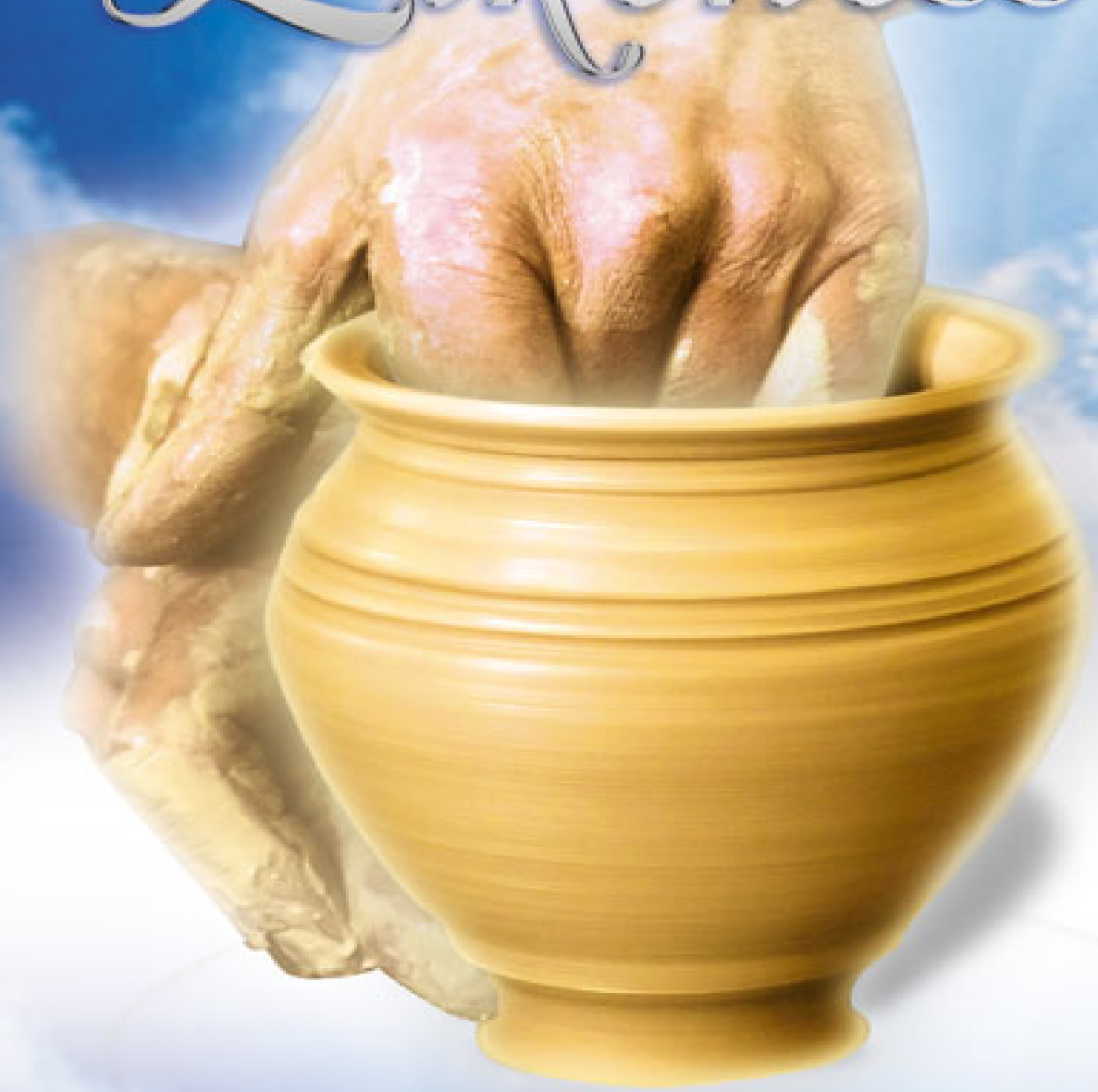
Into His Likeness



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Preface

It is impossible to be a perfect Christian because we humans have lots of weaknesses. This is a popular perception in the minds of Christians everywhere. When I was a newborn Christian I attended a church which stressed perfection, equating perfection with absolute sinlessness. Though I deeply desired to be perfect in my Christian life, perfection seemed to me like a huge unconquerable mountain. I soon even lost all hope of getting to heaven because that church taught that only those who attain perfection will go to heaven.

As I began to mature in my Christian life, growing in the Word and walking in the Spirit, the bondage of legalism eventually broke loose. I came to realize that it is impossible to please God just by trying to be good. The *self* struggles constantly to keep up with different things and is confronted by many challenges all the time. The Christian life, admittedly, is often a life of struggle. The born-again believer finds himself constantly having to struggle to be holy, perfect, righteous, etc.

In July of 1994, while journeying in the wilderness of Tibet, I sighted a very unusual bird. It would vigorously flap its little wings, glide effortlessly through the air, then repeat that motion over and over again. As I stood there watching, it dawned on me that the flight behavior of the little bird resembled the lives of many Christians: a period of striving after holiness and perfection is followed by a lapse into passivity and casual living. This jostling between excellence and mediocrity, even failure, seems an unrelenting struggle in the lives of many believers. Yet the Christ-life is not a life of struggle and strife but a life of resting in Christ: *For he*

who has entered into His rest, has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His (Heb. 4:10).

This book has been birthed through much prayer and prolonged meditation on the Word of God to questions such as, *Can a believer really be perfect?, Is such an absolute ideal ever possible?* Once during a time of meditation it pleased our Heavenly Father to open up my understanding on this matter. Through His Holy Spirit He revealed to me the secrets now you have in your hands. Praise and glory be to the Heavenly Father!

This book originally appeared as *Maturing Unto Perfection* in 1994. I have received a little more insight on this subject over the last few years. When the time came to reprint this book, I rewrote the entire book and have titled it more aptly as *Into His Likeness.* After all, the Lord Jesus is our model–isn't He? So I invite you to read this book with an open heart and a receptive mind. May the same Holy Spirit who taught me these secrets also teach and instruct you, so that these truths will come to fruition in your life, and you will be transformed into the likeness of Christ Jesus.

Sundar Selvaraj
September 2007

Introduction

By looking to Jesus
Like Him thou shalt be,
Thy friends in thy conduct,
His likeness will see

Dr Charles H. Spurgeon once wrote, *We may be certain that whatever God has made prominent in His Word, He intended to be conspicuous in our lives.* Likewise, would God ask us to be like Him in His likeness and image–which is to be perfect like Him–if it is impossible. While meditating John 1:1, the Holy Spirit showed me that therein is the secret to growing or maturing into the likeness of Christ Jesus:

> ***JOHN 1:1***
> *1 In the beginning was the Word, and the*
> *Word was with God and the Word was God.*

In this verse, the Holy Spirit revealed to me a 3-fold principle whereby every believer could reach our highest calling in Christ. Firstly, **WAS THE WORD** signifies the importance of a personal identity rooted in our position in Christ. Secondly, **AS WITH GOD** signifies the need for a consistent and uninterrupted fellowship with God. Thirdly, **THE WORD WAS GOD** signifies that only in achieving and practising Christlikeness is there perfection and fullness of maturity.

Consider a child in its natural stages of maturity. The child begins its life as a foetus inside the mother. When the right time arrives, the child comes as a baby out of the womb into the world and immediately receives from its

mother tender loving care. The child is then raised and nurtured to become like the parents. The foetus, the baby, and the growing child follow a progressive 3-stage development. Likewise a believer can progressively mature to become like the Lord Jesus Christ. This same thought is beautifully expressed in Proverbs 8:22,30 as, *The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. Then I was beside Him, as a master craftsman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.*

It is the expressed desire of the Lord God that we too, like the Lord Jesus Christ, can daily be a delight to the Father God by learning to mature into His likeness unto perfection.

Chapter 1- The Essence of Perfection

The Bible commands believers to be perfect (Jas. 1:4). In His Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus too said, *Therefore you shall be perfect just as your Father in heaven is perfect (*Matt. 5:48). Such commands would be unreasonable and thoughtlessly uttered if they were not possible to attain. Consider this parable: There was a certain man who had a three year old daughter. One day, he was in his garden chopping some wood. His little daughter, who was patiently watching him do his work, said to him, *Daddy, let me chop the wood.* Her loving father told her, No, my darling. You would not know how to do it, to which the little girl insistently replied, *Yes, daddy, I know how to do it, since I have been watching you do it.* This man then stopped his work, put his beloved daughter on his laps, and explained to her very tenderly why she could not help him do his work.

If an earthly father would not allow his child to do something he knew his child could not possibly do, how much more our Heavenly Father. Our Heavenly Father will not ask us to do anything that He knows we are not able to do. He will only ask us to do those things which He knows we can do, things accomplished by Christ Jesus, who became a man like us. Thus the command for us to be perfect is not an impossible goal thoughtlessly imposed by the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, the provision for us to be perfect has been made through Christ Jesus. We partake God’s divine nature when we are born again (2 Pet. 1:4). We only need to learn how to develop this nature to mature unto Christlike perfection.

When believers are described as a perfect as in the Bible, in some cases it means that they are full-grown or matured (1 Cor. 2:6; Heb. 5:14). Certain biblical characters were described in the Bible as perfect before God. Among such were *Noah, Job,* and *Asa* (Gen. 6:9; Job 1:1, 1 Kg. 15:14). In such cases, they were perfect men who lived uprightly before God. As I was writing this chapter, an angel of God appeared before me and said, *Even the angels of God admire upright men–those who walk in integrity and purity before God.* As I was pondering over the validity of the statement, in a moment the Holy Spirit reminded me of the life of the prophet Daniel. From his youth up, Daniel lived a pure life (Dan. 1:8). He lived an innocent and upright life (Dan. 6:22). That was why when the angel Gabriel came to him, he addressed him as *O Daniel, man greatly beloved* (Dan. 10:11). Perfection is not absolute sinlessness. Let us study further on what really does it mean to be perfect like God.

What is Perfection?

The word *perfect* comes from several Hebrew and Greek words, some of which are as follows:

1. Heb. *kalal : to complete, make perfect*

2. Heb. *tam : complete, perfect*

3. Heb. *tamiym* : *entire, complete, perfect*

4. Gk. *artios : complete, perfect*

5. Gk. *katartizo : to complete through*

6. Gk. *teleios : complete, perfect, fully-grown, mature*

To be perfect can be thus defined: *A completeness in all details, having grown into a complete maturity of Godliness in mind and character.* This definition is portrayed in Colossians 2:10 as, *and you are complete in Him;* and Ephesians 4:13 as, *[That it might develop] until we all attain oneness in faith and in the comprehension of the full and accurate knowledge of the Son of God; that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood–the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection–the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ, and the completeness found in Him* (AMP).

There once lived a young prince who was a hunchback. He was a brokenhearted man because of his physical deformity. But he did not lose hope that one day he would be made whole. So he made a statue of himself striking a majestic pose without the hunchback. Everyday he would go to his garden and gaze at his own statue, the embodiment of his perfected physical body. Many days passed by. His back began gradually to straighten up and one day he finally looked like his majestic looking statue. Likewise, when we imitate the perfect life of the Lord Jesus Christ, we too will be perfect like Him.

Since the Lord Jesus Christ lived a perfect man, leaving us an example and pattern to imitate, let's study in the Word the growth and development of the Lord Jesus, which parallels the believer's growth towards spiritual maturity. Let's examine two scriptures:

LUKE 2:40,52

40 And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.
52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

EPHESIANS 4:13
13 Till we all come to the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

From these two scriptures, we can deduce the following striking parallels between the Lord Jesus' natural development and the believer's spiritual growth:

CHRIST JESUS		**THE BELIEVER**
1. Strong in the Spirit	=	The Unity of the Faith
2. Grew in wisdom	=	The Knowledge of the Son of God
3. Increased in stature	=	The Measure of the stature of Christ's fullness

It can thus be concluded that we can grow spiritually and mature unto perfection just like how the Lord Jesus perfectly grew from a child to a grown-up man.

Three Stages in Perfection

There are three stages of perfection revealed in the Bible.

1. *Positional Perfection*

HEBREWS 10:14

14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

This state of perfection is already possessed by us by virtue of our having been justified by the blood of the Lord Jesus. In other words, our perfection here lies with our position or identity in Christ Jesus as cleansed sinners justified by Christ Jesus' supreme sacrifice.

2. *Progressive Perfection*

PHILIPPIANS 3:12

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

This state of perfection is where we are right now in our progress towards spiritual maturity.

3. *Ultimate and Fullness of Perfection*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:52,53

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

This is the final stage of perfection–when our spirit, soul, and body are totally transformed to resemble the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 3:2). God will transform our entire body so that it will be full of glory and majesty, like the body of Christ Jesus.

There was once a farmer who raised a young eagle with a flock of chicken. The young eagle had never learned to fly. One day this farmer decided to teach this eagle to fly by throwing it up in the air. But each time the eagle would look down and fall to the ground. The farmer pondered deeply over how to teach the eagle to fly. Then he had an idea. He lifted up the eagle's head and made it look at the sun above. As soon as the eagle saw the sun, it pushed out its wings, lifted its head with a shriek, and began to soar higher and higher into the sky. Likewise, when we constantly look at the Lord Jesus and pattern after His life, we can mature and transform into the likeness of His perfection.

Chapter 2 - Our Identity in Christ

> ***JOHN 1:1***
> *1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
>
> ***ACTS 17:28a***
> *28a For in Him we live, and move, and have our being.*

We read in the gospels of the Lord Jesus Christ that when He began His ministry He went about all the cities and villages teaching in synagogues and preaching the good news and healing all kinds of diseases and sicknesses (Matt. 9:35; Mk. 6:6; Lk. 8:1). After a season of journeying and preaching, He made His way to Jerusalem (Lk. 13:22).

Consider the Aaronic high priest: When he went to offer blood sacrifices on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), he would begin from the outer court and move towards the Most Holy Place carrying with him the blood of goats and bulls into the presence of the Lord God which was resting on the Ark of the Covenant. Spiritually, Jerusalem signifies the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle. In Old Testament times, the presence of God's glory was kept in the Most Holy Place and the tabernacle was kept in Jerusalem. When the Lord Jesus was crucified as the sacrificial lamb for the remission of sins in Jerusalem, His blood was therefore spiritually shed on the Ark of the Covenant (1 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 9:26).

While I was a speaker at an End-Time Handmaidens' World Convention held at St. Louis, USA, in 1992, I heard another preacher, *Henry Gruver*, share some very

interesting archaeological findings in Israel by a Christian archaeologist, *Ron Wyatt*, concerning the Ark of the Covenant. Mr Wyatt had revealed startling details of the discovery of the Ark of Covenant, which evidently was hidden outside the walls of Jerusalem before the city fell and was destroyed by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. The cavern wherein the Ark was placed was covered up so as to form a mound to conceal it. Over time, debris was piled over this spot and gradually the mound became a small hill. During the time of the Roman conquest and occupation in Palestine, this hill became the site for crucifixions. Permanent marble sockets were built into the ground into which crosses were sunk and erected.

In his search for the location of the lost Ark of the Covenant in a cliff still known today as *Golgotha* (Hebrew) or *Calvary* (Latin), Mr Wyatt first uncovered three post-holes hacked out of the rock. Each of these holes measured thirteen inches square and three feet deep and came with a sort of plug cover on top that contained finger holes for easy removal. In the center post-hole was a cleavage on the left side leading into the rock that probably resulted from an earthquake (Matt. 27:51). Further investigations with scientific instruments revealed the presence of gold in the hill. He sought permission to bore a hole in the hill and only obtained it from the Israeli authorities only after much perseverance.

After over two years of digging a narrow trench into the rock face of the cliff, in January 1982, Mr Wyatt finally broke into a natural cavern of twenty two feet by fourteen feet. There before him lay the sacred furniture from Solomon's Temple: *The Altar of Burnt Offering, the Showbread Table, the Altar of Incense,* and, at the back of the chamber, *the Ark of the Covenant*, with the wings of the two cherubim

stretched over the mercy seat. Mr Wyatt discovered dried blood splattered over the Ark of the Covenant and the other sacred furniture and had it - samples of the dried blood, brought back to the United States for lab testing. It was found that the blood, which was definitely human, consisted of *23 X* chromosomes and only *1 Y* chromosome. The normal human blood should comprise a minimum *46* chromosomes, *23* from each parent. If there is an additional Y chromosome, then the blood is that of a male. This blood was therefore from a male without a natural human father. Mr Wyatt firmly believes (and we can concur with him) that the blood of the Lord Jesus fell to the ground and through the earthquake cleavage was sprinkled upon the mercy seat for the redemption of mankind.

In the Old Testament, the high priest would sprinkle the blood of bulls and goats on the mercy seat in accordance to God's command (Ex. 25; Lev. 16). Scriptures tell us that the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin, but the blood of the Lord Jesus cleanses all sins (Heb. 10:4; 1 Jn. 1:7). The blood of animals was a temporary measure that pointed to the blood of the perfect Lamb that was to be slain. How amazing and appropriate that the physical blood of Christ Jesus was actually sprinkled over the mercy seat hidden in the hill of Calvary, thereby validating the God-ordained ritual of sprinkling the mercy seat once a year on the Day of Atonement!

At the same moment when the flesh of the Lord Jesus was torn and blood and water flowed out from His side, the temple veil was torn in two from the top down (Matt. 27:51 Jn. 19:35). These two concurrent events signify that spiritually we henceforth have full freedom and confidence to enter into the Holy of Holies to come before the throne of grace by virtue of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb.

10:19). The tabernacle of Moses housed the glory of God (Ex. 25:8; 40:34). It was a foreshadow to the body of the Lord Jesus who housed within His body the glory of God (Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3). Just as the body of the Lord Jesus was torn or pierced and blood and water flowed out, likewise the temple veil was torn in two and the glory of God (which was resident in the Holy of Holies) flowed out to reconcile and restore the world to God's favor (2 Cor. 5:17). This spiritual mystery is beautifully portrayed in Hebrews 10:20: *By this fresh (new) and living way which He initiated and dedicated and opened for us through the separating curtain [veil of the Holy of Holies], that is, through His flesh* (*AMP*).

