies of the Cross hate such terms as *the birthing* and *adoption*. In the first place, they do not understand the difference between the two terms. *Birthing* means God the Father has rebirthed a human being in spirit. They are new creations, in Christ. *Adoption* means that they are brought into the family of God with a

full inheritance, a total standing as an offspring, coming behind in no provision between the Father and his child.

5) The enemies of the Cross hate Grace. Grace is even a bad word to them. The kingdom message, preached by over 90% of Christian preachers, is a message based on the Old Testament and Moses' Law as Jesus of Nazareth taught it. It is simply a message that says a human must do something to save himself, and their Crossless message will help them. Paul alone places the emphasis of the Cross where God put it, to the dismay of its enemies.

One of my favorite truths in God's plan is explained in the term I use called *The Whole Bucket of Grace*. The enemies of the Cross are quick to turn me off when they hear I am a Grace preacher. Sadly, law religion has stopped listening to anyone that might have a Scriptural truth concerning the Grace of God. Maybe it is because Grace is of God and religion cannot in any form or fashion duplicate or produce it by law, legalism or programming. Grace is God's love poured out upon believing sinners in an immeasurable amount. Law believers hate grace because it takes away all of the efforts on the part of the preacher to get people saved. Preachers have their own religious ideas and works

THIS GRACE OF GOD'S FITS EVERY NEED, EVERY WANT AND EVERYTHING GOD WANTS THE BELIEVER TO HAVE.

that a sinner must do to fit the message the preacher preaches. Religion likes to parcel out God's blessings and gifts so that it might continue to control the new believer. It is a self-effort on the part of ministries to make sure that all of the rules and regulations of that religion are carefully followed. Thus, the new believer is overwhelmed by how much they need to learn to be one of the group. Lost in this is the blessing and glory of the new relationship with Christ and, most of all, lost is the fact that the once sinner is actually now in Christ and Christ is in him.

It is not unusual that a new convert will spend much of the rest his life in religion and never find out what happened to him the moment Christ came into his life. He may live and die in some religious group and never know that God, the Father, because of Christ's

work at the Cross, was able to pour out the whole bucket of God's Grace on him the moment he accepted Christ as his Savior. It is a fact that God could withhold nothing from the believing sinner because the sinner's salvation is not based on what the sinner does or does not do at the moment of believing. His salvation is based on Christ's death and the Father's immeasurable Grace. In the bucket of Grace, there is nothing lacking for the believer's journey to the Father's house. The believer is completed in Christ (Col. 2:10). There is no trial, circumstance or situation in life that is not already covered by God's Grace. This Grace of God's fits every need, every want and everything God wants the believer to have. God's Grace is so sufficient that Paul could say it did not matter whether he lived or died; in fact, he could say he would rather

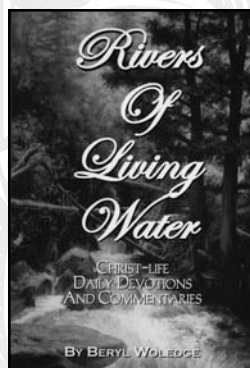
be with the Lord than to be on earth (Phil. 1:21; Rom. 14:8). How else could God deal with humanity if it all is based on the finished work of the Cross of Calvary. Sadly, this gospel is not preached by most ministers today. Secularism has invaded religion, demanding that the sinner do certain things to be saved. Because of this, a whole different system has been created, putting the sinner and what he has done and is doing in the center of salvation. This is a Christless religion and has caused the majority of believers to live and die without ever coming to a revelation that Christ is their life and has lived in them since the moment they accepted Him as their Savior. The enemies of the Cross have changed the modern message from what God has done through Jesus Christ, to what man does within himself to improve himself. †

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THE TWO NATURES OF MAN

By Pat Upton

So many things that people do today are contributed to mankind's human nature; something that is totally non-existent. Nowhere in the Bible is human nature ever mentioned. The Word speaks of a sin-nature and a God-nature or divine nature, but never does it speak of a human nature.

