

Marco Galli · Immanuel Arul Paul · Jacinth Angel

*Slaves
of
Jesus
the
Christ*

Take my yoke upon you
and you will find rest for your souls



“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me,

for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

[Matthew 11:28-30]

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FOREWORD

In Isaiah 55:8,9 God says ⁸ “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, ⁹ for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” This book is our life experience and proof of the above verse. Immanuel Arul Paul started evangelizing in his early twenties, but after a more real encounter with Jesus in November 2012, he began responding to his call to reform churches, encourage fellowships and to preach the gospel through outreach.

However, God as usual, through His unique and unfathomable master plan maneuvered Marco Galli from Italy and Immanuel to be acquainted with each other in 2015. Both men realized that they shared the same passion and affection for Jesus, same vision with regard to ‘church’ and the same zeal to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God. This oneness of mind brought about by the Holy Spirit has now made both men brothers in Jesus as well as partners and fellow-slaves of Jesus the Christ in this mission since November 2016.

Marco and Immanuel are actually authors of this book. I, a firsthand listener of their teachings am functioning as a record keeper of the same and collecting it all together, making it more comprehensive, presentable and sequential in the form of a book.

Both of them have only one concept to tell i.e., ‘The good news of the Kingdom of God’ though they may use different approaches, expressions and means to drive home the concept. The teachings they did because of the revelations they obtained regarding this truth

from God complemented each other and has resulted in this book.

Finally and most importantly, both authors strongly emphasize that their purpose of sharing these studies with you is to point your direction towards the only truth who is Jesus the Christ.

Also, the authors would like to introduce you to the Hebrew-Greek-English interlinear translation of the Bible that has been a great help in understanding a lot of biblical principles that were lost in translation over the centuries. In many instances in this book you will find them referring to it. You can find this in the website www.scripture4all.org.⁽¹⁾ The original Hebrew and Greek writings with word to word translation in English can be found for each verse, chapter wise along with the KJV translation of the same. Once you start using this Bible, you will soon realize the importance of what we are mentioning here.

May God bless you.

Jacinth Angel

(1) ISA3 basic is a software in the 'scripture4all' website, that can be freely installed on desktops and laptops and it has more comprehensive tools to interpret the Scripture.

Chapter 1

WHO IS JESUS?

Jesus, during the three years of His ministry in this world, preached incessantly only one message: the good news of the Kingdom of God. To make us understand the magnitude of this idea, even after His resurrection He taught the disciples for 40 days the things concerning the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). As He himself is the central foundation and cornerstone of the Kingdom of God, we can never understand this concept without first figuring out who He is. In fact, all that He preached revolved around this basic principle. He had no other message to tell the world. Sadly, this good news is nowadays either completely ignored or manipulated to suit the system of the world and the needs of mankind. There could be neither any Christian life nor gospel that does not center on Jesus and His Kingdom. Therefore, this entire book teaches only this one concept as ‘Christian life’ in its entirety.

JESUS THE CHRIST - NAME AND TITLE

We all know that Jesus is God Himself who came in the flesh to redeem us from our sins. But not many of us know Jesus as the Christ. ‘Jesus’ was His given name; ‘Christ’ was not the given birth name of Jesus, neither was it His second name. Jesus was simply referred to as ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ or ‘Jesus son of Joseph’ by the family and community. ‘Christ’ is associated with Jesus not as His name but rather as an inherited royal title.

Matthew 16:15-17 ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son

of the living God.”¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”

‘Christ’ encompasses Jesus’s very essence because it does not identify only His function but is descriptive of who He is. And this has to be a revelation for each one personally. Therefore, whenever we say ‘Jesus Christ’ we need to be aware that we are not calling His name but we are professing Jesus as who He is!

The Greek word used for Christ is ‘Christos.’ ‘Christos’ was used to translate the Hebrew word ‘Mashiach’ which is Messiah. Therefore, Christ and Messiah are synonymous of each other.

John 1:41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ).

Messiah and Christ mean ‘anointed’ but, for the Jews, Messiah in reality held more importance and represented a wider concept. Messiah in fact was meant to be the ‘anointed King’ who would have come to deliver the people of Israel from their oppressors, establishing an everlasting kingdom and restoring peace. For the Jews, He would be the everlasting mighty king and a political leader who would conquer all their enemies, gain back the territory, rule, protect, and guide them, thus offering eternal peace.