Just as in the beginning, when God used to come down and meet Adam in order to converse with him, God had once again come out of His abode to reach out to man. In the Lord Jesus Christ, God has reconciled us to Himself, raised us up together with Christ Jesus, and made us sit down with the Lord Jesus (joint-seating) in the heavenly places–a privilege granted by virtue of our being in Christ (Eph. 2:6). Adam in his sinless state was called t*he son of God* (Lk. 3:38). Man in his restored state is called t*he child of God* (Jn. 1:12; Gal. 3:26).

After paving the way for our restoration, the Lord God calls us to mature unto perfection–that is, to be perfect as He is perfect. The first principle we need to understand in order to progressively mature unto perfection is *Who we are in Jesus Christ–our personal identity and individuality in Him.* What this calls for is *knowing properly, understanding fully, and proclaiming boldly our position in Christ Jesus.*

Consider these scriptures:

1. I am the Almighty God (Gen. 17:1)

2. I am that I am (Ex. 3:14)

3. I am the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:35)

4. I am the Light of the World (Jn. 8:12, 9:5)

5. I am the Door of the Sheep (Jn. 10:7)

6. I am the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:14)

7. I am the Resurrection and the Life (Jn. 11:25)

8. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn. 14:6)

9. I am the True Vine (Jn. 15:7)

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

It can be observed from these scriptures that the Lord God, Who has a full knowledge of Who He Himself is, always proclaims His Name and Who He is (cf. Ex. 34:5-7). As children of God, we must therefore recognize our position in Christ Jesus our Lord. We need to know and comprehend what happens to us *within* and *without* in order to fully grasp who we are in Christ Jesus.

I. BORN AGAIN

> ***JOHN 3:3,5 (AMP)***
> *3 Jesus answered him, I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, that unless a person is born again (anew, from above), he cannot*

ever see - know, be acquainted with, [and experience] - the kingdom of God.
5 Jesus answered, I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, except a man be born of water and (even) the Spirit, he cannot [ever] enter the kingdom of God.

We will first begin to understand our identity–specifically *who we are in Christ*–only after we are born again. Why is it so? Does it mean that we will not understand our identity in Christ if we are not born again? It is written in 1 Corinthians 2:14 that *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* In Genesis 2:17, the Lord God told man that on the day he disobeyed Him, he would surely die. But in Genesis 3:7 we read that man, after he had sinned, did not die. Why? Let's read Genesis 2:7: *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being* (Job 27:3; 33:3). God created man with a spirit, soul, and body. What are these three aspects of man then?

1. *Spirit:* The dimension of man which deals with the spiritual realm and which knows God.

2. *Soul*: The dimension of man which deals with the mental realm, which comprises the intellect, the senses, and the will. This part of man reasons and thinks.

3. *Body:* The dimension of man which deals with the natural realm. It is the house in which the physical man lives.

Man, therefore, is a spirit who possesses a soul and who lives in a body. Consider this: When a builder constructs a new house, he may classify it as an apartment, a terrace house, a maisonette, or a bungalow. When the owners move in to occupy this new house, the house then becomes a home because people now live in there. Likewise the Lord God took the dust of the earth and formed a house–our body. He then breathed into it the breath of life–our spirit. So man became a living soul, like a home.

When man sinned, his spirit man died. He was no longer spiritually alive, sensitive and discerning of things in the spirit realm. That is why the Lord Jesus said that in order to see and enter into the Kingdom of God a person must be born again. It is like this: A living person is well received and accepted in every society, but as soon as he dies he is quickly removed from the society of the living and buried among the dead in the cemetery. The dead cannot coexist with the living. Likewise, when we are dead in our sins, we cannot exist in the land of the living in heaven.

Let us look into the Bible and see what it says about a person dead in sin.

1. By nature all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

2. By nature all are spiritually dead (Col. 2:13).

3. By nature all are children of the devil (1 Jn. 3:10).

4. By nature all are children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2).

5. By nature all are cursed with Adam’s sin nature (Rom. 5:12).

6. By nature all unsaved are alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18).

7. By nature an unbeliever (any unsaved individual) walks according to the lusts of the flesh and possess a carnal mind (Eph. 2:3).

8. By nature an unbeliever is a prisoner to the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2; Jn. 5:24).

Self-centeredness and pride are deeply rooted in man after he has fallen to sin. Ever since then, these two characteristics are part of him. If he wants to be set free from these two characteristics, he must be born again. A child is born of the flesh and blood of its mother. Likewise, a person must be born of the blood of Christ Jesus. [Consider John 3:6: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* The Lord Jesus is a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). The Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:6). And there is life in the blood (Lev. 17:11). Therefore to be born of the Spirit is to be born of the blood of the Lord Jesus.} When the leper Naaman came to Elisha to be healed, he was told to wash in the Jordan River seven times. And when he did that, he was miraculously healed of leprosy (2 Kg 5:1-14). Likewise he who washes himself in the blood of the Lord Jesus shall experience the death of his old man (cf. Rev 7:9-14). He dies to sin and lives in righteousness unto a new life, (Rom. 6:4).

Washed by the blood of Christ Jesus, his born-again spirit is like a newborn child. It is clean, pure, and holy. When a baby comes out of the mother’s womb, it is covered with blood. The baby is then thoroughly washed clean. Likewise, the born-again person is washed clean by the hearing of the Word (Eph. 5:26) and the love of God is shed

(sprinkled) upon his heart (Rom. 5:5). (This is the mystery alluded to in Ezekiel 16:9: *Then I washed you in water; yes I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil.*) Like a newborn baby with all its organs, a born-again spirit man too has a new spirit and a new heart (Ezek. 36:26). He also receives the following:

1. *New eyes* : To behold purity like the Lord God, who does not behold evil (Job 11:4; Hab. 1:13).

2. *New ears* : To hear the Word of God and to hear His voice (Ex. 15:26).

3. *New tongue* : To sing forth the praises of God instead of gossiping, murmuring and backbiting (Ps. 15:3; 1 Tim. 1:4, 4:7).

4. *New nose* : To breathe in the Holy Spirit and not to breathe in the filth of the world anymore (Gen. 2:7; Jn. 20:22).

5. *New hands* : To lift up holy hands and praise the Lord. Only he who has clean hands can enter the holy tabernacle of God (Ps. 24:3,4; 1 Tim. 2:8).

6. *New legs* : To bring the gospel of peace to all places. Not to run towards mischief but to walk righteously before God (Ps. 15:2; Prov. 6:18).

He who is born of God is perfected and matures unto perfection. Day by day he is transformed into the likeness of Christ Jesus. Waves of holiness will come upon him to enable him to live in perfection like God. Isn’t it glorious to be born again of God?

The term born again in the Greek is *anothen*, which means *anew,* or *from above* (as used in Jn. 3:3,5,7). In 1 Peter 1:23 the Greek word for the phrase “having been born again” is *genethenai anothen*, which means *regenerated*. “Born again” can therefore be defined as *a spiritual rebirth that is effected from above and that is regenerative.*

May I reveal a conversation I once had with a ministering spirit from heaven (Heb. 1:13,14)? Once I was meditating the scriptures and was pondering deeply on the subject of “Born Again.” A ministering spirit came from the presence of God and revealed to me the following: *To be born again means to be born in Christ or to be begotten of God. How is a person born in this world? Isn’t it by the union of a male and a female? In the beginning, man sinned and lost the glory of God* (Rom. 3:23). *What will come forth from sinful man? Only sin! That is why even newborn children possess a sinful nature. Whatever that came forth from the first man after he had sinned was always full of sin.*

Born again is spiritual rebirth. The Lord Jesus asserted that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Jn. 3:6). This rebirth is effected from above because only God through His Holy Spirit is able to do that. In the new creation of the new birth, the Lord God gives us a new spirit and a new heart. Two scriptures in the Old Testament beautifully portray this truth: *I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you* (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26); *I will give them a heart to know Me that I am the LORD* (Jer. 24:7).

The Lord Jesus Christ specifically declared that to be born again is to be born of water and of the Spirit (Jn. 3:5).

a. *Born of the Water*

The *water* as referred to by the Lord Jesus regarding spiritual rebirth performs a dual action–*within* and *without*–on the life of the person who is being born again.

i. *The Operation of Water Within*

Here it speaks symbolically of the Word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, while washing the disciples' feet, said: *He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean* (Jn. 13:10); You are already clean because of the Word which I have spoken to you (John 15:3). Regarding the church, the apostle Paul writes: *That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word* (Eph. 5:26). The psalmist also writes thus: *How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word* (Ps. 119:9). With the understanding gained from these scriptures we can conclude thus: Being "born of water" *is a spiritual act of washing resulting from hearing and receiving the Word of God.*

This principle of washing with water was effected inside me during my own salvation experience. When I answered the altar call and came forward to stand before the speaker, I opened my mouth to confess my belief that Jesus Christ had died for my sins and rose again from the dead. As soon as I opened my heart and confessed with my mouth, *I believe and accept you as my Lord and Savior*, I felt as though someone started to pour oil over my head. From my head, the oil began to flow down all over my face, hands, body, legs, and feet (cp. Ps. 133:2). It was a very tangible supernatural experience. As this oil was flowing down all over my body, within me I felt that I was being cleansed of my sin and filthiness. It was like a physical washing and cleansing. That being born of water takes place through the Word of God is also shown clearly in the following scriptures:

Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you (Ezek. 36:25); *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God* (1 Pet. 1:23).

ii. *The Operation of Water Without*

This refers to water baptism. The most important question that needs to be asked and answered is *Why do we need to be baptized in water?* The standard and most popular reason given makes reference to Romans 6:4: *we were buried with Him through baptism into death.* The outward cleansing of water baptism thus signifies an inner cleansing of the Word and an identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The baptism of water actually has an in-depth meaning. Consider the words given to John the Baptist when he was hesitant to baptize the Lord Jesus: *Permit it to be so now: for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness* (Matt. 3:15). What did the Lord Jesus mean when he said “fulfil all righteousness”?

In Exodus 40:12-13 we read: *Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and wash them with water. You shall put the holy garments on Aaron, and anoint him, and sanctify him, that he may minister to Me as priest.* The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in order to minister as the faithful high Priest in the priest’s office, needed to be washed by the baptism of water (Heb. 2:17; 4:15; 5:5). If the Lord needed to do so, what then believers? In 1 Peter 2:9, it is written, *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, His own special people* (Ex. 19:6; Rev. 1:6). The believer, without

doubt, needs to be baptized in water, so that like the priest standing in the priest's office he can offer spiritual sacrifices to God (Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:5).

b. *Born of the Spirit*

> ***TITUS 3:5***
> *5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*

Let's look at the two key words used in this scripture that describe being born of the Spirit. *Regeneration* is translated from the Greek word *palingenesia*, which means *new birth* (*palin*, "again"; *genesia*, "birth"), signifying *spiritual regeneration*. *Renewing* comes from the Greek word *anakainosis*, which means *to make new*. We can therefore conclude thus about "being born of the Spirit": *It is the state of spiritual regeneration effected by God's power to develop the life of a Christian through the continual operation of the indwelling Holy Spirit.*

As man's spirit is dead because of original sin, when he is born again of the Spirit, God puts in him a new spirit (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26). The spirit of man is re-generated by the quickening work of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11). Just as in the creation when the Holy Spirit moved across the dark waters and brought forth life, likewise in regeneration that same Spirit of the Living God brings forth new life, making alive what has no life (Gen. 1:2-27.) "Spiritual regeneration" involves the communication of new life. The two powers that operate to produce this life are the Word and the Spirit

(Jn. 3:5,6; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23). This is what is meant by being born of water and of the Spirit.

Let's examine some scriptural passages that foreshadow this truth:

1. *The Creation of Adam*

God *said* (spoke the Word), *Let us make man and the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath [or Spirit] of Life; and man became a living being* (Gen. 11:26; 2:7; Job 33:4). (Genesis 1:2 contains the implication that water was used to mix with the dust of the ground.) Observe the dynamic relationship here between God's creative Word and the Spirit's impartation of life: *Man is born of water (resulting from the creative power of God's Word) and of the Spirit (action of hovering over the waters and breathing in of life)*.

2. *The Resurrection of Dry Bones*

In Ezekiel 37:1-10 we read how the prophet Ezekiel was taken out of his body by the Spirit to a valley that was full of bones (v. 1). God then commanded Ezekiel to prophesy the *Word* to those bones (vv. 4-6). When the prophet prophesied, *the breath* (the Spirit) came upon those dry bones and they came together and received life (vv. 9-10). Observe the same dynamic relationship between the Word and the Spirit that brought flesh and breath back to the dry bones: *They are born of water (creative Word) and the Spirit (life breath)*.

3. *The Mystery of the Virgin Conception*

In Luke 1:26-38 it is written that the angel Gabriel appeared before Mary and gave her a *Word*. The angel told her that the *Holy Spirit* will come upon her and she shall be conceived of the Spirit (v. 35). Mary told the angel, *Let it be to me according to your Word* (v. 38). We all know that cells are living organisms in the human body. In the female reproductive system are ovaries. These ovaries are cells that have the potential to produce new life. The Holy Spirit is a quickening Spirit who gives life by making things come alive (Jn. 6:63; Rom. 8:11; 1 Pet. 3:18). When the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, the young virgin's ovaries were quickened and they began to pulsate with new life as the supernatural impregnation occurred. Mary conceived and was made pregnant resulting from the same dynamic relationship between the Word and the Spirit. *The Virgin Mary was divinely impregnated of water (Word) and the Spirit*.

II. CLEANSED FROM SIN

After we are born again, cleansing from sin begins to take place.

> ***EZEKIEL 36:25***
> *25 Then I will sprinkle clean water you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols.*

Consider a woman in her labor pains ready to give birth anytime. When the baby comes out of her womb, it is covered with blood and uncleanness. The umbilical cord that links the mother and child is cut. The baby is then cleansed by water of all the blood, the filthiness and uncleanness, and clothed in a white cloth before being presented to the

parents. Likewise God washes and cleanses us from all filthiness after we are born again (Ezek. 16:4,9).

Justification

Cleansed from sin, we are justified before God. God is a righteous and holy God. To stand before Him in righteousness and holiness we first have to be cleansed from all sins. The word *justification* in the Greek is *dikaiosis*, which means *the act of pronouncing righteous, justified, acquitted.* God justifies a person when he is born again of water and of the Spirit by acquitting his guilt. *Justification,* therefore, *is the concrete expression of righteousness by declaring that a person is righteous*.

Just as the surgeon severs the umbilical cord that joins the mother and the newborn baby when it leaves the womb, God cuts off the spiritual umbilical cord that attaches us to the world when we are born again. Our spiritual umbilical cord is “the cord of sin” (Prov. 5:22; Isa. 5:18). Justified and cleansed from sin, God no longer imputes nor reckons nor holds any sin against us, since we have been cut loose and set free from the dominion of sin (Rom. 6:14,18,22). Having been freed from the dominion of sin–cleansed and declared justified and righteous by God–we must neither (1) allow sin to rule and reign in our body to make us yield to its cravings and subject to its lusts and passions (Rom. 6:12) nor (2) yield our bodily members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin but instead yield completely to God (Rom. 6:13,19).

In John 19:34, it is written, *But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.* This is how we are cleansed from sin and made justified in the eyes of God–*by the blood and water of the Lord Jesus Christ.* Why blood and water? Blood is for the

redemption from sin (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). Water is used to cleanse us from all the filthiness and uncleanness that result from our everyday life (1 Jn. 1:7,9). There is life in the blood and it can speak (Gen. 4:10; Lev. 17:11). In 1 John 5:7,8, it is written, *So there are three witnesses in heaven, The Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are One, and there are three witnesses on the earth, the Spirit, the water and the blood; and these three agree [are in unison, their testimony coincides]* (AMP). In this scripture water speaks of the Word, which we have also seen in the preceding discussion. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word (Water) of Life, has also gone up to heaven, and entered the Most Holy Place by His blood so as to redeem us from sin (Heb. 9:12,24). He offered His eternal blood which speaks a better and nobler gracious message of mercy before a righteous and holy God (Heb. 12:24). Having entered heaven as the great high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 4:14; 7:25).

His intercessions run like a continuous flow of water to cleanse us from all sins. This is beautifully illustrated in 1 John 1:7: *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.* When we practice a habitual and consistent life of prayer and fellowship with God (1 Jn. 1:3) and obey the Word (walk in the light) we can be assured that “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses (removes) us from all sin and guilt–keeps us cleansed from sin in all its forms and manifestations” (1 Jn. 1:7, AMP). We, then, are justified, made upright and in right standing, with God by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus by his blood (Rom. 3:24,25).

III. NEW CREATION

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Let's first examine the words "new" and "creation" found in this scripture from the original language. The word new in the Greek is *kainos,* which means *new, as to form or quality, of different nature from what is contrasted as old.* The word *creation* in the Greek is *ktisis,* which means *the act of creating or the creative act in process*. The term "new creation" can thus be defined as follows: *By the creative act of God, a person becomes a new man (or creature) in Christ, with a new manhood both spiritual and moral, after the pattern and character of Christ Jesus.*

In regeneration *(born of Water and of the Spirit and cleansed from all filthiness of sin)*, a person becomes a new creature. The person is still the same person, but the old sin-dominated nature is no more in existence. The Lord God has declared that "all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). All the old, our entire past, has passed away. In Isaiah 43:25 it is written, *I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins* (also Heb. 10:12). When we came to God as sinners, all that we had done in the past was wiped out (cleaned out), everything that we were was erased. We received the full remission of sins as though they had never been committed (Acts 2:38; 10:43).