How do we get these natures and what is the outcome from these natures? What kind of fruit does each of these natures bear?

Both natures are the result of a birthing. In her daily devotional book, *Rivers of Living Water* (p. 351, Oct 14), Beryl Woledge states it very succinctly, "It is not the actions of a sinner that makes him that; he was birthed a sinner. Likewise it is never the actions of a believer that make him a Christian, but it is his birthing by God."

How easily we grasp the concept that we are born into sin, we are born sinners. But when it comes to the matter of our nature, we get off track. This is where the idea of a human

nature comes in. Those who believe in human nature are believing a lie of Satan's. If he can get human beings to believe in human nature instead of his sin-nature, then he can even more easily deceive believers about the divine nature that indwells them when they are re-birthed.

I must reiterate. There are only two natures: a sin nature that comes directly from Satan, our father from our first birthing, and a divine, Godly nature that comes directly from our heavenly Father when we are re-born. Many in religion continue to erroneously teach that believers continue to have a sin nature after they are saved. No, when a believer is saved the sin-nature goes out by Christ's work at the Cross, and what is left is an old, unrenewed mind that is not saved and is erroneously thought to be the old sin-nature. It is our birthing that dictates who our father is and the nature we have. It is not what we do that dictates our nature, but rather it is our nature that dictates what we do.

When our first birthing takes place, it automatically comes with a sin-nature. This sin-nature dates back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God created Adam complete except for one thing—He did not create Adam with a nature already installed. God left it up to Adam to choose the nature he would live by and the fruit it would bear. As we now know, Adam chose the wrong nature. In choosing the wrong nature Satan became his spiritual father. Because of that choice, because Adam chose the wrong nature, sin entered into the world and has ruled it ever since. We cannot escape the fact that our first birthing comes complete with a sin-nature, for all are conceived in sin.

Ephesians 2:3 says, Among whom also we had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. Paul is talking about our first birthing here, that we are, by

nature, the children of wrath, from that birthing. Satan was full of wrath; he was furious when he was put out of heaven and he has passed that anger and hatred on to us. He has passed his sin-nature onto us by way of our first birthing and Adam's choosing the wrong nature. Satan is our spiritual father, and will and must remain so until we are born again. Because of this, we operate from a position of an unrenewed mind and lust after the desires of the flesh. These things are very apparent in our lives; they are the fruit of the sin-nature from which we operate. These fruits are listed in Galatians 5. They are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings and such like. What a list! As we look around us in the world today we can see all of these things running rampant. As we approach the time for Christ's return, as his coming draws nearer, Satan becomes more and more bold seeking to destroy and devour as many as possible before Christ's second coming.

"For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death" (Rom. 7:5).

When we are in the flesh, when we are operating from a sin-nature, the only fruit we can bear brings death, death that is of a spiritual nature, death that separates us from God throughout eternity.

This verse also says *"the motions of sins, which were by the law."* Does that then mean the law is sinful? No, a thousand times no! The law is the means by which our sins become apparent. The law says do not do that because it is sin. But because we operate from a sin-nature, we continually do what the law says not to do.

For this to change there must be an exchange—a divine nature for a sin-nature; a new life for an old life; a new Father in place of the old father. There is only one way for this exchange to take place. As Jesus told Nicodemus, *"Ye must be born again to enter into the things of heaven."* A thing so simple, but man tries to make it so difficult. How do we become born again? It is so simple and yet so many miss it. So many try to add something to do, some type of works to bring about the new birthing. The Word of God tells us to simply *"believe on Him whom I have sent."* Can this be so? Yes, yes, yes! God said, *"Believe on Him whom I have sent."* Period! When we believe, then the door is opened for God to place His seed, His only begotten Son, in us and the new birthing is complete. At

that instant, the exchange has occurred—a divine nature in the place of a sin-nature, a new life for an old life, a new Father for an old father. At that instant in time, *"Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new"* (2 Cor 5:17). What an awesome thing! In the twinkling of an eye, we have become new creatures in Christ, a new creation, nothing of the old remains. The problem is most born-again believers never come to the knowledge of their born-again status. They never come to know that they are to operate from the divine nature within, but instead they continue to do good works thereby nullifying everything that took place at Calvary.

We have believed on him whom God has sent. Now what? We begin operating from our new position in Christ. We begin operating from the Christ-nature in us. Just as we naturally, without any effort on our part, operated from our old sin-nature, so we are to operate naturally and without any effort on our part from our new divine nature. It is now our nature to show forth the fruit of the Spirit which is the nature and personality of the indwelling Christ. The fruit of the Spirit is listed in Galatians 5:22–23,

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, tem-

(CONTINUED ON P. 28)

WHEN WE BELIEVE, THEN THE DOOR IS OPENED FOR GOD TO PLACE HIS SEED, HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, IN US AND THE NEW BIRTHING IS COMPLETE.

WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR OUR ETERNAL SALVATION?

PART 1

By Richard D. Cassidy

Taken from Christ-life 2005 Ridgcrest Camp Meeting

I cannot remember for the life of me where I first heard this proverb-like saying, but I think it appropriate to insert it at the beginning of what I believe is the main thought behind Warren's desire to cause us to understand that the world is a schoolhouse in which we learn to attain knowledge that is appropriate as a Christian. The proverb is: *The ink from the pen of a scholar is better than the blood of a martyr.* I believe this is saying that knowledge ought to be preferable over ignorance. If it is required of us to die for something, then it is important that we know what it is we are to die for. Far too many Christians will live and die never knowing that Christ lives in them. Throughout their life, they will wonder what the will of God is for their life, and they will die never knowing the answer to their inquiry.

Whenever we claim anything that is distinctively Christian, we have to do so in the context of our personal relationship and experience with Christ

Jesus. The Christian gospel is the good news proclamation of an event, that is The Event of Jesus Christ on Earth. What gets Christians into trouble with all other religious systems is the view of reality that Jesus is the final and eternal way to God. Whatever was before Jesus has been superceded by His event, and nothing else is forthcoming to supercede His event—Jesus is final!

Jesus Christ is the pure revelation of God and the revelation of true humanity. Clearly a paradoxical tension, absurd to many thinkers, is that of the humanity of Jesus and the divinity of Jesus co-existing, which is the essence and the absolute bottom line of the gospel proclamation. No one in the New Testament stood on the firing line in prominence and preeminence and staunchly declared and defended such a gospel proclamation as did the Apostle Paul. He knew what he was talking about every time he spoke and in every thing he wrote. By his own testimony, he came by this knowl-

edge through spiritual revelation—thoughts that had never been in the mind of man, including his own mind. This challenged the minds of others to the extent that Paul came to realize early on that his life was on that firing line, put there by the very one who was revealed to him and in him. Literally, within days of his conversion there were those in Damascus who were determined to eliminate him and his gospel. The enemies of the Cross, however, were delayed in their killing plans for more than thirty-years, albeit they hounded his every step.

Paul knew his gospel message touched raw nerves in the minds of many Jewish leaders, just as he himself was once outraged at the mention of the name of Jesus. Paul knew he would never be free of their treacherous schemes to kill him, and he became all the more tenacious in his determination to teach Christ. Armed with this gospel and the assurance of Christ that nothing and no one would be able to take

his life until the work was completed, Paul began and completed what no man had done before or since. But that's another story.

Paul's letter to the Colossian saints is not very well known among Christians, especially among preachers. That is a pure mystery to me, for in all of Paul's writings, especially Galatians, Ephesians and Philippians, we are unable to find a more eloquent treatment of the supremacy and deity of Christ than is found here in these brief pages of Colossians. I hope that all of us will gain a greater appreciation of the knowledge of Paul's thoughts as we search the treasure-house of this epistle and share the continuing grace and love of Christ.

All Paul had to say in this letter concerning Christ was truly in refutation of what was being taught by false teachers and accepted by the saints in Colossae. This teaching had become widely known, not understood as it should have been, as the Colossian Heresy of the Gnostics.