During a season of fasting for 40 days in 1985, I received a visitation from the Lord Jesus and beheld His similitude. He showed me a particular member of my church and asked for my opinion. All I could think of to tell the Lord were her mistakes and ugly unChristlike character and

behavior. The Lord Jesus then opened my spiritual eyes to see from God's view how He looked at her. All her mistakes and ugly unChristlike character and behavior did not exist, for this person was a new creature in Christ Jesus. Instead of the ugliness, I saw in her the beauty and innocence from the perfection of Christlikeness. In His great mercy and grace, the Lord Jesus taught me that when a person is born again, he or she becomes a new creature within and all the old has passed away. Externally the person may not look any different because it is only the spirit that is born again, not the soul and the body. A person's thinking, certain traits, and behavior may still seem to be like the old person. But, within, the spirit man has become a new creature.

In 1993, I was invited to speak at a certain charismatic church in Singapore. After the message, as I was ministering to the people, the word of the Lord came to me saying, *There is a woman here feeling very condemned and unloved by Me. Tell her that I love her*. I gave the word and prayed for that woman. After the meeting was over, a young woman came to see me for prayer. Looking at me with moist eyes she said, *I am the woman whom you called out as feeling condemned*. She went on to pour out tear-filled words regarding her sinful life and her feelings of condemnation. As I was listening to her, the Lord Jesus, who was standing beside me in the Spirit, said, *Tell her that when I forgave her sins, I remember them no more* (Is. 38:17; Jer. 31:34). *She is not condemned before Me. Neither is she ugly before Me.* After telling her what the Lord Jesus said, I told her, *My dear sister, when the Lord Jesus Himself doesn't remember your sins, why are you reminding Him of your sins which He doesn't remember? He has buried all your sins under the ocean of His love* (Micah 7:19). *Go in peace. When we become new creatures, the old has passed*

away. We must now look at ourselves the way God looks at us–*as how we look in Christ Jesus.*

The Creation of a New Creature

The new birth or the born-again experience is the birthing of a new creation from heaven through the direct operation of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. We are completely spiritually changed and made righteous new creatures in Christ Jesus. Let's examine from the scriptures what new things God makes in us when we are born again and how He sees our identity in Christ Jesus.

1. *New Human Spirit*

> ***EZEKIEL 36:26,27***
> *26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*
> *27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*

It is the human spirit that God re-creates because it is only the spirit that deals with the spiritual realm and which knows God (1 Cor. 2:11). It is like the main power station that supplies power to certain area. When there is a power outage due to an electrical fault at the power station, every house in that area will lose its electricity. To rectify the problem one does not go to each house to carry out repair but to the power station itself. When the fault is corrected, all the houses affected by the power failure will receive a new flow of electricity. Likewise when the spirit man (who is

the real man in us) is regenerated, eventual and effectual change will come over the soul and the body.

The new man, with the new spirit, becomes a partaker of the divine nature and life of God (Col. 3:3,4; 2 Pet. 1:4). The new man has, as it were, Christ formed in him(Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:27). Our new spirit has been regenerated to put on the image and likeness of God in righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). That was how the first man Adam was before he sinned. Our spirit nature has been restored back to how it originally was in the beginning (Gen. 1:26,27).

2. *New Heart*

It is impossible for us to change our heart. When we are born again, the Lord God gives us a spiritual heart transplant.

The word heart (as in Ezekiel 36:26) in Hebrew is *leb*, which has the following definitions:

i. The seat of desire, inclination, or will (e.g. Ex. 7:14; 35:5; Ps. 86:12).

ii. The seat of emotions (e.g. Deut. 6:5; 1 Sam. 2:1; Is. 35:4).

iii. The seat of knowledge and wisdom (Deut. 29:4; 1 Kg. 3:9).

iv. The seat of conscience and moral character (2 Sam. 24:10; Job. 27:6).

v. The seat of rebellion and pride (Gen. 8:21; Jer. 17:1; Ezek. 28:2).

vi. *The outflow of man's deeds* (Gen. 20:5; 1 Kg. 3:6; Is. 38:3).

vii. *The inner being of man himself* (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 17:9).

Why does God need to give us a new heart (mind)? Because,

a. *The imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was evil* (Gen. 6:5).

b. *The heart is deceitful and wicked* (Eccl. 9:3; Jer. 17:9).

c. *The heart is the source of many evils* (Matt. 15:19,20; Mk. 7:21,22).

d. *The heart is unclean* (Job 14:4).

e. *The heart is accustomed to doing evil* (Jer. 13:23).

Because of the ugliness of the heart of sinful man, when we are reborn God gives us a new heart of flesh and takes away the stony heart. In the parable of the sower, the Lord Jesus said that the seed which fall upon stony places sprout up quickly but soon wither because they do not have deep roots (Matt. 13:20,21). Only good ground can nurture seeds to fruitfulness. God has to replace the stony heart with a heart of flesh so that He could "Imprint [His] laws upon their minds, even upon their innermost thoughts and understanding and engrave them upon their hearts" (Heb. 8:10, AMP; Heb. 10:16). When God wrote His laws on tablets of stone and instructed Israel to obey them, they failed to do so (Ex. 31:18; Deut. 9:15-17). Seeds cannot germinate on stones and produce fruits of perfection. God's new laws–

if they are to bring man unto perfection–must be written on "fleshy tables of the heart" (Jer. 31:33; 2 Cor. 3:3).

3. *God's Spirit*

After having recreated the human spirit and giving man a new heart (mind), God puts His Spirit in us to cause us to walk in his statutes and obey his ordinances by keeping them (Ezek. 11:20; 36:27). Why does God need to put his Spirit within us to guide us? Let's return to the early days of creation. Before the fall of Adam, God's personal presence was always in habitual fellowship with him (Gen. 3:8). When Adam disobeyed God's word and sinned, God's presence left him. Later, at the time of Moses, God led the nation of Israel out of Egypt by His Spirit's manifestation through the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21; Num. 14:14; Neh. 9:12). Even then the people of God continued to test, try, vex, and disobey God (1 Cor. 10:5).

Because of man's utter inability to walk righteously, God then brought His presence right inside us so that His Spirit will live in us and abide with us constantly (Jn. 14:16,17). His Spirit in us will now lead us into all truth, teach us all things, and bring to remembrance all the commandments, statutes, ordinances, and ways that God has commanded (Jn. 14:26; 16:13).

4. *New Nature*

> ***EPHESIANS 4:24 (AMP)***
> *24 And put on the new nature (the regenerate self) created in God's image, (Godlike) in true righteousness and holiness.*

God’s nature is that of holiness, love, and truth, and therefore man’s new nature will reflect this. The regenerated person’s innermost being is now inclined towards righteousness and holiness. When we were still the unregenerated man, we were enslaved to sin. But now, having been set free from sin, our new nature will feel inclined to yield the bodily members to righteousness and holiness as we are led by the Holy Spirit of God (Rom. 6:17-19).

Sanctification

We feel drawn towards righteousness and holiness because God has sanctified us through His Spirit. It is written very beautifully in scripture thus: *And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God* (1 Cor. 6:11).

The word *sanctification* in Greek is *hagiamos*, which means *separation to God, a setting apart*. The Bible emphatically declares that every believer is sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:2). Sanctification can be thus defined: *Separated and set apart and made holy unto God by the grace of God.*

God is holy and separate from all other gods (Ex. 15:11). He has thus separated and set apart His people from the rest of mankind as holy and belonging solely and uniquely to Him (1 Pet. 2:9). This then is the will of God–that we should be separated, set apart for pure and holy living, knowing how to possess our own body in sanctity and honor, because God has not called us to a life of impurity but to a life of total consecration and holiness (1 Thes. 4:3,4,7).

Let us take an overall view of how own life had been while we were dead in sin and how it had been changed after we were born again.

	Our Old Life		Our New Life
1.	We were spiritually dead in our sins (Col. 2:13)	-	We are made alive and given eternal life (Eph. 2:5,6)
2.	Cursed with Adam's sin nature (Rom. 5:12).	-	We are made to partake the divine nature of God (2 Pet. 1:4)
3.	Minds blinded and understanding darkened (2 Cor. 4:4)	-	The eyes of our understanding have been enlightened (Eph. 1:18; Heb. 6:4)
4.	Enemies of God (Rom. 5:10)	-	Reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18,19)
5.	Prisoners to the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:1).	-	Freed by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ (Rom. 8:2).
6.	Children of the devil (1 Jn. 3:10).	-	Children of God (Jn. 1:12).
7.	Living in the kingdom of darkness (Col. 1:13)	-	Transferred to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13)

Who We Are In Christ Jesus

The first principle we need to know after having understood what happens to us when we are born again is to comprehend our identity in Christ Jesus. More specifically we must confess our knowledge of who we are in Christ according to what the Word says about us. The entrance of God's Word through our mouth into our heart brings light - which is understanding (Ps. 119:130) and faith (Ps. 119:130; Rom. 10:17). When our faith is built up, we will then rise up, walk by faith, and begin to please God because we will know

that as sons or daughters of God we are joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7; Heb. 11:5,6).

If we read in the gospels the life of the Lord Jesus very carefully, we will notice that He constantly declares *Who He is, What He is, and What His mission in life is. For instance, He says, I and My Father are one* (Jn. 10:30); *The Father is in Me, and I in Him (Jn. 10:38); For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel* (Jn. 5:20). The Lord Jesus has certainly left us an example of finding out and establishing *who we are.* We are then to boldly declare who we are and walk confidently in the light of this declaration. God looks at the new man in Christ Jesus when He looks at us. He does not look at us from the natural standpoint that we look at one another but through the perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who are we, then, in Christ Jesus? Or who am I in Christ Jesus?

1. We are God's *workmanship* created for good works (Eph. 2:10).

2. We have been made *righteous* in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:22; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9).

3. We are no more prisoners under condemnation; we have been *set free* from the law of sin and death in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1,2).

4. We are more than *conquerors* through Him (Rom. 8:37).

5. Christ *lives* in us (Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:26,27).

6. We are joint heirs *seated* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:17; Eph. 2:5,6).

7. We have been *blessed* with all spiritual blessings in Christ; therefore we have every good thing in us (Eph. 1:3; Philem. 1:6).

8. We are *members* of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27).

9. We are made *alive* in Christ Jesus (Acts 17:28; Rom. 6:11; 1 Cor. 15:22).

10. We are God's *fellow worker* (Mk. 16:20; 1 Cor. 3:9).

11. We are *triumphant* in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 15:57; 2 Cor. 2:14).

12. We are a *new creation* in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).

13. We are *citizens* and *members of the household of God* in heaven (Eph. 2:19; Phil. 3:20).

14. We are *children of God* in Christ Jesus (Jn. 1:12; Gal. 3:24).

15. We are *ambassadors* for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).

16. We have a *high calling* of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13,14; 2 Tim. 1:9).

17. We are *established in the faith* in Him (Col. 2:7).

18. We are *complete* in Him (Col. 2:10; Heb. 13:20,21).

19. We are *anointed* and have the Spirit of God in us (2 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 1:13; 1 Jn. 3:24, 4:13).

20. We are *made accepted* in the Beloved (Eph.1:6).

21. We are *the light* of the world (Matt. 5:14; Eph. 5:8; 1 Thes. 5:5).

22. We have been *redeemed* by the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).

23. We are *the salt* of the earth (Matt. 5:13).

24. We are the *temple* of the Living God (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16).

25. We have *boldness* in Christ Jesus to come before God (Eph. 3:12; Heb 4:16; 10:19).

26. We are *justified* and *glorified* in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24; 5:9; 8:30; Gal. 2:16).

27. We have the *grace of God* given to us by Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:4).

28. We are *enriched in all knowledge* by Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:5).

29. We are *perfected* by Christ Jesus (Heb. 10:14).

30. We have *power* and *authority* in Christ Jesus (Matt. 28:18; Mk. 16:17,18; Lk. 10:19).

31. We are *sanctified* and *purified* in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:2; Tit. 2:14).

32. We are *kings* and *priests* unto God (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6).

33. We are *holy, unblameable*, and *unreprovable* before God's sight (Col. 1:22).

This is *who* and *what we are* in Christ Jesus. As we begin to see ourselves the way God sees us and as we allow the Word of God to sink into us by meditating the preceding scriptures, our identify in Christ will become a reality in our life.

Chapter 3 - Fellowshiping with the Triune God

JOHN 1:1
1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

1 JOHN 1:3
3 That which we have seen and heard we declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1a
1a Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the [Holy] Spirit ....

The second principle that will help us to be transformed into Christlikeness is *our fellowship with the triune God.* This truth is exemplified by the text *the Word was with God*. In Proverbs 8:30, it is written that *Then I was beside Him, as a master craftsman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.* Every child in a healthy home enjoys the constant fellowship of his parents as he grows steadily into maturity. Likewise we must now learn to establish a consistent, habitual, and uninterrupted fellowship with God. This simply means maintaining a disciplined prayer life - closely fellowshiping with God.

For a fuller understanding of this vital subject, let's examine several Greek words and a Hebrew word for the word *fellowship.*

1. Gk. *koinonia : communion, fellowship, sharing in common*

2. Gk*. metoche : partnership*

3. Heb*. chabar : to be joined*

4. Gk*. koinonos ginomai : to become a partaker*

Fellowshiping with God can be thus defined: *Joined with God in communion and sharing a common partnership, thereby becoming a partaker of God's nature and attributes.*

God fellowshiped with Adam in his sinless state. Adam too fellowshiped with God in all His perfection. Let's consider the scriptural account of this beautiful fellowship.

1. *Communion*

Genesis 3:8 records, *And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day* (AMP). This beautiful scene is commonly interpreted as God and Adam having fellowship with each other. Enoch too enjoyed a similar intimate communion with God: *Enoch walked [in habitual fellowship] with God* (Gen. 5:22,24, AMP).

2. *Partnership*

After creating him, God conferred on Adam complete authority and dominion over God's creation (Gen. 1:26,28). All too soon Adam committed high treason by selling out his

authority to the devil. After destroying all the works of the devil, the Lord Jesus Christ took back the authority and restored it to us in His Name (Matt. 28:18; Mk. 16:17,18; 1 Jn. 3:8).

3. *A Common Participation*

God let Adam share and participate in the joy of His creation. It is written in Genesis 2:19, *And out of the ground the Lord God formed every [wild] beast and living creature of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them; and whatever Adam called every living creature, that was its name* (AMP). The Creator clearly viewed the first man as His partner and put His seal of approval on Adam's choice. We see in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus and His disciples a similar partnership between God and man: *And they went out, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs* (Mk. 16:20).

When we fellowship with God as a partner and participate in a project together, He comes to discuss things over with us. We are His partner. He will listen to us. Let's examine two specific instances in the Bible:

i. *Moses*. Moses constantly enjoyed a deep communion and intimate fellowship with God. He spoke with God freely as a friend (Ex. 33:11). Because Moses was made God's partner, he could reason, plead, intercede with God–even, on many occasions, talk Him out of completely destroying Israel (Ex. 32:9-14).

ii. *Abraham*. Abraham was called a friend of God (2 Chr. 20:7; Is. 41:8). When God wanted to destroy Sodom and

Gomorrah, He first had a talk with His friend (Gen. 18:7). After telling of the sinful condition of the cities slated for destruction, God was willing to listen to Abraham's views and hear his intercession. God was even willing to take into consideration His partner's concerns (Gen. 18:23-33).

4. *Partakers of God's Nature and Attributes*

If we put a piece of coal in the fire, after some time, the coal will be glowing with fire in it. The coal now burns with its own fire because it has partaken of the original fire through close association. Likewise when we fellowship with God the fire of the Holy Spirit renews, transforms, and transfigures us into God's image and likeness.

Although Adam was created in the image and likeness of God, after the fall of man, it is only through habitual fellowship with God that anyone can once more be a partaker of God's nature. Of Enoch, the Bible tells us that he walked with God in habitual fellowship (Gen. 5:22,24). Even with his inherited fallen nature, Enoch took on God's nature, receiving His light and His glory. After a long life of close communion with God on earth, "Enoch was caught up and transferred to heaven, so that he did not have a glimpse of death; and he was not found, because God had translated him" (Heb. 11:5, AMP). Of Moses, scriptures say, *Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain) that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him* (Ex. 34:29). After fellowshiping with God continuously for forty days and nights, Moses partook the light of God's glory (Ex. 34:28).

Of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is written, *And as He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe*

became white and glistening (Lk. 9:29). The Lord Jesus, who lived in uninterrupted communion with God the Father, partook of that same manifested glory of God that came upon Enoch and Moses. Of the believer, it is written: *by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4a).* In Christ Jesus, we now partake the divine nature within our spirit. By habitual fellowship with God, we will be transfigured and transformed into His own image and likeness in ever-increasing splendor from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

The Different Levels Of Fellowship With God

I have found through the study of God's Word on this subject that there are or have been different levels of fellowship with God. Regarding this we can follow human history through its different stages of change, from the first man Adam, who enjoyed the highest level of communion with God before his fall, through the fallen state of mankind, through the restoration of man's fellowship with God by the second man Christ Jesus.

1. *The Level of Adam*

Adam in his sinless state fellowshiped with God face to face, enjoying daily the loving communion of God as a son would with his father. Once as I was in deep prayer, my spiritual eyes were opened to behold a scene in the Garden of Eden. God came walking in the garden. His appearance, though in form like a man, was shrouded with the glory light. Adam was standing by a fruit tree and admiring it. The whole atmosphere in the garden pulsated with the vibrancy

of life. Walking very gently, God came and stood beside Adam, and explained to him the purpose for the creation of that tree - its qualities and its functions. Such was the blessed state of Adam before his fall (Gen. 1:28-30; 2:8,15-17,19,20; 3:8).

2. *The Level of Moses*

Since the fall of Adam, man could no longer behold God face to face and be in His glorious holy presence. Moses, through close habitual fellowship, found favor in God's eye (Ex. 33:17). God spoke with Moses face to face, as a man would speak with his friend (Ex. 33:11; Deut. 34:10). His spiritual eyes were opened to behold the form of the Lord God (Num. 12:8).