The Gnostic teachers, also known as the false teachers, were those who discounted the full deity of Christ as God in the flesh. They could not accept the full humanity of Jesus because they could not accept the possibility that anything material, earthly or human could be an expression of, or could be filled with the divine. The

false teachers were successfully deceiving the Colossians with persuasive words, as Paul would declare in chapter two. These heretics were also demeaning Christ, proposing rather a substitute philosophy for the Gospel of Grace that Paul had preached.

The Colossians had received this gospel message through the teaching of Epaphras, a young Greek convert in Christ who had heard Paul speak to the saints in Galatia some years before. Epaphras, by the way, is most likely the one who left Colossae in search of Paul, who was at this time imprisoned in Rome for nearly two years, and revealed to Paul the troublesome teachings that had infiltrated the church. I'll speak more about that meeting a bit later.

So, Paul rises in eloquence, in a sweeping crescendo, as he tells the Colossians about the all-sufficient Christ, of which they had heard before but had fallen victim to another gospel. He uses dramatic, impelling, somewhat philosophical language to present the case for the irreplaceable centrality of the all-sufficient Christ. Listen to his words as you read Colossians 1:15-17:

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth,

visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."

I readily admit that this is a difficult passage, but it is crucially important that we come to understand it, to know what Paul knows and to fix our minds on what he is teaching us. Paul was not writing in a vacuum but was addressing a very specific situation in Colossae. A tendency of thought promoted by the Gnostic false teachers was all but in full bloom among the Colossian saints by the time Paul became aware of what was going on. The false teachers were turning the gospel of Christ's Grace into a philosophy aligned with the heresy of Gnosticism and with other philosophies of eastern religions and secular thinkers. Those who were promoting such teachings were the intellectuals who were dissatisfied with what they considered the rude simplicity of the Christian gospel. There had to be more to salvation and eternal life than that which was to be found in Christ Jesus. And so they began with one basic assumption—that matter is altogether evil and spirit is altogether good; further, that matter has always existed, and out of evil matter the world was created, thus the world

and all of its material expression is evil. God was an ultimate spirit and far away from the created world. God could not touch or be touched by anything created materially because God could not be touched by evil and all things material were evil.

That philosophy has not been totally lost in antiquity, for it is still with us in our day, albeit manifested in various corrupted theological suppositions and syncretistic religious systems, birthed out of the clever and contriving minds of those men and women who would gain an audience and a following at whatever the cost to those sainted souls who are in Christ. Epaphras, no doubt, had to think of himself as an utter failure because of his inability to withstand the false teachers and to prevent his people from moving away from the gospel he had learned at the feet of the great apostle when Paul had traveled through Galatia some years before. How could he tell Paul about his grossly inadequate effectiveness at home in Colossae? What would Paul say to this young teacher of the Gospel of Grace? How would Epaphras withstand Paul's disappointment in him as well as his challenging criticisms of his failed works? Although these and other thoughts bewildered the young preacher, he nonetheless set his sights on Rome and the daunting

task of finding Paul. The round-trip journey had to take months to complete.

Another thought that had to trouble Epaphras centered around Paul's intolerance of those who were not steadfast and sure in the work of the gospel. Epaphras, no doubt, had heard of the problems Paul had with young John Mark, and later with Barnabas and how he would not allow them to continue on with him. What would be Paul's disposition toward Epaphras? Would Paul fire him, or would he embrace him and encourage him to continue on? The answers to those inquiries we find very early on in the letter that Epaphras would take back with him to Colossae as Paul writes: "...just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit" (Col. 1:7-8).

There was no doubt in Paul's mind when he received the word, things were in a colossal mess in Colossae and his work there was far from being complete. The facts clearly show that the mission work in that region was in jeopardy of being lost altogether. If it became necessary for Paul to reunite those saints who had come to Christ and teach them once again the unsearchable riches found only in knowing Christ, then he was prepared to go.

However, Paul had his own problems as well, for he was detained in Rome. Until he gained his freedom, Paul would make preparations to confront those teachers of the false gospel and refute their folly and foolishness in light of the truth of his gospel. Paul's personal appearance did not become necessary, for the young man Epaphras was there to hear Paul's instructions and return home with letter in hand. As far as we can know from both the biblical record and reliable scholarly tradition, the problem was quickly laid to rest in Colossae.

Are we to assume that the Gnostic heresy simply went away and was never a problem to the Christian gospel? Not at all! According to ancient historical records, both religious and secular, Gnosticism flourished well into the third century before it lost its prominence. However, a revival of its original teachings is alive and well in our day, but under another name—*New Age*; and it declares preferential knowledge and the higher power to a very select few. What these Gnostic heretics came to teach the Colossians saints is also seen in the modern *New Age* philosophy and can be understood in four basic expressions:

1. The Creator God is not the true god, but a distant emanation (like the rays of the sun—the rays are not

WHAT THESE
GNOSTIC HERETICS
CAME TO TEACH THE
COLOSSIANS SAINTS
IS ALSO SEEN IN THE
MODERN NEW AGE
PHILOSOPHY.



He poured His life out for me that I might live.

God gave a part of Himself, God the Son.

“As He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17).

The Treasure in Earthen Vessels

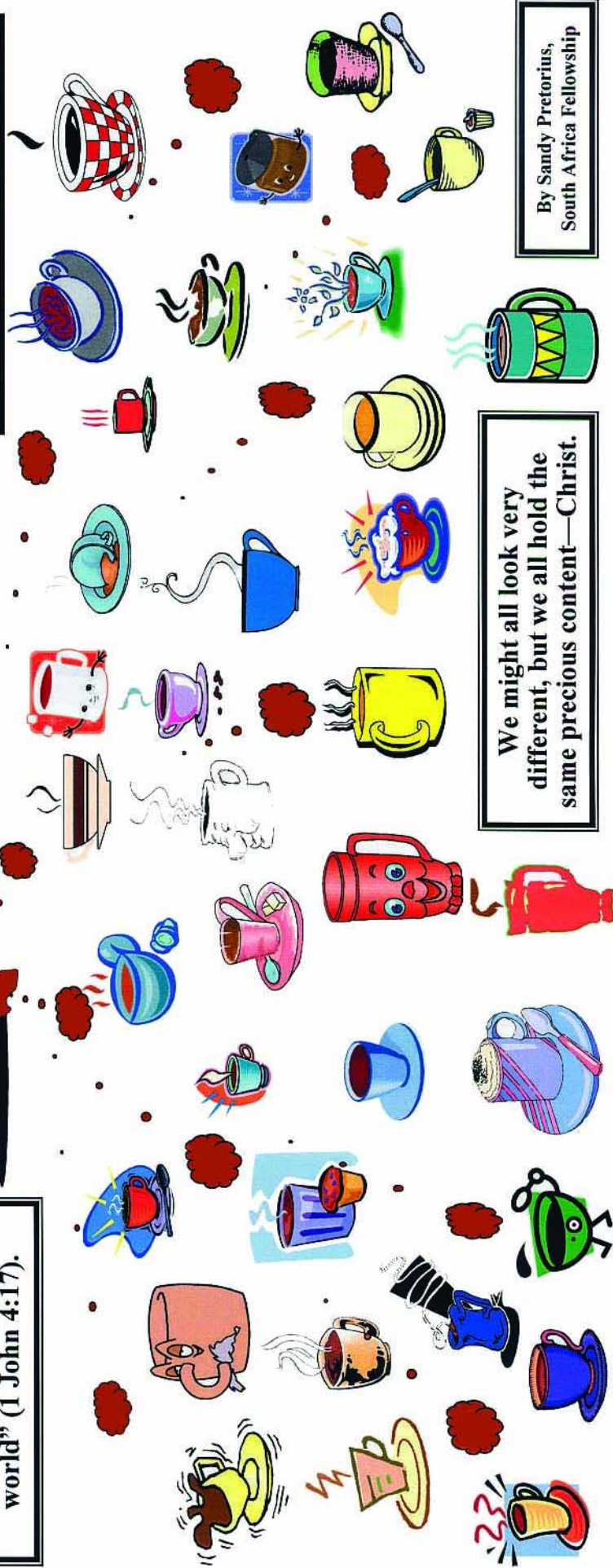
An empty vessel is nothing on its own.