3. *The Level of the Prophets*

As the sin and wickedness resulting from man's depravity increased on the face of the earth, man even forgot his Creator (Is. 1:3; Jer. 9:3,6). It was the prophets who continued to fellowship and stay in partnership with God. As they communed with God, God spoke to them through the word of prophecy (1 Pet. 1:19-21). Thus, it is often written in the scriptures, the Word of the LORD came unto me. This Word came to them through a vision, an audible voice, a word put in the mouth, or through an angel of God. Consider the following scriptures: Genesis 15:1; Numbers 23:5; Judges 2:4; 1 Samuel 15:10; 2 Samuel 7:4; 1 Kings 6:11; 2 Kings 20:4; 1 Chronicles 22:8; 2 Chronicles 12:7; Ezra 1:1; Isaiah 38:4; Jeremiah 1:2; Ezekiel 1:3; Daniel 8:16,17; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 7:16; Jonah 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1; Haggai 2:10; Zechariah 8:18.

4. *The Level of the Lord Jesus*

During His earthly days, the Lord Jesus Christ was always found in prayer fellowshiping with God the Father. Sometimes He would even spend the whole night in prayer (Luke 6:12). He communed with God “in the bosom [in the intimate presence] of the Father” (Jn. 1:18, AMP). There is a very saintly man of God in South India who walks very intimately with God and is often caught up to the heavens as was the experience of the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 12:2-4). In one such experience, this holy man was taken by the Lord Jesus to see the throne of God the Father. The dwelling place of the Father God, he beheld, was pervaded with an air of absolute peace, tranquillity, and stillness. A throne was there with a majestic glory cloud resting over it. He could not see God the Father clearly and could only make out His form overshadowed by the glory cloud.

This man then turned to the Lord Jesus and asked Him concerning a certain matter, to which the Lord replied He had to go ask the Father about it. The Lord Jesus then walked towards the throne and disappeared into the cloud. As God the Father and God the Son were conversing, thunders and lightning broke forth from within the cloud. After some time, the Lord Jesus stepped out from what seemed like the bosom of the Father God. This is the place of deep and intimate fellowship between the Lord Jesus and God the Father. It has always pleased the Father God to speak with the Lord Jesus from a cloud because He habitually fellowshiped with God (Matt. 17:5; Mk. 6:46; Lk. 5:16).

5. *The Level of the New Covenant Believer*

The regenerated believer who is in Christ Jesus enjoys this new reality: *And you are in Him, made full and have come to fullness of life [in Christ you too are filled with the*

Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and reach full spiritual stature] (Col. 2:10, AMP). Having been restored to the original sinless sate of Adam, the believer who is in Christ can now, through the blood of Christ Jesus, fellowship freely with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

a. *Fellowshiping With the Father*

We can fellowship with the Father God (1 Jn. 1:3). We have been taught that all prayers must be addressed to the Father in the Lord Jesus' Name (Matt. 6:9; Jn. 15:16; 16:23) but have hardly been taught that we should fellowship and develop an intimate acquaintance with the Father God. Why do we need to love and fellowship with the Father God? Because He cares for us, is deeply interested in us, and loves us unconditionally, as though no one else exists in the entire universe (1 Pet. 5:7).

Once a sister told me she had difficulty picturing and accepting God as her Father because she had an unloving father and a neglected childhood. To this sister and others like her, the Lord Jesus had especially taught the beautiful parables of the loving and caring Heavenly Father. Luke 15:3-32 records three such parables of the Lord Jesus. In the first parable, the finding of the lost sheep speaks of God as a deeply loving and caring person (vv. 3-6). In the second parable, the finding of the lost coin shows how much God values, honors, and cherishes us. In the third parable, the restoration of the lost son portrays God as a loving father who is full of mercy and compassion (vv. 11-32). We can confidently fellowship with God because of His incomparable love, and He is the Heavenly Father of all who have been born again into the family of God (Eph. 3:14,15).

There are two ways we can fellowship with the Father God:

i. *Through the Word*

Once, the Spirit of God led me to the Word to study the relationship between the Lord Jesus as Son with God His Father. In the Word, I discovered much about the Father's love, His nature, and the way He cares for us, His children. The apostle of faith Smith Wigglesworth once said: *I can't understand God by feelings. I understand God the Father by what the Word says about Him. He is everything the Word says He is*. It is written in John chapter 14 that when we walk in obedience to the Word we will be loved by the Father and He will come to make His special dwelling place in us (vv. 21, 23). We can have the same intimacy the Lord Jesus had with the Father God when we fellowship with Him (Jn. 17:23).

ii. *Experiencing His Fellowship*

It is written that God created us for His pleasure (Rev. 4:11). As such we should fellowship with God's Presence and Being. It is not just experiencing the presence of God but rather waiting continually in His presence until God manifests Himself.

I read of an experience of a man of God which exemplifies this. He went into his prayer closet one day and began to worship, to delight in, and to wait on God. He then heard God say, *Son, is there anything which you want that I can do for you?* He replied, *Oh, no, Father. I don't want anything. I just came to abide in Your presence because You are so wonderful, lovely, and full of goodness. You have already provided me with all I need. I did not come before*

You for anything. I just came to visit You and be near Your presence, Father. God the Father then said to him: *Son, you don't know how much that delights Me. No earthly father ever desired the companionship and fellowship of his children any more than Me. I desire the fellowship and companionship of My children. I made man so I will have someone to fellowship with. I put Adam on the earth in the garden, and in the cool of the day I went to meet and talk with him*. What a blessed privilege just to be able to fellowship with the Father God!

b. *Fellowshiping With the Son, Jesus Christ*

We are called to fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:9). There are five levels of relationship we can progressively mature into as we fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. In the first level of relationship, we become the *children of God* by accepting and receiving the Lord Jesus as our Savior (Jn. 1:12).

2. In the second level of relationship, we become the *sons or daughters of God*. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption brings us into a deeper relationship with God as Father through the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:6; Rom. 8:14,15).

3. In the third level of relationship, we become the *servants of the Lord Jesus Christ*, anointed with power and authority, and serving the Lord in humility and obedience (Matt. 25:21; 28:19,20; Mk. 16:15-20).

4. In the fourth level of relationship, we become the *friends of the Lord Jesus*, with whom He would share and in whom

He would confide His secrets (Ps. 25:14; Jn. 15:15).

5. In the fifth level of relationship, we become the *wife of the Lord Jesus Christ*, enjoying with Him an intimate oneness of spirit, soul, and body (Jn. 17:21,23; Gal. 3:28).

When we delight to fellowship and hold sweet and intimate converse with the Lord Jesus, opening our hearts to Him and obeying His Word, the Lord Jesus Christ will reveal and manifest Himself to us. He will let Himself be clearly seen as a real person to us (Jn. 14:21). I spent the first day of the year 1995 at the feet of the Lord Jesus in Nairobi, Kenya. I just desired in my heart to delight in the presence of God by worshiping Him. After half an hour of singing love songs to the Lord Jesus, I beheld the manifested presence of the Lord Jesus before me. The Lover of my soul was beautiful beyond description. I then said to the Lord, Speak Lord, your servant shall hear. You know what he said? *No, son, I came just to sit by you and enjoy the sweet sacrifice which you are offering unto Me.* What a wonderful Savior is Jesus our Lord!

c. *Fellowshiping With the Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit is the most neglected Person of the Godhead. We pray and worship the Father; we sing praises to and fellowship with the Lord Jesus. But by and large we don’t know or have forgotten that the Holy Spirit also needs our fellowship because He too is God (Jn. 4:24; 2 Cor. 3:17; Phil. 1:19). It is written in 2 Corinthians 13:14 that there is *the presence and fellowship (the communion and sharing together and participation) in the Holy Spirit* (*AMP*, also Phil. 2:1). We need to learn to cultivate a habitual communion with the Holy Spirit.

I was in Western Tibet in July of 1994. One morning, as my associate and I were spending some time praising and worshiping God, I began to sing this song:

Holy Spirit, we welcome You
Holy Spirit, we welcome You
Move among us each day
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit
Holy Spirit, we worship you ....

The more I ministered to the Holy Spirit, the more I felt being drawn closer to Him. I began to change the words, personalizing it by singing, *Holy Spirit, I worship You ..., Holy Spirit, I love You ..., etc*. During those moments, I perceived in my spirit that the Holy Spirit was immensely pleased and rejoicing while receiving the worship and adoration offered to Him. This experience greatly convinced me that as much as we praise, worship, and pray to the Father God and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit too needs to be recognized, praised, worshiped, and fellowshiped with, because He is with us and in us (Jn. 14:17). The Holy Spirit will not force Himself upon us because of His gentle nature. We need to maintain a consciousness of being together with Him. We can fellowship with the Holy Spirit in the following ways:

a) *Adoring Him and thanking Him for Who He is.*

b) *Praying in the spirit in unknown tongues.*

c) *Welcoming His presence and showing our appreciation for Him by worshiping, praising, and waiting on Him.*

As we begin to fellowship with and establish a divine union with the Holy Spirit, He will teach us all things, bring to remembrance the Word, guide us into all truth, show us

things that will happen in the future, and magnify the glory and presence of God in our lives (Jn. 14:26, 16:13,14). In learning and developing a love relationship with the Holy Spirit, we may, for a start, begin each day by saying, *Good morning, dear Holy Spirit!*

How Can We Fellowship With God

There are several ways revealed in the Word as to how we can fellowship with God in order to help us transform into Christlikeness. In our study we shall specifically examine two main ways to fellowship with the Godhead.

1. *Ministering to the Lord*

> ***ACTS 13:1,2a***
> *1 Now in the church that was at Antioch*
> *there were certain prophets and teachers: as*
> *Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger,*
> *Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been*
> *brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and*
> *Saul.*
> *2a As they ministered to the Lord....*

I once read an author who described the importance of ministering to the Lord, something largely and often overlooked by present-day Christianity: *We need to once again dig down into the springs of God's life and bury ourselves in Him, the Source. We need to be caught up in the wonder of the Person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, to know Him intimately and deeply.*

I was once in Himachal Pradesh, India, in June 1986 for about two months in the course of ministry to the Tibetans. One morning I sat before the presence of God and began to praise and worship. As I went on praising, I perceived the presence of God increasing within me and around the room. I then beheld the Lord Jesus in the Spirit. Upon seeing the Lord, I clutched His feet and began worshiping His majesty. I then experienced an ecstatic joy and love flowing from the Lord Jesus towards me. At that moment of high and deep intimate worship, I experienced a oneness with Him. Ministering to the Lord can be such a wonderful, rapturous experience.

The word *minister* in Hebrew is *sarat*, which means to *minister, serve*. It is a special term to describe service in worship. In the Greek, it is *diakoneo*, which means *to serve, wait upon, minister*. Ministering to the Lord can thus be simply defined as follows: *Serving God in worship and waiting upon Him as a servant.*

I once read a story about Abraham Lincoln. An elderly lady came to see him one afternoon. As she entered his office, he arose, seated her, and asked how he could be of help to her. The elderly lady said, *Mr. President, I know you are a busy man. I have not come to ask for anything. I simply came to bring you this box of cookies for I heard that you enjoy them so much. Tears began to roll down Lincoln's eyes. After a while, he turned to her and said, Madam, I thank you for your thoughtful gift. I am greatly moved by it. Thousands of people have come to me asking for favors. You are the first person who came not to ask for favors but to bring a gift for me. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.* Likewise God desires us to come to Him for not just what we want or need but for Himself, *for who He is,* presenting ourselves to minister to and for Him.

The Lord God specifically “separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister to Him and to bless in His name” (Deut. 10:8). Likewise, God has chosen us from the world to be a royal priesthood (like the priestly tribe of Levi), filled with the presence of His glory (like the bearers of the ark of the covenant - 2 Cor. 6:16; Col. 1:27), and privileged to stand before the Lord to minister unto Him by declaring forth His praises (1 Pet. 2:9).

How can we minister unto God? We can minister to God by offering Him our praise and worship, and by waiting on Him.

a. *Praise*

> ***PSALM 37:4***
> *4 Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.*
>
> ***PROVERB 8:30b***
> *30b I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.*

Delighting in the Lord is rejoicing before Him and praising Him. It is only when we rejoice in praises, delighting ourselves in the Lord, that God will give us the desires of our heart. Many times our desires are selfish. We do not know what we should want or what we really need. When we praise God, the selfish, unwanted desires will be filtered out, and our heart will be purified and sanctified before God.

Consider the rain. When it comes down from the heavens, it is pure and clean. When this water falls on the

earth, it gets mixed in with the soil and dirt, and becomes muddy and dirty. We cannot use this muddied water for any purpose. When the sun comes up after the rain, its heat rays draw out the water from the mud through the process of evaporation. The evaporated water vapor rises up in its purified state to form clouds. The water is once again made clean and pure by the sun's heat. Likewise, when we delight in the presence of God through praising Him, our carnal, selfish, impure desires become purified and sanctified by the presence of the Sun of Righteousness in our lives (Mal. 4:2). In such a state, we are then able to examine our desires and motives and bring them into conformity with God's desires.

To delight in the Lord is to rejoice by praising God. Psalm 7:17 says, *I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.* After Solomon had completed the building of the temple, the people of Israel witnessed the visitation of the presence of the Lord God on the day of the temple dedication: *Indeed it came to pass when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying: For He is good; for His mercy endures for ever, that the house, the house of the LORD was filled with a cloud* (2 Chr. 5:13).

In heaven too, thousands upon thousands of angelic beings minister to the Lord with their praises. The apostle John writes: *Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power*

and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing!" And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honour and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!" (Rev. 5:11-13).

We can praise God by acknowledging His attributes and commending Him for His goodness and Who He is. We can praise by boasting of His wondrous works by the offering of thanksgiving, and by giving Him the glory due to Him with uplifted hands.

b. *Worship*

> ***PSALM 95:6***
> *6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.*
>
> ***PSALM 99:5***
> *5 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His footstool - for He is holy.*

Praise leads to worship. Worship is a love relationship with God. The Lord Jesus said that God is seeking true worshipers who will worship in Spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23). We can worship God without love but we can't love God without worshiping Him. God is seeking for such true worshipers who will truly love Him enough to want to constantly be in His presence to worship Him. Worship is our love expressing itself in communion with God. Worship ushers us into God's presence and brings God's glory into us. In worship we love, adore, and ascribe praise to Him for Who He is. It is only when we worship in one spirit and mind

that God's glory would come down into our midst (2 Chr. 5:13,14).

Worship literally means *to prostrate oneself before God.* In Tibet I have often seen Tibetans prostrating themselves before idols. When performing prostrations before the idols of their worship, Tibetans would wear a leather apron over their long cloaks. Their hands would be thrust through the straps of flat wooden clogs. Standing with their arms by the side, they then clap the clogs in front of them, raise them above the head, fall on their knees, then stretch themselves full length on the ground with arms straight out before them. After mumbling some mantras, they rise up and repeat the whole process of worship. This ceremony is usually performed for hours. If those who worship idols can do this much, how much more should those who worship the living God bow, prostrate, and kneel to worship (cf. Rev. 4:9,10; 5:8,13,14).

I was in Israel in October of 1992 for the Feast of Tabernacles. For seven days, Christians from about eighty nations joined in praising and worshiping the Lord God in the beauty of holiness. On the last day, as I was worshiping the Lord God together with thousands of other worshipers in one mind and one accord, the skies opened before me and I looked into heaven. The Lord Jesus was seated majestically on a throne. He was surrounded, first by the redeemed saints who had been washed by His blood, next by Old Testament saints, then by billions of angelic beings. The entire heavenly host was dancing, praising, and worshiping the Lord Jesus. I then saw a very glorious multi-tiered crown descend out of heaven from the throne of God the Father. As the Lord Jesus was being crowned the innumerable multitude of angels and saints bowed down to worship the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 4:9,11; 5:11-14). *(For a*

more thorough study on praise and worship, please read my book "The Art of Worship".)

c. *Waiting on God*

After a time of worshiping God together in one heart and mind, we should wait on Him. Just as in a restaurant, where the waiters wait on us to take our orders, likewise we are to wait on God. It is written in Acts 13:2 *that as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said ....* The early disciples could not have been in the midst of praising and worshiping God when the Holy Spirit spoke to them–because that would mean the Holy Spirit interrupting their worship, an act contrary to His nature (Jn. 16:14). They must have been earnestly waiting on God in silence in order to hear Him when the Holy Spirit spoke.

In Isaiah 40:31, it is written, *But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.* To wait on God means to wait in stillness and silence before God's holy presence (Ps. 46:10; Hab. 2:20). When we wait on God, we are binding ourselves in a perfect intimate bond of union with the Lord.

When we learn to wait on God, we can hear the voice of the Lord Jesus speaking to us through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:2). Consider this parable. There was a certain man who went for a walk in the park. Seeing a beautiful lake there, he went and stood by it. As he looked into the still and calm lake, he could see his own image reflected in it. He then took some small stones and threw them into the lake. The still surface of the water broke into ripples and immediately his image was gone. After some time, the water became calm and still again. He was once again able to see his

image reflected there. Likewise, amidst the busyness, noise, and distractions of life, if we desire to see the Lord Jesus or hear His voice, we must be still within us. That is why it is written in Psalm 46:10, *Be still, and know that I am God.*

When I first learned about the importance of waiting on God in April of 1983, I began to earnestly practice this art. I got up at 2 a.m. and spent the first hour praising and worshiping God. In the second hour, I meditated on God's word, and in the third hour I interceded for others and for myself. Thenafter, I would say something like what the young Samuel said: *Speak Lord, for your servant waits to hear* (1 Sam. 3:9). I then waited in quiet stillness. My heart was quiet–though it still was beating. My mind was not wandering and thinking other thoughts. Initially I could not wait in silence and stillness for more than five minutes.

But day by day, I was able to wait silently before the Lord for a longer time. I waited on God in this manner for about seven days. After yet another time of quietness before God, as I set my head to the pillow for a short wink before I set about the day's work, suddenly, I heard a loud sound like the voice of a man speaking. As I listened carefully, I noticed that the voice was sweet and melodious. It also had the sound of many rushing waters. I discerned it to be the voice of the Lord Jesus (Rev. 1:10,15; 14:2). Naturally I was fearful. But the first words of the Lord Jesus were Fear not! The Lord Jesus spoke for about fifteen minutes about some things concerning the ministry He had called me into.

As it is written in Isaiah 40:31, when we wait on God our inner man is also renewed and transformed into the likeness of Christ Jesus. The word *renew* in Hebrew is *chalaph*, which means *to change, pass on.* When we wait on God, He

changes us and we are then continually transformed from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

Consider the chicken. The mother hen lays eggs that do not resemble it in any way, for the egg white and yellow yoke within the shells are formless and imageless. She then has to sit on the eggs for about twenty eight days for them to hatch. She sits on the eggs by spreading her wings over them. Her warmth transforms the formless, shapeless, and imageless egg white and yoke into the image and likeness of a chicken, like herself. Likewise, when we wait on God, the Lord God stretches His wings to overshadow us (Ps. 91:1,4). Beneath the wings of God, His presence becomes like a wall of fire (Zech. 2:5). Like the egg that becomes a chick under the incubating wings of its mother, our spirit man will be renewed and changed from glory to glory into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ by the fires of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Jn. 3:2).

The word *renew* in Greek is *anakainos*, which means to *make new again*. It is a renewal brought about by an effectual power of change, resulting in a transformation. The word *transform* in Greek is *metamorphoo*, which means *to change into another form*. Interestingly, this same word *metamorphoo* is used for the word *transfigure* in describing the glorified altered appearance of the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mk. 9:2).

Mystery of Jesus' Transfiguration

> ***LUKE 9:28b,29a***
> *28b He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray.*

29a And as He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered ....

MATTHEW. 17:2
2 And He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.

The Lord Jesus said in John 8:12 and 9:5: *I am the light of the world*. The Lord Jesus is “the sole expression of the glory of God - the Light-being, the out-raying of the divine and He is the perfect imprint and very image of [God’s] nature” (Heb. 1:3, *AMP*). God the Father prepared a physical body for the Lord Jesus Christ and within this body is contained the brightness of God’s glory (Heb. 10:5).

As the Lord Jesus was praying on the mount of transfiguration, God, who is light and is covered by light like a garment because light dwells with Him, came down in His presence and enveloped and penetrated the Lord Jesus with this light (Ps. 104:2; Dan. 2:22; 1 Jn. 1:5). The spirit of the Lord Jesus began to receive and absorb the light of God. As His spirit man was flooded over with this light, its brightness manifested in His flesh, shining forth through His human skin. The entire body of the Lord Jesus and His clothes began to shine exceedingly white, like the purest snow (Mk. 9:3).

Light penetrating through the skin? Let me illustrate the possibility of this phenomenon with a personal experience. In June of 1986 I went to Ladakh, Kashmir (India), to evangelize the Tibetans. The average altitude of this place is 12000 feet. This place has the reputation of being as hot as the Sahara Desert and as cold as the Siberian winter. I

walked all over this place for twelve days preaching the Lord Jesus Christ. When the midday sun came up, I experienced the painful sensation of the sun's rays literally piercing through my body deep into and underneath my skin. I keenly felt the sun's heat on the inside of my whole body. After the sun set, the chilly evening winds picked up, penetrating through my skin to cause me much pain. If created light can pierce through the skin, how much more the Creator's light.

This phenomenon can also be scientifically explained. Biologists tell us that the human body contains seventy-five percentage of water. During warm, sunny days, when the internal body temperature increases, our perspiration cools the skin. Perspiration comes out from within the body through the sweat pores. Likewise, the light that was within the Lord Jesus flowed out as it increased in intensity while he was praying on the mount of transfiguration.

Can a believer too have a transfiguration-type experience? Absolutely. When we minister to God and abide and dwell with Him in close communion, we too can be transfigured. During a season of fasting and prayer in 1991 while I was in the United States of America, the Lord Jesus taught me specifically on this matter: *Anyone who seeks to delight himself with God in prayer and in the Word can participate in this transfiguration.*

In a vision, the Lord Jesus showed me a dark room. A Hand brought one lighted candle into the room and placed it on a table. There was just a little bit of brightness and the room was dim. Candle after candle was then brought into this room, and each time a candle was brought in, the brightness in the room increased. Soon the room was well lit. As more candles were added, the brightness in the room

increased even more. Eventually the light from this growing brightness inside the room began to seep under the door to the outside. Looking from outside the room, I could see light pouring out from under the door. The Lord Jesus then told me that what I saw in the vision was like the transfiguration experience that He had.

The Bible says that man's spirit is the candle of the Lord (Prov. 20:27). This light went out when man sinned (Eph. 4:18; 5:8). But through the redemption brought about by the blood of the Lord Jesus (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), man's spirit was born again, and his candle relighted by the light of God (Ps. 18:28; 2 Cor. 4:6). The Word is light (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23). When we meditate and allow the Word to dwell in our heart (spirit) richly, we will allow the entrance of God's light into us through His Word (Ps. 119:130; Col. 3:16).

Like in the dark room, which got brighter as the light of more candles was added, the more we soak ourselves in the Word the more the light in our spirit will increase. When this happens, the presence and glory of God within us will also increase. As we dwell in the presence of God by waiting on Him, our spirit man is absorbing the glory light. Here, then, is a double portion of God's light: *God's light received through meditation of His Word and God's light received through worship and fellowship in the Spirit*. The Spirit of God will then begin to transform us from glory to glory, and our flesh and skin will shine forth with light, exactly like what happened to the Lord Jesus, who now lives within us (2 Cor. 3:18).

I was still puzzled at this revelation and asked the Lord Jesus to show me in the Word where this supernatural phenomenon has happened to another person. The Lord Jesus replied, *Haven't you read of how the face of Moses*

shone, when he was in the presence of God? Indeed we read in Exodus 34:28,29, *So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. In fact, here, the Amplified Bible is even more visual in its description: the skin of his face shone and sent forth beams [of light] by reason of his speaking with the Lord* (Ex. 34:29). In fellowshiping, abiding, dwelling with and waiting on God, Moses' spirit was so full and filled with God's glory that beams of light radiated forth his skin. Of Stephen too, it is written that his face shone like an angel (Acts 6:15).

As we learn to wait on God, fellowshiping with Him in prayer and in the Word, His light will increasingly enter our spirit, preparing our body for a transfiguration like the one the Lord Jesus experienced. The key for such an experience is *prayer and waiting on God* (Ex. 34:28; Lk. 9:29). *(For a thorough and in-depth study on the subject of prayer and waiting on God, please read my book "Prayer Secrets In the Tabernacle".*)

2. *Praying in the Spirit*

> ***JUDE 1:20***
> *20 But you, beloved, building up yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.*

The second main way to fellowship with God is by praying in the Spirit, which is praying in unknown tongues.

When we cultivate a habit of praying in tongues, we can become conscious of God's indwelling presence. This consciousness of God's indwelling presence will become more real and more personal, and will not be a mere addition of knowledge.

Why Pray In the Spirit

The things of God are in the Spirit realm. It is difficult for us to know and comprehend the thoughts of God except with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit "searches diligently, exploring and examining everything, even sounding the profound and bottomless things of God - the divine counsels and things hidden and beyond man's scrutiny" (1 Cor. 2:10, *AMP*). It is only by praying in the Spirit that the Holy Spirit can reveal and unveil the deep things of God.

The Lord Jesus says in John 7:38,39, *He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. The Holy Spirit is described as rivers of living water.* Symbolized as "rivers of water," the Holy Spirit is spoken of in the Bible as being *poured out*. The Hebrew and the Greek have several words that are commonly translated "pour out":

1. Heb. *yatsaq : pour out* (Is. 44:3).

2. Heb. *naba : to cause to flow out* (Prov. 1:23).

3. Heb. *shaphak : to pour out or shed* (Ezek. 39:29, Joel 2:28,
Zech. 12:10).

4. Gk. *ekchuno : to pour out* (Acts 10:45).

From these verses, we can conclude that, *like rivers of flowing, living water, the Holy Spirit can be poured out*.

In trying to understand why we need to pray in the Spirit, we should first know the manner in which the Holy Spirit connects the believer to the spirit realm and how God channels the communicable things in heaven to the believer through the Holy Spirit.

Let's examine three scriptural passages that allude to and foreshadow this work of the Holy Spirit:

1. *The River in the Garden of Eden*

> ***GENESIS 2:9b,10***
> *9b The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*
> *10 Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted, and became four riverheads.*

We find that the tree of life was in the center of the garden, and a river went out from it. The Hebrew word *yasa* is translated *went out, meaning came forth, flowed out*. This river came forth from the midst of the garden of Eden. Before we proceed any further, let's find out something more about this river. Psalm 104:30 says, *You send forth*

Your Spirit, they are created: and You renew the face of the earth. Genesis 2:10 tells of *the river flowing forth* to water the garden, and Psalm 104:30 describes *the Spirit of God being sent forth to renew or replenish the face of the ground*. From these two scriptures, we can reasonably conclude that the river in Genesis 2:10 speaks symbolically of the Holy Spirit.

Let's consider the garden of Eden. The word *Eden* in the Hebrew language literally means *delight*. God put man there in the garden of delight to fellowship with him. In Proverbs 8:30a,31a, it is written, *Then I was beside Him, as a master craftsman; rejoicing in His inhabited world.* We can reasonably conclude from these scriptures that the habitable part of God's earth is a place of delight and of rejoicing, and it spiritually symbolizes the throne of God. It is quite possible that this river was flowing out from the tree of life in Eden. It is therefore possible to conclude that the Holy Spirit flowed like a river from the throne of God out of the tree of life in Eden.

2. *The Blood and Water from Jesus' Side*

> ***JOHN 19:34 (AMP)***
> *34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came (flowed) out.*

In His sermons delivered during His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus often said, *The kingdom of God is within you* (Matt. 12:28; Lk. 17:21). Within you - *in the depths of your heart, in your spirit*, is the Kingdom of God, which is also the throne of God. In Luke 23:31, the Lord Jesus said, *For if they do these things in the green wood (tree), what will be done in the dry?* Here, the Lord was speaking of Himself as the

green tree. In John 14:6, the Lord Jesus spoke of Himself as the Life. From these verses it is possible to conclude that the Lord Jesus is foreshadowed in the tree of life.

When the side of the Lord Jesus was pierced, blood and water flowed out. Blood and water speak of the greater abundant life in the Spirit (Jn. 10:10). We see this symbolism in another key scripture: *the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree - are in unison, their testimony coincides*" (1 Jn 5:8, *AMP*). We can thus conclude that the blood and water speak of the Holy Spirit. We can then reasonably conclude that the Holy Spirit, God's Blood and Water, flows out from the throne of God (the heart of Jesus), and is also poured out through the torn side of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the tree of life.

3. *The River in the Heavenly City*

> ***REV. 22:1,2a***
> *1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.*
> *2a In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life.*

We see in these verses the beautiful picture of the Person of the Holy Spirit as was also earlier observed with the river of Eden and the blood and water from the Lord Jesus' side. The pure river of water of life speaks of the Holy Spirit proceeding out of the throne of God, and flowing through the midst of the tree of life (Jn. 7:38.39; 2 Cor. 3:17).

So why do we need to pray in the Spirit? Just as the foetus in the womb receives life from its mother through the umbilical cord, the person born of God receives through the Holy Spirit the life and essence of God's being. Praying in the Spirit connects the believer to God, opening a channel through which an ever growing intimate knowledge of God would flow into the believer.

Why Tongues?

There are thousands of languages and dialects in this world. In India alone, there are 14 official languages and thousands of dialects among the more than twenty five states. The countries in the European, African, and South American continents also have their multiple languages. People from one country may not understand the language spoken in another country. Many people learn a foreign language for pleasure or for business. Many American businessmen, I understand, make the effort to learn the Japanese language for their business dealings with Japan. Australian businessmen are encouraged to learn Asian languages so as to do business in Asia. Missionaries in cross-cultural ministries would initially spend a year or two studying local languages.

Tongues is the language of heaven. When the apostle Paul was caught up into the third heaven, "he heard utterances beyond the power of man to put into words, which man is not permitted to utter" (2 Cor. 12:4, *AMP*). In heaven, which is the Spirit realm, a different language is spoken, a language different from the language of man and unknown to man on earth. The word *tongues* in Greek is *glossa*, meaning *a tongue, language*. The *Amplified Bible* renders *glossa* as *different, foreign languages (tongues)*.

Praying in tongues can therefore be more accurately described as *praying in a different and foreign language*.

What, indeed, is the tongue? Is it not an organ that utters a language, the knowledge of which is supplied by the brain? Since flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven, the Lord Jesus states that a person must be born again in order to enter or see it (Jn. 3:3,5; 1 Cor. 15:50). A born-again person receives a new heart (mind) and a new spirit, which allows him to enter into heaven (Ezek. 36:26). Likewise, he also receives a new tongue, which allows him to speak the language which is spoken in heaven (Mk. 16:17).

To conclude, why then we should speak in tongues is because God is Spirit, and the Lord Jesus speaks to His people through the Spirit, and the Spirit gives utterances in tongues (Jn. 4:24; Acts 1:2; 2:4). The word *utterances* in Greek is *apophthengomai*, which means *to speak forth*. *Tongues*, therefore, *is the utterance which the Holy Spirit gives the born-again person to speak forth a new language.* When the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, we read in the *Amplified Bible*, *the Spirit kept giving them clear and loud expression* (Acts 2:4). A certain minister once said that speaking in tongues is like a flowing stream that should never dry up because it will enrich our life spiritually.

The Bond Of Perfection

COLOSSIANS 3:14

14 But above all these things put on love,
which is the bond of perfection.

This scripture is beautifully rendered in the *Amplified Bible* as, *And above all these [put on] love and enfold yourselves with the bond of perfectness [which binds everything together completely in ideal harmony].* Let us also look at another rendering from the *Weymouth* translation of the New Testament: *And over all these put on love, which is the perfect bond of union.*

In these three translations, we find the word *bond* mentioned. What does the word "bond" mean? The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines the word "bond" as *a thing that ties another down or together; a uniting force; bind together.* With this understanding let us ask another question: What is that thing or force that can unite or bind us together with someone or something that can make us perfect? The answer very simply is love. Let us meditate on this a little deeper.

Let us read the scriptures found in the first epistle of St. John.

> ***1 JOHN 4:12-16***
> *12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.*
> *13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of his Spirit.*
> *14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.*
> *15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*

16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

In Colossians we are told to put on love, which is the bond of perfection. How can love be a binding force bringing about Christlike perfection in us? *Through abiding in God!* When we abide in God, He abides in us. The word *abide* in Greek is *meno,* which means *the relation in which one person or thing stands with another; thus to remain in or with someone,* i.e., *to be and remain united with him, one with him in heart, mind, and will.* This technical Greek definition can be simplified to mean thus: *To consistently sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus and continually depend on Him by listening to His Words with a heart and mind to obey. J Oswald Sanders* defines "abiding" as "keeping an unbroken contact with Christ Jesus in a union of intimate love."

How can we abide in God? In three ways: *firstly*, by loving one another (Jn. 13:34; 1 Jn. 4:12); *secondly*, by confessing (by declaring openly and publicly) that Jesus is Lord (1 Jn. 4:15); *thirdly*, by abiding in love (1 Jn. 4:15). To abide in God is to abide in Christ Jesus (Jn. 17:21). How can we abide in Christ Jesus? By meditating the Word of God (Jn. 14:21,23; 15:7) and by walking in love (Jn. 15:9-12; Eph. 5:2). When we walk in love, God abides in us and binds us to Himself with cords or the bond of love (Hos. 11:4). An excellent example of abiding in Christ is exhibited by Mary of Bethany when she just simply sat at the feet of the Lord Jesus loving Him and listening to Him (Lk. 10:38-42).

When God abides in us and binds Himself to us when we walk in love, how does that perfect us? Consider a parable: A man sat down at his flower shop to make a garland of jasmine flowers. He first took a long *naaru* (strips of thread

stripped from the banana tree) and wetted it. Tying one end of the naaru to his right toe and holding the other end with his left hand, he carefully picked each jasmine flower and placed it on top of the naaru. Then he brought the naaru end on his left hand towards the other end and tied the jasmine flowers together in a knot. The whole process was repeated until an entire garland of fragrant jasmine flowers was completed.

The naaru by nature does not have any scent. But when in union with the jasmine flowers, it gains the aromatic scent of the jasmine. Likewise when we walk in love, we abide and dwell in, and bind ourselves to the love of God, which enables us to inherit all the Christlike image and likeness of perfection (Jn. 17:23). So, let us walk in love and enfold ourselves with the likeness of Christ Jesus' perfection.

Let me unveil another mystery of abiding with God. This is the pattern found in the life of the Lord Jesus. In my walk with God, the Lord Jesus has shared many times that the reason He was able to live holy, perfect, sinless, and in obedience and submission to God during His earthly life was not just because He was the Son of God but chiefly because He always abided in God the Father. Consider John 1:18: *No one has seen God at anytime. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.* The "bosom of the Father" is the Lord Jesus' "secret place of the Most High" and the place where He constantly abided to draw on all the fullness of the Godhead. As we too learn to abide in Christ Jesus, He will then bind us to Him and Himself to us and make us drink from His bosom the milk of His perfection.

Chapter 4 - Christlike Transformation

> ***JOHN 1:1***
> *1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
>
> ***2 CORINTHIANS 3:18***
> *18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

It is written in Luke 6:40 that *A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.* The Lord Jesus Christ, as our Master, was manifested in the flesh and was tempted of the devil in all areas as we are (Jn. 1:14; Mk. 1:13; Heb. 4:15). He lived like us–so that we could live like Him. We are to grow continually and progressively into the likeness of Christ–"the express image of the Father" –so that we may bear the likeness of the Father and eventually become perfect like the Father (Matt. 5:48; Heb. 1:3).