1 Cor. 4:7

It is the content that we need and are after. The cup merely holds the content. Christ lives in your clay cup.

We are to know no man after the flesh, not even Jesus of Nazareth. We need to so learn the Christ in us that He might come out of us as we are (2 Cor. 5:16).



We might all look very different, but we all hold the same precious content—Christ.

By Sandy Pretorius,
South Africa Fellowship

MODERN PRISON EPISTLE

Dear Mr. Litzman,

I am writing you in regards to a book someone gave me that you wrote. It's called *Paul: The Apostle of Grace*. Around the same time I was doing my own study of the New Testament for the first time [*sic*]. I have come to believe God put your book in my hands at the exact perfect time. Here is how I gained possession of the book. I was actually looking for a novel to read when I walked over to a fellow prisoner and asked if he had one I could borrow. He said he did and led me over to his living area. He opened his foot locker and started pulling out a few different paperback novels. Then out came your book falling to the floor with the cover up. As soon as I read the title I forgot all about the other books this man was holding and asked only if I could read this book. It especially grabbed my attention because of my study. I had just finished Acts and started with Paul's Epistle to the Romans. It was not matching up with what I had just

went over the last couple of months. I see now I was commingling the Scriptures like you talked about in your book. I read your book from cover to cover and as I did I also read Paul's epistles.

Many of the things you wrote about the Holy Spirit had revealed to me before, but I had nothing to go on. I've never done my own in-depth studies of the Bible or Christianity. I kept turning to religion for answers, but what I got only made me deny what the Holy Spirit and God was [*sic*] trying to reveal to me. I tried to further explore by attending a variety of Christian churches seeking information, a religion I could accept as truth. I found myself disappointed and fed up with religion as a whole, but not God and Jesus Christ. Then I finally just realized I don't need a church building to live my life in God and Jesus. I don't need anyone to tell me how I should think, feel and what I should and shouldn't do. I am just as capable of

understanding God's Word just like any minister, priest, pastor and so on. I make more sense to myself than they ever have to me. Now I see it's not me at all but the Holy Spirit revealing Christ in me.

Back to your book; you have given me a renewal of hope and strength. It just all makes perfect sense to me. I feel now my whole life and all what I once considered misfortune, but now all worthwhile, have led up to this. As I look, I see God has led and guided me all this way to reveal His Son, Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit in me. This is a very difficult letter for me to write. In fact this is the fourth time I've attempted to write it in the last few weeks. The Holy Spirit has not let me forget or give up. I am so overwhelmed with Christ in me, my own thoughts make very little sense at times. I'm sure if anyone understands, it's you. I don't know what's next, nor do I even attempt to know. God has been giving me revelations and answers as I need them

(CONTINUED ON P. 28)

(ETERNAL SALVATION—CONT.
FROM P. 23)

the sun only a production of the sun). These emanations were completely ignorant of, even hostile to, the true god from whence they came. This heresy placed the true god away from creation to the point that even God could not be anywhere near creation, for creation would contaminate God because creation was material; hence creation was vile and evil.

2. The heretics declared that Jesus was not unique in His existence, that there were many intermediaries between God and man. They believed that Jesus was only one of many intermediaries and although his position was high before God, perhaps even the highest in the order of so many others, Jesus was still only one among many. To the gnostic mind, there was a hierarchy of angel-beings responsible for varying degrees of authorities. Jesus was somewhere in the mix of those other entities, not a Son of God, but simply of God, and no more relevant than any other angel-being.