The final principle relating to maturing unto perfection is expressed well by the apostle John: *to walk and conduct [oneself] in the same way in which He walked and conducted Himself* (1 Jn. 2:6, *AMP*). Taking heed of this saintly advice will develop the Christlike perfection in us, whereby we are transformed into His likeness.

How We Can Attain Christlike Perfection

Adam's being, while still in its perfect state, was like God's, for he was created in the image and likeness of God, and was delegated with dominion over the creation of God on earth (Gen. 1:26). The Lord Jesus Christ, in living a perfect life while on earth, constantly abided with the Father and was always pleasing to Him (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Jn. 8:29). How was the Lord Jesus able to live a life well pleasing to God? The answer lies in a confession the Lord Jesus frequently made. He testified that *I do nothing of Myself; but as the Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him* (Jn. 8:28,29). So the Father was always pleased with His Son, because the Son always obeyed the Father. Likewise, a believer can attain Christlike perfection by following Christ's example of hearing and doing the Word.

Meditation

Whenever the word *meditation* is mentioned, most people would think of Hindu holy men, sitting half-naked in caves, and spending a lifetime in meditation. Or they think of Tibetan lamas who lock themselves in a small dark room, just big enough to sit in a lotus position, spending three to twelve years in meditation. Yet others think of New Age practices when they hear the word "meditation." But meditation, from its earliest beginnings, is actually a biblical art that is by and large lost to Christianity. The concepts enshrined in the meditative practices of Christianity and Eastern religions are, however, worlds apart. In Eastern meditation practice, the practitioner empties his mind,

whereas in Christian meditation, the practitioner fills his mind with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the seas (Hab. 2:14).

Meditation is one of the spiritual laws in the spirit realm. New Agers, having discovered this spiritual law, began to tap into it. Meditation, they know, is able to make a person godlike. Misinformed, uninformed, and ignorant believers– those who understand not this truth from the Word of God– totally brush aside this God-ordained principle by saying, *Oh, it's so New Agey!* Meditation, for certain, is not something out-of-this-world or New Age but rather a very powerful and creative biblical art which needs to be cultivated by Christians. When cultivated, it will transform our inner being to a complete wholeness as Christ Jesus' (Eph. 4:13).

The earliest record of meditation found in the Bible points to its eternal timelessness. It is written that we existed in God's mind even before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4,5; 1 Pet. 1:2). God is always thinking about us (Jer. 29:11; Is. 49:16). Thinking is an aspect of meditation. It is written of Isaac that he practised meditation (Gen. 24:63). Meditation is a genuine God-ordained and God-commanded biblical practice. Meditation is very powerful and it is an art that needs habitual cultivation.

Most Christians study and memorize portions of scriptures in their quiet time. That is good. But the Bible commands us not just to study the Word but to meditate on it (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2). The study of scriptures centers on exegesis, analysis, and gathering of material to share with others, to teach and to preach. Whereas the meditation of scriptures centers on internalizing and personalizing the scriptures. When we practice as such, the written Word then

becomes a living word spoken just for us. The German martyr *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* said, “Just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love, but accept them as they are said to you, accept the Word of scripture and ponder it in your heart as Mary did. That is all. That is meditation.”

The Art of Meditation

There was once an 18-year old student who was very interested in astronomy. So, for his birthday, his father bought him a telescope. Since he had studied something about optics, he found the instrument very intriguing. He took the telescope apart, examined its lenses, and made a detailed study of its mechanism. He became so absorbed in gaining a technical knowledge of the telescope that he never got to looking at the stars. Likewise, we can analyze, organize, and classify scriptures into dispensations, time-frames, and cultures, yet miss the primary purpose for which they were given to us. We should not neglect nor am I downplaying the importance of the study of scriptures. Because it is written, *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness* (2 Tim. 3:16). What I am also emphasizing is that, as much as we study the Word, we must not neglect the God-commanded principle of meditating the Word of God.

What is meditation? There are two Hebrew words and a Greek word used in the Bible for this concept.

1) Heb. *hagah : to murmur, mutter, speak, study, talk, utter, muse*

2) Heb. *siyach : to ponder–converse with oneself aloud–a contemplation, a reflection*

3) Gk. *meletao : to take care of, i.e., to resolve in the mind, imagine*

Let us study a little deeper into the Hebrew word *hagah.*

1. Its root is closely related to the word *thought* (e.g. Ps. 19:15; Is. 33:18). Hence *hagah* can be precisely defined as *contemplation*.

2. Its root also refers to *speech* (eg. Ps. 35:28; 37:30; 71:24). In this respect *hagah* has the connotation of both *speech* and *thought*.

3. It also connotes *inarticulate* and *repetitive animal sounds.*

i. The *coo* of a dove (Is. 38:14).

ii. The *growl* of a lion (Is. 31:4).

iii. *Inarticulate sound* made with the throat (Ps. 115:7).

iv. A *sigh* or *gasp* (Ps. 90:9).

This definitions indicate a sound or thought that is repeated over and over, like the cooing of a dove or the growling of a lion. It is the constant repetition of the Word of God either verbally or mentally until it becomes part of our being (cp. Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2).

4. Another closely related base-root to hagah is the word *chag*, which refers *to anything that is cyclic or repeated*. It is

from this base-root that we get the word *circle*. In this sense *hagah* means *to repeat something over and over, periodically and cyclically*.

Meditation can therefore be thus defined: *A contemplative reflection of something by pondering and resolving in the mind and by conversing with oneself in a murmur and/or loud manner*. In this definition, we find the "two-in-one" method of meditation: Firstly, *by conversing with oneself in a murmur and/or loud manner*; secondly, *a contemplative reflection of something by pondering and resolving in the mind*. Put simply, to meditate is *to deeply ponder and reflect in the mind that something of which you are speaking to yourself.*

The meditation of the Word of God will effect a change in our behavior as we encounter the living God in His Word. Meditation will enable us to hear God's voice in His Word, thereby leading us to obey it. When we meditate the Word, we develop a familiar friendship with God. In that instant, the Lord God and the Lord Jesus will become a living reality to us rather than just theological dogma.

How to Meditate

The art of meditation is very simple but it requires discipline. Let us consider a few illustrations.

1. In India, the cow is revered as something very holy. Idling cows can be seen everywhere in India. I have often noticed the cow's eating habits. The cow first fills its stomach with grass. Then it settles down for a good long chew. It will be chewing the grass in its mouth for a long time by bringing the food back up from its stomach and rechewing what it

already has eaten, and at the same time wearing a look on its face as if it is thinking deeply about some very serious United Nations' world problems. While wondering about the cow's manner of eating, once the Holy Spirit revealed to me that this is how meditation should be–an act of mental chewing, speaking to oneself, thinking and reflecting deeply some thought.

2. In some countries, the government conducts "legal gambling" in the form of lottery. There is this huge iron cage into which numbered balls are put. The cage is then rolled over and over many times before it is brought to a stop, allowing one lucky numbered ball to fall out into a small slot. Symbolically, the cage speaks of our mind, the balls of the Word, and the rolling of meditation. In meditation, we ponder something over deeply, rolling, as it were, that thought in our mind over and over again, until understanding breaks forth.

3. Murmuring or muttering the Word to oneself is another way of meditation. When we speak the Word to ourselves, the mind better imagines or sees it, because the ears also hear the Word. By hearing the Word, faith is activated and it impregnates our spirit (Rom. 10:17).

4. A fourth way is to contemplatively reflect a thought by pondering in the mind. I went to see the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City in 1992. Among the many sculptures by the renown Michelangelo was one called *The Thinker*. This sculpture depicted a man with his chin rested on one hand and apparently deep in thought. We should likewise contemplate deeply, focusing all thoughts on the Word of God. We should be mindful and deeply reflective of spiritual things: *the Word, the acts of God, and the things of God*.

To meditate can also very simply mean to take a portion of scripture or a single verse and read it several times to mentally understand it at first. Then keep on “chewing,” thinking and pondering over and over the scripture. Do not speed read the Bible in order to boast that we had read through the whole Bible. Speed reading can be used for other books, but not for the divine and living Word of God. In eating physical food we receive no nourishment until we chew and swallow the food. The food may taste good in our mouth, but if we gulp it down without proper chewing it is disastrous to our body. So is speed reading to just know about the Bible. But unless the food is thoroughly chewed, swallowed, and digested, it is of no benefit to the body. So it is with the Word of God. Meditation opens the way to bringing great spiritual benefit to our spirit, soul, and body.

Consider the bees. Bees gather nectar from different varieties of flowers and make honey. When a bee visits a flower, it does not just land on one flower, take a little nectar, and then hop on another flower. No it does not do that. The bee will sit idly on a flower and dip its proboscis deep into the flower. It will thoroughly suck out all the nectar it can get. Then it proceeds to another flower. Likewise, we should wait on God’s Word and thoroughly “suck” it until the nectar of spiritual truth of sweetness from the Word is received into our spirit (Ps. 104:34).

What to Meditate On

1. *The Word of God*

> ***JOSHUA 1:8***
> *8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day*

and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

The written Word of God is the expressiveness of the immortal God, Who dwells in unapproachable light (Dan. 2:22; 1 Tim. 6:16; Jas. 1:17). In meditating the Word of God, we meditate on Him who spoke the Word. Because God's Word is Spirit and is Life, when we meditate the Word, we are being transformed into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sometime in February of 1993, I saw a vision during a season of fasting and prayer in the Himalayan mountains. I saw the heavens opened before me (Ezek. 1:1). In the vision I saw the Lord Jesus leaning against a huge rock in a beautiful garden. I saw myself standing in the garden too. As I was standing a little distance away, the Lord Jesus beckoned me to come near Him. I saw the Lord Jesus looking at Himself in a hand-held mirror. In it I saw the reflection of the face of the Lord Jesus. He then held the mirror before my face. To my surprise, I saw that instead of reflecting my image, the mirror showed the face of the Lord Jesus. I was bewildered. *This mirror*, the Lord Jesus turned to me and explained, *represents My Word. Anyone who continually meditates on My Word will be transformed to conform to My image and likeness. Furthermore, their faith will be as solid and immovable as this huge rock. Does not the Bible say that, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Rom. 10:17)?

2. *On God*

PSALM 63:6
6 When I remember You on my bed, I
meditate on You in the night watches.

PSALM 104:34
34 May my meditation be sweet to Him: I will
be glad in the LORD.

Once when I was waiting on God, I heard the voice of the Lord Jesus speaking after this manner: *There is no greater joy in My heart as when My children make mention of My Name and think about Me. I surround them with My love and am a wall of fire all around them to protect them. I am ever so near them* (Mal. 3:16; Hos. 11:4; Zech. 2:5). What a blessed privilege! How do we, meditate on God? We could think about and ponder over His nature, His goodness, or His Name. When the Lord God caused His goodness to pass before Moses, He declared His own Name: *The LORD! the LORD! a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; yet does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of parents upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations (*Ex. 34:6, *Tanakh, The Jewish Bible).*

Here are some other Names of God that are worthy of meditation:

1. *Jehovah Elohim* : *The Eternal Creator* (Gen. 1:1)

2. *Jehovah Elohay* : *The Lord my God* (Zech. 14:5)

3. *El Elyon* : *The Most High God* (Gen. 14:18)

4. *Adonai Jehovah* : *The Lord God* (Gen. 15:2)

5. *El Shaddai* : *The Almighty God* (Gen. 17:1)

6. *El Olam* : *The Everlasting God* (Gen. 21:33)

7. *Jehovah-Jireh* : *The Lord-Will-Provide* (Gen. 22:13,14)

8. *Jehovah-Rapha* : *The-Lord-Who-Heals* (Ex. 15:26)

9. *Jehovah-Nissi* : *The-Lord-Is-My-Banner* (Ex. 17:8-15)

10. *Jehovah-Shalom* : *The-Lord-Is-Peace* (Judges 6:24)

11. *Jehovah-Tsidkenu* : *The-Lord-Our-Righteousness* (Jer. 23:6)

12. *Jehovah-Shammah* : *The-Lord-Is-There* (Ezek. 48:35)

13. *Jehovah-Sabaoth* : *The Lord of Hosts* (1 Sam. 1:3)

14. *El Gibbor* : *The Mighty God* (Is. 9:6,7)

15. *Jehovah-Eloheka* : *The Lord Your God* (Ex. 20:2)

16. *Jehovah-Hosenu* : *The Lord Our Maker* (Ps. 95:6)

17. *Jehovah-Mekaddish* : *The Lord Our Sanctifier* (Lev. 20:8)

18. *Jehovah-Rohi* : *The Lord My Shepherd* (Ps. 23:1)

19. *Immanuel* : *God With Us* (Matt. 1:23)

20. *The Lord Jesus* : *He-Will-Save-From-Sins* (Matt. 1:21)

When we meditate on the Name of God, the revelation given will bring us high into the Spirit realm (Ps. 9:10; 91:14).

I was in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in February 1993 for some meetings. During one of the days when I was fasting, I decided to do a spiritual research to find out what would happen if I meditated on the name *Jesus*. With singleness of mind, I began to meditate on the Name which is above all names. As I was deeply meditating, in a vision I saw the heavens opened and the word “JESUS” there (Jn. 1:1). As I continued meditating, the word “JESUS” became flesh and I saw the Lord Jesus (Jn. 1:14). I meditated on and saw the Lord Jesus being transfigured into a ball of light (Matt. 17:2; Heb. 12:29). As I continued meditating, this ball of light began to expand and expand. I then perceive in my spirit that this light would transfigure into the Father of Lights (Jas. 1:17). Then followed a blinding explosion of light in my spirit, soul, and body, like how stars explode in the universe, and I was physically knocked out and shaken. That’s how powerful meditating the Name of God was, for He is the one who created and formed the whole universe.

3. *Works of God*

> ***PSALM 77:12***
> *12 I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds.*
>
> ***PSALM 143:5***
> *5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your*

hands.

When we meditate and ponder on the works of God, the faith to believe that all things are possible with God will arise in our heart. From deep within we will believe Him for the impossible (Matt. 17:20; 19:26).

By exhorting on the meditation of the works of God, I am not advocating a worship of creation or pantheism. When we meditate on the works of God, we see His glory in His creation. Do not the scriptures attest, T*he heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork* (Ps. 19:1)? The Lord Jesus often speaks to me when I would be contemplating the works of God's hand. Out of that reflection was born the book *Jewels Of Wisdom*.

The heavens, the creation of God, declare His wondrous glory. By reflecting and meditating on creation, the works of God, we see and understand the goodness and graciousness of God. Consider the phalarope. The phalarope is a wading shorebird which has a peculiar way of eating sea creatures too deep for it to reach at. It will spin in the water at an incredible speed–a full spin per second–thereby creating a vortex that sucks up shrimps from the depth of three feet. According to a certain biologist, the phalarope is also a speedy eater. It can detect prey, thrust, seize, transport, and swallow its prey in less than half a second. Imagine the wonders of this bird. The Psalmist reflected on nature and the works of God and in turn saw the majesty of God (Ps. 104). The Lord Jesus too pointed out the works of God's hand to demonstrate His caring nature (Matt. 6:25-32). Creation is a signpost pointing to God.

When to Meditate

The Lord God has given us instructions for all areas of our life, both spiritual and natural, for our pleasure, as much as it is His to give. Let us now examine in the Word when we should meditate.

1. *Day and Night*

> ***PSALM 1:2***
> *2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,*
> *and in His law he meditates day and night.*

Some people are busy during the day time so they prefer to pray and meditate at night. Others feel tired and sleepy when night approaches that they prefer to do their quiet time in the morning. But why is it we should in fact meditate the Word day and night?

Let us consider the day first. Consider the millwright working in a factory. While it is still dark, he goes to the factory. He turns on the lights one by one. Large machines are then fired up, the temperature control equipment is engaged, and soon, before the clock strikes seven, the millwright has the plant all powered up and ready for a new day's production. Likewise, when we meditate God's word in the morning before we start the day's business, we will be empowered to meet the challenges that lie before us. The meditation of the Word of God will warm us up. The Lord God often met with the patriarchs early in the morning (Gen. 28:18; Ex. 34:4; Job 1:5). Even the Lord Jesus always spent the early morning waiting on God (Ps. 119:147, Mk. 1:35).

2. *The Whole Day*

> ***PSALM 119:97***

97 Oh, how I love Your law! It is my
meditation all the day.

We are also exhorted to meditate the Word of God the whole day. Why should we do that? Isn't just meditating the Word in the morning and night sufficient? In order to answer that question, let us read Proverb 6:20-22: *My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you.*

When we meditate the Word of God the whole day, the Word becomes a blessing to us in three ways.

i. *Whenever we go, it will lead us* (Prov. 6:22).

ISAIAH 30:21
21 Your ears shall hear a word behind you,
saying, "This is the way, walk in it,"
whenever you turn to the right hand or
whenever you turn to the left.

The Word of God blessed me in this manner in a marvelous way when I went to minister to the Tibetans living in Ladakh, India in June 1986. We had been walking for six days preaching the gospel to the Tibetans living in that mountainous region. On a certain morning, after spending some considerable time in prayer and on the meditation of the Word, my associate and I started our journey. We had to climb a very high mountain at 14000 feet to cross a pass to get to the next village. When we reached the mountain top, a heavy snow storm broke out.

We could hardly see where we were going, and neither did any villager on the mountaintop open his home to give us shelter from the storm. Our only alternative was to proceed down the steep mountain pass. But we couldn't even see the trail. I prayed very much asking the Holy Spirit to lead us. Every now and then, I would hear a voice behind me saying, *Now turn right... now turn left.* I kept on hearing that guiding voice until we safely reached the bottom of the mountain. Likewise, the Word of God will lead us wherever we go in our daily business for that day.

ii. *When we are sleeping, it will protect us* (Prov. 6:22).

> ***PSALM 91: 4b,5a***
> *4b His truth shall be your shield and buckler.*
> *5a You shall not be afraid of the terror by night.*

This is the work of protection the Word does when we meditate it in the night before going to bed. Many people suffer from bad, lustful, evil dreams and nightmares in the night. How do they occur? Among the many parables which the Lord Jesus taught during His earthly ministry, one is called *The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares* (Matt. 13:24-30). In that parable, a man sowed some good seed in his field. When he went to sleep in the night, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. This is the work of the devil and evil spirits. When we are asleep, he will come to sow his seeds of lust, fear, terror, and confusion.

Several years ago, a saintly prophet of God from India, *Vincent Selvakumar*, shared with me an incident which he witnessed in the Spirit which attested to the enemy sowing tares in our mind. He and his associates were lodging one night at a certain place after a convention. When nightfall

came, they retired to bed. The associate was soon snoring himself to a delightful slumber. But Brother Selvakumar was waiting on God in prayer in the night watches. Sometime in the night, Brother Selvakumar was in the Spirit (Rev. 1:10) and saw the *spirit of lust* appearing as a beautiful seductive woman coming near and standing beside his associate. The spirit of lust then began speaking into his mind. Brother Selvakumar was surprised to see this. In the morning, he asked his associate whether he had any bad dreams in the night. His associate then told him, *Yes, I had very lustful and unclean dreams*. When our mind is not guarded by the Word, the enemy will come to sow evil in our mind. But when we meditate the Word, it will be like a wall of defense and fire to keep us from all evil.

iii. *When we wake up, it will talk with us* (Prov. 6:22)

> ***ISAIAH 50:4***
> *4 The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to hear as the learned.*

When we get up in the morning, His Word will come to us, giving a word in season. About two years ago, I went to Eastern Tibet to evangelize. When we reached a certain town, we went around the huge monastery sharing the eternal Word with the monks. The next morning, as I was waiting on God upon getting up, the Word of the Lord came to me, *The enemy will come in one way but he will flee in seven ways. Fear not, I am with you* (cp. Deut. 28:7). That whole day, I was pondering over the Word of the Lord that was spoken to me that morning.

That evening, two plainclothes policemen came to our room and said that the chief of police wanted to see us. When we went to the police station, the chief of police told me that the senior monk of the monastery had filed a complaint that we had been preaching about Christ in the monastery. We were severely interrogated for two hours. At the station it then dawned on me how the enemy had come in one way. A great peace then flooded me on account of the Word that came that morning. I then saw an angel of the Lord standing beside me with a drawn sword. A greater peace surged through me. Eventually, we were let off with a warning. When we meditate the Word, the Word of the Lord will come to talk to us to prepare us for the day.

3. *Night Watches*

> ***PSALM 119:148***
> *148 My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word.*

Night watches for the Jews begin at sunset and end at sunrise: The *first watch* is from sunset to 10:00 p.m., the *second watch* from 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m., and the *third watch* from 2:00 a.m. to sunrise. I was once meditating the scriptures on Luke 20:17,18. In that incident, the Lord Jesus quoted scriptures to refute the priests and scribes. I then asked the Lord how He knew all the Word. He replied, *For Me to know the scriptures, I meditated on them day and night. That was how I was able to quote the irrefutable Word. To a certain woman of God, the Lord Jesus revealed thus: I went to bed every night with My head on the pillow, meditating the scriptures and Who I was in them.* When we meditate the Word at night, the Lord God will minister to and speak to our spirit in the night watches through visions and dreams (Job 33:15-18).

What Takes Place During Meditation

Consider the eating process. When a person begins to eat, firstly he chews the food; secondly he tastes it, delicious or otherwise; thirdly, he swallows it; and, finally, his digestive system works the food over so that it is absorbed into the body. Likewise, a similar process takes place when we meditate the Word.

i. *Chewing*	= *Meditating*
ii. *Tasting*	= *Realizing/knowing the goodness of God* (Ps. 34:8; 104:34)
iii. *Swallowing*	= *Entrance of the Word into the spirit* (Ps. 119:130)
iv. *Digestion/ Absorption*	= *The Word received into and dwelling richly in the spirit man.*

Let's examine in greater detail the spiritual benefits of meditation.

1. *Spiritual Nourishment for Growth*

> ***1 PETER 2:2***
> *2 As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.*

As milk is needful for a baby's growth, and meat is needful for an adult's sustenance, likewise the Word is necessary for spiritual development. A mother's breast milk is made from her own blood. So, when a baby drinks its

mother’s milk, in a sense, the baby is actually drinking the mother’s blood. There is life in the blood (Lev. 17:11). That is the reason why just by drinking milk a baby grows because it is receiving life from the mother.

Likewise, a similar spiritual work is being effected in us when we meditate the Word. The *Word of God* is compared to milk in 1 Peter 2:2. The Lord Jesus Christ is also called The *Word of God* (Jn. 1:1,14; Rev. 19:13). The written Word is a fragment of the living Word which is Christ Jesus. When we meditate the Word, we are actually meditating the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus said that He was the living bread which came from heaven and anyone partaking that bread eats His flesh (Jn. 6:32-35). Therefore, when we meditate the Word, it transforms into the flesh of the Lord Jesus in our spirit and becomes a spiritual nourishment for us. This is the mystery of Matthew 4:4: *But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”* (also Deut. 8:3).

Let us meditate on this subject a little deeper by considering Psalm 1:2,3: *But His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.* The person who meditates the Word, the psalmist says, is like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

How is it possible? The Word of God is compared to a seed (Lk. 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:23). When we meditate the Word, it is like a seed deposited into the ground of our heart. As we continue to meditate the Word day and night, the seed germinates and eventually grows into a tree. Not just any

tree, but like after the manner of the tree of life (Gen. 2:9). Consider the similarity between the simile of the healthy, fruitful tree in Psalm 1 and the tree of life in Genesis 2:

i. He who meditates the Word will be like unto a tree planted by the rivers of water (Ps. 1:2,3).

ii. In the Book of Genesis, it is mentioned that rivers proceeded forth from Eden where the tree of life was (Gen. 2:10).

In one of His sermons, the Lord Jesus also said that His words were spirit and life (Jn. 6:63). The Word of God, therefore, is a seed of life. When we meditate it day and night, it germinates into the tree of life. And through the Word, the Holy Spirit flows like rivers of water to nourish us (Jn. 7:38,39). Our life will then be fruitful and our works will remain. The Lord God will then prosper the works of our hand.

2. *The Energizing of Faith*

> ***ROMANS 10:17***
> *17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

After the apostle Pete r had declared the divinity and Sonship of the Lord Jesus, he was told, *You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it* (Matt. 16:18). Peter's name means *rock*. Two different Greek words signifying *rock* are used in this scripture. The name *Peter* is from the Greek word *petros*, meaning *a piece of rock, a stone.* The word *rock* is from *petra*, meaning *a massive rock*. The words of the Lord

Jesus “on this rock”–referring to the receiving of the revelation by Peter from God –can be likened to the meditation of the Word. Our spirit, like the small stone that is signified in Peter’s name, changes into a massive rock, unshakeable and unremovable, when the Word of God is received with faith.

When we are born again, we receive a measure of faith that is like a small stone or like a small mustard seed (Mk. 4:31; Rom. 12:3). During meditation, our spirit man receives the Word, which is the Word of faith (Rom 10:8). Strengthened by the Word, the inner man grows progressively until it becomes solid, like a massive rock, and great, like a blooming tree (Mk. 4:32).

We are asked in Ephesians 6:10 *to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*. We can only be strong in the Lord by having our heart filled with the Word because, as we have seen earlier, the Word provides nourishment for spiritual growth (Col. 3:16). When the Word is meditated and received into our spirit, it energizes our spirit man with the power of God’s might, which is strong like the massive unshakeable rock.

There are two different Greek words for *word*: (1) *Logos*, meaning *the living, written - the source;* (2) *rhema*, meaning *the spoken word. Logos* is the entirety of the wisdom of God that is revealed in the Bible, the written word. *Rhema*, the spoken word, is given or manifested for a specific purpose or to a person. *Rhema* comes out of logos. Hence the word, *logos,* was manifested in the flesh as Jesus, *rhema* (Jn. 1:14; Heb. 1:1,2)

When we meditate the written Word (*logos*), it is manifested in the flesh spiritually as rhema in the spirit

man. The Lord Jesus said, *Upon this rock I will build My church* (Matt. 16:18). Are we not the temple, the church of the living God (1 Cor. 3:16)? The Lord Jesus will by the Holy Spirit strengthen and reinforce our inner man with mighty power (Eph. 3:16). This strengthening through the mighty power of the Holy Spirit will cause us to speak forth words of faith that can cause creative power. This is the power-in all its glory, majesty, and strength, of the Almighty God.

3. *Success and Prosperity*

> ***JOSHUA 1:8***
> *8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

Look at this scripture carefully. One of the benefits of meditating and practising the Word of God is that it will give us success and make us prosperous. The word *prosperous* in Hebrew is *tsalach,* which means *profitable advancement, prosperity, promotion.* The word *success* in Hebrew is *sakal*, which means *wisdom, intelligence, prudence.*

The prosperity that comes as a result of meditation is not financial prosperity but rather a *profitable advancement and/or promotion*. And the success that comes as a result of meditation *will make us wise in all the affairs of life* (Josh. 1:8, *AMP*). It will yield insights that are deeply practical, like how to deal with a certain problem or a business situation. It is of this kind of wisdom that King Solomon possessed (2 Chr. 1:10). That which King Solomon

received in “one lump sum” can be received by us daily, measure upon measure, when we meditate the Word.

4. *Prepares Us to Pray*

> ***PSALM 19:14***
> *14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.*

Many believers have written me or come to me personally asking for prayer saying that whenever they pray, their mind wanders around or thinks of other things. One of the ways to prevent that is to meditate the Word before praying. The meditation of the Word of God prepares us to pray with an undivided mind.

We have seen at the beginning of this chapter that one of the Hebrew words for meditation is *hagah*. A leading Israeli etymologist *Rabbi Solomon Pappenheim* discovered that the root *hagah* comes from a two-letter base *hag. Hag* is closely related to another word derived from the word *nahag. Nahag* means *to lead, direct, or steer,* and carries the connotation of having *many motions directed toward one goal.* Meditation, simply restated, *is the process of directing the thoughts towards God*. The act of meditation also purifies and clears the mind of any impurities, so that the heart and mind are blended in oneness and thoughts of prayer directed toward God.

5. *Christ Makes His Abode In Us*

> ***JOHN 14:21,23***

21 “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” 23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”

The meditation of the Word of God will prepare our hearts to see the Lord Jesus. It is written, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God* (Matt. 5:8). It is also written that the words of God are pure (Ps. 119:140; Prov. 30:5). Therefore, meditating the Word of God purifies our heart, making it purified to see the manifestation of the Lord Jesus.

Behold, I reveal a deep mystery concerning this now. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Word of God (Jn. 1:1, Rev. 19:13). He is also the living Word, which means that every written word is a fragmentary manifestation of the Lord Jesus. This fact is alluded to by what the Lord Jesus spoke in John chapter six. In that chapter, He told the Jews that their forefathers ate manna which came down from heaven (Jn. 6:32, 49). He then asserted that He is the living bread that came down from heaven (Jn. 6:51). A manna is a small piece of food, whereas the bread is a whole loaf. Likewise, the written Word is like the manna. The more we store the Word of God in our hearts, piece by piece of the Word will soon form the complete Whole Word. Eventually, the living bread, Christ Jesus, is formed in our heart, which will be a manifestation before us in a living form as how He was manifested like a Person to the Jews two thousand years ago.

The meditation of the Word of God also allows the manifested Lord Jesus to come into our heart and construct a sanctuary in it. Of this is written thus: *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me* (Rev. 3:20). When the Lord God commanded Moses to build the tabernacle, He said, *And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them* (Ex. 25:8). When all the fittings and furniture were ready according to the Word of the Lord, the visible glory cloud of God came to abide in the Holy of Holies (Ex. 40). Likewise, when we meditate the word and fill our heart with the Word, it is like the tabernacle being constructed. All the furniture, except for the brazen altar and the laver of washing, were made of gold, which signifies holiness and purity. The Word of God purifies and sanctifies our heart (John 17:17).

Consider a bird making a nest. Day after day, the bird flies here and there to gather twigs, leaves, and ferns to construct a nest. When the nest is constructed and ready, the bird will then lay its eggs and hatch its chicks there. The gathering of sticks or twigs by the bird to build its nest can be likened to meditating the Word of God and storing it in our heart. When the nest is ready, little birds are born and make their home in the nest. Likewise, when the heart becomes a sanctuary made holy, pure, and ready by the Word of God, the Lord Jesus and the Lord God will come into it to make Their residence there. In our heart, They will dine with us and we with Them, which signifies the communion between us and God (Ex. 25:22). As God fed the Israelites with manna in the wilderness, in the sanctuary of our heart, He will feed us with His own flesh and blood, which is the living Word (Jn. 6:51-58). Oh, it is a wonderful experience which very few enjoy!

The meditation of the Word of God will transform us into the likeness of Christ Jesus and transform our heart into like the garden of Eden where we could enjoy the fellowship and oneness with the Lord God.

Chapter 5 - Practising Christlikness

> ***JAMES 1:22-24***
> *22 But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*
> *23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man observing his natural face in the mirror,*
> *24 for he observes himself, and goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.*

In the journey towards Christlike perfection, we have discussed how the spirit and the mind can be transformed and begin to bear Christlikeness. Now we shall examine how by learning to walk like Christ the soul and the body can also be transformed into Christlikeness.

On a certain occasion, while a British statesman was serving as a military attaché in Paris, France, he met with and started talking to a distinguished French statesman. *In these days* said the French statesman, *there are only two things a soldier needs to know. He must know how to march, and he must know how to shout!* The Englishman quickly responded. *I beg your pardon, your Excellency, but you have forgotten the most important thing of all! What's that?* the Frenchman asked. The Englishman replied, *He must learn how to obey!*

After having meditated the Word, scriptures learned must be put into practice. It is not good enough just to

meditate. The flesh and the mind too need to be born again. It is of the redemption of the soul and the body that the apostle Paul writes, *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (*Phil. 2:12). The command to "work out your own salvation" is for the redemption of the flesh and the mind. And it can only be so done by our obeying the Word, practising what it teaches.

A certain church had a new pastor who preached the same sermon every Sunday. Soon the people got bored and tired of hearing the same sermon and began to complain. The pastor then told the congregation, *I'll preach a new sermon when you act on this one.* Practising and obeying the Word of God is a very difficult thing for most Christians to do. For example, the Word says in 1 Peter 5:7 that we are to cast all our cares and worries upon the Lord. Even after doing so in prayer, most Christians still sit and worry over their problems. This act defeats the necessary faith mechanism in prayer and so their needs are not answered. Such a course of action is certainly not practising the Word. To practice the Word in this situation is not to worry since we no longer have a problem, having already given it to the Lord. It is now His problem and not ours.

In order for us to mature and be transformed into the likeness of Christ Jesus, we must practice what the Word of God says. Let us consider a few scriptures.

> ***JAMES 1:21***
> *21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

1 PETER 2:1,2,11

1 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,
2 as new born babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,
11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

In these scriptures, please note the words *lay aside, laying aside*, and *abstain*. These words call for action. These scriptures identify the sins that prevent our growth or maturity to Christlikeness. Consider the bonsai plant. The Chinese have perfected a method of creating real trees but in miniature form. How did they do that? It is achieved through stumping the roots. As a result, the tree does not attain its full stature. Likewise is our Christian life. The traits of our fallen state (listed in 1 Peter 2:1,11) will stump our growth. When we act upon the Word by putting away these traits, we will then attain full manhood like the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:13).

Mind Renewed And Transformed

ROMANS 12:2

2 And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God.

In our previous study we looked at the two scriptures: Philippians 2:12 and James 1:21. In these two scriptures, we

find two very important phrases: *work out your own salvation and save your souls*. Both these phrases refer to the renewal and transformation of the mind that results from obeying and practising the Word of God. When we are born again, it is our spirit that is born again, not the mind and the flesh. The salvation of our flesh is brought about by our practising and obeying the Word. The old sinful mind is renewed by meditating the Word and transformed by obeying the Word.

Let us examine the two effects of meditating and obeying the Word of God that are mentioned in the key text of this subject: *Renewal of the mind* and *transformation of the mind.*

A. Renewal of the Mind

The word *renew* comes from the Greek word *anakainosis*, meaning *renewal*. The word *mind* comes from two Greek words:

i. *Dialogismos* : *imagination, reasonings, thoughts*

ii. *Dianoia* : *thinking over, the faculty of thinking*

The renewal of the mind can be thus defined: *Making anew the imaginations and thinking of the mind, resulting in a transformed state of mind that is like the mind of Christ.*

Why must the mind be renewed? It is because of the depraved state of the mind fallen into sin. Some aspects of the fallen mind include the following: *reprobate* (Rom. 1:28-32), *vain* (Eph. 4:17), *doubtfu*l (Lk. 12:29), *carnal* (Rom. 8:7), *lustful* (Eph. 2:3), *defiled* (Titus 1:15), and *evil* (Gen. 6:5). Such is the pitiable state of our sinful mind. That is why it is

bent on sinning and rebelling against God. This is the reason why the scriptures admonish us: *and be renewed in the spirit of your mind* (Eph. 4:23).

Five-Fold Effects Of the Word Of God

The mind can only be renewed through the meditation of the Word of God. When we meditate the Word of God, the living Word which is Spirit and Life performs five different functions to effect a renewal of the mind.

The five functions are:

1. *Cuts*

> ***HEBREWS 4:12***
> *12 For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

The first work that the Word of God does in renewing the mind is cutting. The Word of God is like an axe or sword that cuts deep into the roots of sin in our mind (Lk. 3:9; Eph. 6:17). I recently read about the *Leksell Gamma Knife*, a state-of-the-art surgical equipment for treating tumors and growths in the brain.