3. Jesus was not truly a man, nor was Jesus fully a man. They argued from their presupposition that all things material were evil, including human flesh,

and so Jesus who was the revelation of God cannot have a real and true human body; He cannot have real flesh and real blood as all mankind is flesh and blood. So, the Gnostics insisted that Jesus was nothing more than a spiritual phantom in bodily form, and only appeared to have human characteristics.

4. And finally, the Gnostics refused to see Christ as the center or source of salvation. They insisted that the task of man was to find his own way to God, working one's way up a ladder, as it were, getting past or beyond each of the angel levels or those emanations of God through special knowledge and secret passwords which were revealed only to the elected few.

Thus, there was great mystery in this heresy and the Gnostics declared that they held the only key to the revelation of that mystery. The key, they believed, was an elaborate intellectual knowledge system that only they possessed and only they could teach. However, not everyone could come to know what the teachers knew. Some would simply not possess the mechanism of an intellectual mind to learn what was being taught.

Well, what was to become of those who could not or would not ascend to gnostic knowledge? This was never truly clear in that teaching portion of their philosophy, so we have to assume that those who failed to pass the course, well, didn't count for anything in the eternal scheme of things and would never make it into God's presence.

In the school of life, this is truly a hard, even impossible classroom in which one finds himself. The teacher of this class is the epitome of religious gobble-de-gook who is always present in alternative religious systems, birthed out of the corrupted mind of man. However, I have attempted to simplify and give you the basic outline of the Gnostic philosophy that had infiltrated the Colossian church and that horrible heresy that Paul was combating as he wrote this classic response. I hope this brief synopsis will help you to understand Paul's language, indeed, his terminology in this letter. It is not typical of his language, or his thought, in his other epistles that describe the person and the work of Christ. †



(NATURE—CONT. FROM P. 5)

one of the greatest witnesses of this attribute of God as Father.

At this point I am reminded of what the younger son said in Luke 15 while he was still in the pig pen: *“And am no more worthy to be called thy son”* (Luke 15:19). These are the words of one who has a penitent heart; and that is good, but it is not the answer. When the son arrived at his father’s house, he repeats the statement that he is no longer worthy. His understanding of his relationship with his father was based on his understanding of worth. As long as he remained at home, he thought he was worthy to be his father’s son. He did not do anything wrong as long as he remained there, and upon this he based his understanding of his worth. For many years, this was the basis of my understanding of my relationship with God. What is wrong with this logic? This is the understanding of a believer who looks at himself through his own eyes and has never understood his birthing.

Our understanding of our worth must go beyond ourselves and to the glory

of Christ who is in us. It is true that when we were outside of Christ we found ourselves unable to come to the unapproachable God who was too holy and righteous for us to be allowed in His presence. But now that same God sees his beloved son, Christ, in us! The believer needs to know how his Father sees him. Read Ephesians chapters 1 through 3 until it is indelibly written in your heart. Not only must it be written upon the fleshly tables of your heart, but also it must become life to you. If you ever understood who you are in Christ and who your Father is, you would also know *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”*

If you find reason to condemn me or anyone else then you must also condemn Him who is my life, whom the Father loves with all of His heart. If you can find no fault with Him, then you will not be able to find fault with other believers, for He lives in them as their life. If you can read Ephesians 1 and point a finger at the believer described there, then I, too, am guilty because that is me with Christ in me as my only life.

This is not my concept of myself, but it is God our Father’s perception of me. How is this possible? Because Christ is in me, and there is therefore no condemnation because of Him. If you can find fault in me, then you are seeing me through your own eyes and not through the eyes of Him who is my Father! Ephesians perfectly describes me as I am in Christ and who Christ is in me!

The basis of who I am is found only in Christ, and I am not separated from Him for a moment. I am persuaded that nothing can separate me from Christ who is in me (Rom. 8:39). He was birthed in me! I am no longer separated from Him because He lives in me; and everywhere I go, He is in me and goes with me. How could anyone with Christ as his life live in condemnation? I can no longer be condemned because it would necessitate that the Christ in me be condemned also! Our Father who is omnipotent can find no reason to condemn me, so how could I or anyone else condemn you or me? There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ! There is none. Condemnation is gone forever; let it go my friend! †

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF OUR WORTH MUST GO BEYOND OURSELVES AND TO THE GLORY OF CHRIST WHO IS IN US.



(EVERYDAY LIFE—
CONT. FROM P. 15)

the Father’s limitless love for us is the foundation of all our relationships—including how we relate to

ourselves—our connection to family and friends will become healthy, life-giving, full of grace and truth. No crashing waves

of discord will be able to disturb the calm of our connections when we live from the center of Christ our Life. †

(MARY BODY—
CONT. FROM P. 12)

God is not going to save denominations. He is not going to bring them corporately into the Christ-life move. This isn't His plan. He is not going to restore institutional churches. His plan is consistently to pull out believers and to move on. If Jesus delays His coming, I believe we're going to see groups who have been

floundering—waiting on their preacher to get stirred, waiting on their Sunday school teacher to get stirred, waiting on their church to accept the fullness of Jesus—launch out into a new faith walk. I believe God is going to begin a move whereby believers begin to take spiritual responsibility to maintain this message, as has always been the plan of

God. The Joseph ministry is going to vibrantly come alive. We cannot do without him. Sooner or later you are going to need Joseph to maintain the ministry in the home to be in God's plan. And until Jesus comes, we're going to have to have a ministry of the local home-church bodies to promote the ministry of Jesus to the ends of the earth. †



(TWO NATURES—
CONT. FROM P. 20)

perance: against such there is no law."

Ephesians 5:9–10 also says that "*fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.*"

The Spirit in this case is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our appointed teacher, appointed by God

to teach us Christ. The fruit of the Spirit is contained in all goodness, righteousness and truth. In other words, the fruit of the Spirit is contained in Christ because Christ is all those things. As the Holy Spirit teaches us these things, as He teaches us Christ, then the fruit that is contained therein begins to flow forth from us in an effortless outpouring of

God's love to others. It is our nature to express the fruit of the Spirit which is in Christ who is in us. It is our nature that produces this fruit; the fruit (works) cannot produce the nature. There is nothing we can do to get this new nature except to believe on him whom God hath sent. †

(Pat Upton attends the Tulsa Christ-life Fellowship.)

(PRISON EPISTLE—
CONT. FROM P. 25)

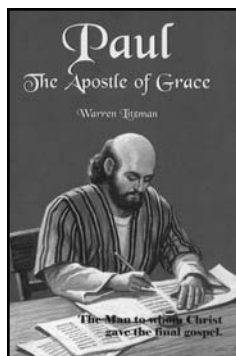
through the Holy Spirit, just like this letter. I'm still searching for insights and a better understanding of Jesus Christ in me.

Well, Mr. Litzman, anything you could tell

me or provide me with I'm more than grateful to accept. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I only hope I wrote and expressed everything correctly and I tried to be as brief as pos-

sible as not to take up too much of your time. May God bless you through His Son, Jesus Christ and His grace to us all.

Respectfully sincere,
Dale Hooker †



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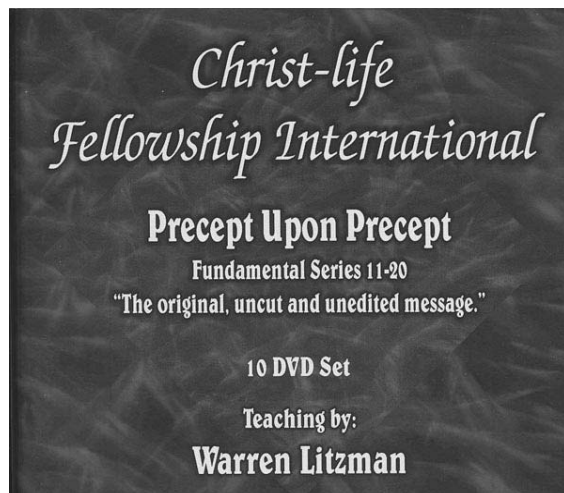
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