First, a frame is screwed on to the patient's head. A local anaesthetic is then given. The patient's head is scanned to determine the location of the target and the images are put into a computer. Using a three-dimensional

graphic of the brain, the operating team plans surgical route and the intensity of the gamma ray, which is a form of electromagnetic radiation of higher energy than X-rays. Like the focusing of sun's rays with a microscope thereby forming a sunbeam that can burn a hole in a piece of paper, likewise, without any incision on the head, the gamma ray penetrates the head and burns the tumor growth. This is how the Word of God also cuts and renews the mind. This process is beautifully described in the Amplified translation of Hebrews 4:12: *For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power - making it active, operative, energizing and effective; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, and is able to penetrate to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [that is, the deepest parts of our nature] exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart.*

2. *Washes*

> ***EPHESIANS 5:26***
> *26 that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word. (also Ezek. 36:25; Jn. 15:3)*

Consider a car that sits idly in the carwash. Just by being there, the car is washed clean by soap and water. Likewise, when we meditate the Word, it washes us clean. How is it possible? Did not the Lord God say, *Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols* (Ezek. 36:25)? Such a cleansing takes place in our spirit. The Lord God who was manifested as a man is now present in the living Word. That is why the Word of God has the same cleansing and washing power to cleanse our minds of all filthiness. That is why the

Psalmist said with great confidence, *How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word* (Ps. 119:9).

3. *Purifies*

> ***1 PETER 1:22***
> *22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.*

After having washed us, the Word will begin to purify us. How can the Word of God purify us? The Lord God Himself is pure (Hab. 1:13). The Word of God which came forth from Him is also pure (Prov. 30:5). There is an important point to take note of here: It is fire that purifies (cp. Mal. 3:2,3). The scriptures declare very clearly that our God is a consuming and devouring fire (Deut. 4:24; Ps. 50:3; Heb. 12:29). Like God, His Word too is fire (Jer. 20:9; 23:29). Like the acetylene torch of a refiner that removes gold of its dross, so will the fire of the Word of God purify our mind of all evils and filthiness.

This has been my regular experience. When I spend many hours meditating the Word of God, I would feel a glowing fire burning in my right hand. Each time I come into the presence of God to meditate His Word, the fire would burn and increase in intensity until I experience it all over my body (Ps. 39:3). The Word of God will purify us "from everything that contaminates and defiles the body and spirit, and bring [our] consecration to completeness in the (reverential) fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1, *AMP*).

4. *Illuminates*

> ***PSALM 119:130***
> *130 The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.*

The Word of God is like light (Ps. 119:105). Let us examine the primary Hebrew word for meditation–*hagah*–more closely. A base root closely related to *hagah* is *gah,* which denotes *brightness*. From the word *gah* is derived a word like *gayah,* meaning *flame* or *light*. The most important derivative of *hagah* is the word *nogah,* which refers to *a glow* or *shine*. This word is especially significant, as it refers to *a glow shining in the dark, as the glow of dawn or twilight.*

What makes the word *nogah* important is its occurrence in the prophet Ezekiel's vision: *Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself, and brightness (nogah) was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire* (Ezek. 1:4). The relationship between *hagah* (meditation) and such concepts as light and fire is mentioned clearly in the Bible. The Psalmist says, *My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned* (Ps. 39:3). The vision of light (brightness) which Ezekiel saw as a result of meditation is clearly established.

Light speaks of wisdom, understanding, illumination, or revelation. When the Word is meditated, it enters as light into the inner man and comes into contact with the spirit, which is the candle of the Lord (Prov. 20:27). When the Word, as light, comes into contact with the spirit it results in a fusion, thereby releasing a light that shoots up to the

Father of lights (Jas. 1:17). From the Father then comes illumination for the spirit man (Jas. 3:17).

It is like a firework that is shot into the sky. After reaching a certain height, it comes back down in a multiplex of lights. This picture is illustrated in James 3:17 in the multi-fold wisdom that comes down from the Father of Lights: *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.* It is also like the flow of blood in the human body. The heart pumps blood to all parts of the body through veins, capillaries, and arteries. When the flow reaches the feet by the force of gravity, the heartbeat there causes the blood to flow up back to the heart. Likewise, during meditation the Word sinks deep into our spirit, causing the inner man to spring back in response and reach out for the illumination that comes from God.

5. *Sanctifies*

> ***JOHN 17:17***
> *17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*

A few years ago, as I was waiting on God, the Word of the Lord came unto me in the form of a conversation. The Lord Jesus said, *When you meditate My Word, My blood will ooze out from it to sanctify and cleanse your mind that it may be renewed.* Surprised, I asked, *Lord, how can Your blood come from Your Word?* To this Lord Jesus answered, *When I was crucified, didn't blood and water come out of Me* (John 19:34)*? I am the Word* (John 1:1,14; Rev. 19:13). *When you take My Word and meditate upon it, My Word is broken into you. When it is broken, the sanctifying power in My*

Word (through My blood) and the cleansing power in My Word (through My water–the Spirit) will renew and transform your mind as like a well-tended and well-watered garden.

So–cutting, washing, purifying, illuminating, and sanctifying–these are the ways by which the Word of God when meditated upon renews our mind. Let us summarize this five-fold work to see the complete picture.

Let us consider the fact, for example, that before we were born again, we had been taught "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"–an attitude of revenge. When we become Christians, we want the mind with its old attitudes changed because the Lord Jesus taught us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:38-44). So, meditate the Word *love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you* (Matt. 5:44). When we begin to meditate this scripture, the Word, like a sword, will begin to cut down the thought of *An eye for an eye* lodged till now in the mind. Like an axe, the Word will also begin to chop off the branches, even the very tree of vengeful thinking itself.

Once the cutting is done, blood will ooze out. The sin in the old man will cry out: *Oh, you heartless new man. Why did you cut me off from your life? I've been your mind's companion for years.* The Word then, like *water*, is sprinkled on the bleeding area. All the blood–the old thoughts–are washed away. The mind is now clean. But the cut is still an open wound. The Word then, like fire, will begin to work. Like an acetylene torch, it will begin to burn and burn until the wound is cauterized and closed up. The Word like *fire* purifies the mind. The roots of unrenewed thoughts are burned to ashes. The Word then like *light* will begin to shine

and illuminate our mind. The new Word–*Love your enemies*–will shine like a laser beam into our mind. As it is shining upon our mind, the Word will enter into our spirit. It enters deep into our spirit and a light will then shoot upwards–heavenwards–to the Father of the spirits. The truth *Love your enemies* is then firmly planted in the area formerly occupied by the old thought *An eye for an eye*. Finally, the Word then *sanctifies* and makes our mind new, renewing and transforming it into the mind of Christ.

B. Transformation Of the Mind

The work of transformation of the mind works simultaneously with the renewal of the mind. The word *transform* in Greek is *metamorphoo,* meaning to *change into another form.* This is the same meaning applied to the word *transfiguration* (Matt. 17:2). Therefore, to have the mind transformed is to have it transfigured–completely and totally changed into the mind of Christ Jesus.

Consider the insects. The higher insects such as *beetles, flies, butterflies,* and *wasps* undergo a complicated series of metamorphoses in their development from egg to adulthood. The larva that hatches from the egg of the butterfly or the moth is called a *caterpillar*. The caterpillar is vermiform and feeds voraciously on plant matter. After four molting cycles, the larva grows greatly in size and undergoes a metamorphosis to enter the *pupal* (chrysalis) stage. In its final act of metamorphosis, the caterpillar secretes a substance over itself which becomes its *cocoon*, attaching itself firmly to a branch or twig. Inside the cocoon all the tissues of the pupa are reorganized. The composition of the larva is reconstituted as wings begin to differentiate themselves out of little groups of cells called *imaginal disks*.

When this metamorphosis is complete, the winged adult capable of sexual reproduction emerges from the cocoon.

Notice the sentence “Inside the cocoon all the tissues of the pupa are reorganized.” Notice again three words: *cocoon, pupa*, and *reorganized*. The “cocoon” speaks of the *mind,* the “pupa” speaks of the *spirit of the mind*, and the “reorganized” speaks of *renewal*. This picture is clearly portrayed in the scriptures: *that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness* (Eph. 4:22-24).

Just as the Lord Jesus was transfigured and His countenance flooded with the light of God’s glory, likewise the mind will be transformed–transfigured with God’s glory to possess the mind of Christ Jesus as we meditate constantly on His Word (Lk. 9:29; 1 Cor. 2:16). Let me illustrate this with a uniquely beautiful experience I received one day. When meditating the scriptures I began to realize that a great change was coming over my mind. The Lord God’s glory was hovering over it. It was like the top half of my head from the eyes up was not there anymore. Instead that entire area was covered with a canopy of God’s glory. It was as if heaven filled my mind. In that state of glory, I was made to comprehend a certain biblical truth which stretches from Genesis to Revelation. This experience was truly astounding. What a transfiguration of the mind!

One evening several years ago, as I was meditating the Word of God, my spiritual eyes were opened to constantly and continually behold the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus said, *When you search My Word, you will only find Me*. The Lord

then showed me a vision. In the vision, I saw a young girl sitting before a big mirror. She was beautifying herself before the mirror. On the mirror, instead of the girl's image, what I saw reflected was the image of the Lord Jesus. It even appeared as if the image was infinitely reflected, just like when one's image is reflected infinitely before two barber's mirrors placed opposite each other. The Lord Jesus then explained, *The mirror is the Word. When you look into the mirror of the Word, which starts to beautify and transform your life, My image will be reflected in you throughout eternity.*

As we meditate the Word of God, the Holy Spirit residing within us will do the work of changing us into the image of Christ Jesus. The measure therefore by which the Holy Spirit is able to make us like Christ Jesus is dependent on how earnestly we meditate the Word of God. The Holy Spirit has only one goal–to transform us and make us look like the Lord Jesus when He comes again: *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord* (2 Cor. 3:18); *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is* (1 Jn. 3:2).

The Lord Jesus concluded His Sermon on the Mount by saying that if anyone hears Him but does not put His teaching into practice is like a man who foolishly builds a house on sand, which is soon washed away. But if anyone hears the Word and obeys it, he is wise and builds his house on a rock that can never be removed (Matt. 7:24-27). Meditating the Word of God will build up the spirit, renew and transform the mind, and cause the body to be obedient to the ways of God. We can then be fully conformed and

transformed into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 6 - The Fullness of Perfection

> ***MATTHEW 5:48***
> *48 Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*
>
> ***MATTHEW 5:48 (AMP)***
> *48 You, therefore, must be perfect [growing into complete maturity of godliness in mind and character, having reached the proper height of virtue and integrity], as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

The renown renaissance painter *Michelangelo* spent many, many hours on his back on high scaffolding carefully perfecting the details of each figure in the frescoes on the high ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City. A friend once asked him why he took such pains with figures which could be seen only at a close distance by viewers. *After all*, said the friend, *who will know whether it is perfect or not?* Gently but resolutely, Michelangelo replied: *I will*.

God is a perfect person who designed His creation in perfection. It was only after the entrance of sin that creation's perfection was marred. In the creation account as found in the Book of Genesis chapters 1 and 2, each time God had created something, these words follow: *and God saw that it was good* (Gen. 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31). Creation–God's masterful handiwork–was perfect in every way–suitable, pleasant, fitting, admirable. In the creation of man, Genesis 1:26,27 tells us how God created man in His

own image and likeness, endowing him with the attributes and the character of God. After the fall, when sin entered the world, man's perfect divine image was marred. When I was in Rome in 1992 I went to see the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City because I had always admired the works of Michelangelo. During my visit I noticed that some of Michelangelo's paintings and works were being restored as they had been damaged by adverse atmospheric conditions and had also suffered from lack of proper care. Likewise the Lord Jesus came and restored us to the image and likeness of God by His own blood. He now commands us to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect.

Let us consider *man* a little deeper. The Bible says that the Lord God made him in God's own image and likeness. What is "the image and likeness of God"? *Image* is *physical resemblance.* When we look at a child, we may exclaim, Oh, she looks like her mother! Why do we say that?–because we see a certain resemblance to the image of the parent. What then is God's image? The scriptures declare that the Lord God is a Spirit (Jn. 4:24). Man too is a spirit (Prov. 20:27; 1 Cor. 2:11). God is immortal (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15,16). Man too was originally created immortal. Death came into existence only after sin (Gen. 2:16,17). God is Three in One (Eph. 4:4-6). So is Man–spirit, soul, and body (Gen. 2:7; 1 Thes. 5:23).

Let us now look at God's likeness. *Likeness* refers to *His characteristics*–His attributes and personalities. When the Lord God appeared to the prophet Moses, He revealed His name by proclaiming His attributes: *And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin'* (Ex. 34:6,7). Does not man too exhibit these attributes and personalities in some

small measure? Man was originally created perfect without a taint or a flaw. We were originally made as sons and daughters of the King to rule and reign (Gen. 1:26; Lk. 3:38). But sadly, sin marred the perfect image and likeness of God in us.

A question can be asked: I*f God created man in His own image and likeness to reign as sons and daughters of the King, why then did God make man till the ground in a garden in Eden instead of having him seated at the right hand of God* (Gen. 2:18,15)? Let's begin our quest to unravel this enigma by recalling a very sad event that happened a long time ago to one of God's highest creation. *Lucifer*, who was "the full measure and pattern of exactness–giving the finishing touch to all that constitutes completeness–full of wisdom and perfect in beauty", allowed sin–seen in God's creation for the first time–to enter into him (Ezek. 28:12, *AMP*). As the anointed cherub who trod freely among the fiery stones on God's holy mount and who enjoyed an intimate knowledge of God, Lucifer fell into sin because of pride (Ezek. 28:14). Instead of uninterrupted intimacy with God, Lucifer found himself cast out from God's holy presence (Is. 14:15).

In Lucifer's downfall we might perhaps see that spiritual perfection is better realized through active obedience. Thus when man was created, he was made a little lower than the angels and put to till and tend a garden (Gen. 2:15, Ps. 8:5). The process of nature teaches that perfection involves different stages of growth. The Lord God intentionally set Adam to the task of tilling the garden so that as he watched a seed germinate and give birth to "first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mk. 4:28, AMP), he would learn from his observation the necessity of *tending* (feeding his spirit man), *guarding* (girding the loins of his mind, Eph.

6:14), and *maintaining* an uninterrupted fellowship with God. The goal of the Christian life is to be perfect like our Father in heaven (Gen. 17:1; Deut. 18:13; Matt. 5:8). It is the absolute will and desire of God that we be like Him because God, who is the embodiment of love, wants affection and devotion from one who is an exact likeness to Him, and with whom He could fully relate (Jn. 17:23; 2 Cor. 13:11).

Consider this: When people are in deep sorrow over some problems, they pour out their hearts in prayer, making their needs known to God. They may receive comfort through the Word or through the still small voice of the Holy Spirit, yet they would yearn to receive some loving words of comfort and consolation from a fellow human being. Why do we do that? Simply because God is a Spirit and we could not relate to Him tangibly as with to another human. Likewise God, who created us to fellowship with Him, wants us to rise up to the full potential of our sonship in order that we may relate freely with Him as our Heavenly Father.

Consider an oyster. When a stone falls into the mouth of an oyster, pain and irritation would cause it to secrete a fluid to cover over the stone. The oyster would continue to secrete this fluid on the stone. In due process, through the oyster's secretion, the stone is transformed into an invaluable pearl. Likewise, our spiritual journey to perfection involves a process of transformation. When we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, through His blood He begins to perfect us in Him just as the stone coming into the oyster begins to be perfected (Heb. 10:14). As the oyster would continually secrete to perfect the stone into a pearl, likewise we are continually being perfected and transformed into Christlikeness through the Word (Col. 1:28), through fellowship with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

(1 Jn. 1:3; 2 Cor. 13:14), and through the action of His Spirit (Tit. 3:5). Finally, just as the perfected pearl in the oyster is collected and becomes an object of adornment, we become a diadem in His Hand after we have transformed unto perfection (Ps. 102:18; Is. 62:3; Zech. 9:16; Mal. 3:17). We are, after all, created–and perfected–for His pleasure and glory (Is. 43:7; Rev. 4:11).

Perfection, therefore, is the progressive growth into complete maturity of Godliness in spirit, soul, and body, which are being molded to become the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, bearing inwardly His likeness. This is beautifully described in scriptures as follows: *But all of us, as with unveiled faces we mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same likeness, from glory to glory, even as derived from the Lord the Spirit* (2 Cor. 3:18, *Weymouth*).

It is not impossible to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. If no loving earthly father would demand from their children something which in all aspects he knows would be impossible for the children to accomplish, then surely not our Heavenly Father. He would never demand that we be perfect if it is unattainable. It is not impossible because God has made it possible for us to be transformed into Christlikeness by the Holy Spirit. God, Who Himself is perfect, has put in us the essence and life-seed that can germinate and transform us unto Christlike perfection. It is written in 1 Peter 1:23 that we are *having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.* 2 Peter 1:4 furthers this truth: *by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

Just as God placed Adam in the garden of Eden to till and tend it, we must and should learn how to carefully tend, guard, and keep the life-seed–the divine nature of God in us–so as to cause it to germinate by stages from blade to ear to full grain. To this we are called: *For those whom He foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand], He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might become the firstborn among the many brethren* (Rom. 8:29, *AMP*).

I know of a dear saintly man of God in South India. Once he was caught up into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4). He witnessed what appeared to be the great white throne judgement of God (Rev. 20:11-15). A great multitude of people were standing before the Lord God. After those whose names were not found in the Book of Life were cast into the lake of fire, with great love and compassion, the Lord God turned His gaze upon those who have kept the Name of Christ Jesus without blemish. A powerful beam of light shot forth from the eyes of God (Rev. 19:12). The beam of light fell upon all the redeemed. In an instant, everyone looked exactly like the Lord Jesus. This is the ultimate and fullness of perfection–*transformed into His Likeness.*