In fact as stated in one of the many prophecies of Isaiah regarding the Messiah:

Isaiah 9:6,7 ⁶ For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order

it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

If interpreted in the above sense, does it mean that the Messiah holds significance and is functional only to the Israelites? If He should be the King of the Jews then what role does He have in the lives of us gentiles (all non-Jewish people were considered as gentiles) or why do we follow Him?

Isaiah 11:10 And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.

It is very clear from the above prophecies of Isaiah and the many words of Jesus and the disciples themselves later, that the Messiah though is a root of David, He is a banner, King and ruler for all the nations. He is not a restricted figure for the Israelites alone.

Romans 1:6 And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

So 'Jesus Christ' actually means 'Jesus Messiah' i.e., **'Jesus the anointed King'**. This habit of addressing Jesus as 'Jesus Christ' over the centuries made the title 'Christ' into merely a name associated with Jesus and it lost its significance, power and truth. This has eventually led to the collapse of the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Anointing was a ritual performed in Jewish tradition to consecrate someone for a special and specific purpose. It was a sacred investiture reserved for Kings and High Priests. So, Jesus was the anointed Messiah, the King⁽¹⁾.

(1) Actually Jesus was the King and the Highest Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:10), but with regard to this book we will focus on Him only as a 'King'.

Matthew 3:16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

Jesus, unlike humans, was anointed by the Holy Spirit by God Himself. This was parallel to the anointing in the Old Testament where oil was poured on the heads of kings to anoint them.

The Jews were waiting for a Messiah, a powerful king who would free them from the dominion of the Romans and bring eternal peace to Israel. Therefore, they celebrated in grandeur when Jesus entered Jerusalem. They believed that their day of deliverance had finally come. But disappointingly when Jesus went straight ahead to ‘clean’ the temple instead of trampling the Romans, the people turned against Him. Even after His resurrection, though His disciples had the revelation that He was the Messiah, they still associated it with deliverance from Romans and a physical restoration of the Kingdom of Israel.

Acts 1:6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

If Jesus did not come as Messiah to restore the kingdom of Israel, then what was His purpose? How is He the Messiah in our lives?

JESUS THE KING

We saw Peter acknowledging who Jesus is and in many instances in the gospel we see people recognizing Him as the Messiah.

Matthew 16:20 Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

Furthermore, we can see Jesus Himself claiming that He is the King.

John 18:37 Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?” Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”

Jesus Himself bears witness to the truth that He is the Messiah i.e., the Christ; but He will reveal it to the world in a very shocking and unimaginable way - by not wearing rich garments and sitting on a throne, instead hanging naked on a wooden cross with a crown of thorns.

Revelation 19:16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

THE DISCIPLES PREACHED JESUS THE KING

The gospel that Jesus is the King was the biggest and life changing revelation that the disciples witnessed and experienced. For the joy and deliverance that came from this gospel, they could not cease from proclaiming it after Jesus’s ascension and this became the core message and essence of the early church.

Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 17:6,7 ⁶ But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. ⁷ Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king – Jesus.”

In order to perceive Jesus as King, let us try to understand what it would be like to have a king in practical life. We are not used to being

ruled by royalty like in ancient times; hence it is a little difficult to understand who actually a king is and what would be his authority, characteristic traits, attributes and prerogatives.

1. A Kingdom is not a democracy. In a democracy, citizens elect and have the freedom to choose who their ruler can be. But in a kingdom, we are at the king's mercy and he is the one who chooses us. We do not have the rights to decide who our king can be. Whether we like it or not, the one who reigns is the king. Being a king and ruler of his kingdom is the king's birthright and unquestionable, unshakable authority.

John 15:16 “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”

Most of us think that we have chosen to follow Jesus. But it is merely His grace that He chose to reveal Himself to us. The gospel of late preached is to ‘accept’ Jesus into our hearts or lives as our personal savior. When He is the King, He is the one who needs to accept us into His Kingdom and we can only cry for His mercy and acceptance. He is the one who chooses us. What rights do we have or who are we to accept Him, the King? When He called His disciples, He only said “follow Me.” It was a command. A King does not beg people to be citizens in His Kingdom.

Mark 1:17 Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”

2. A king who rules an absolute monarchy is in full power and authority over his kingdom. He is the supreme ruler and

everything comes under his control. The entire kingdom is his and the people are just debtors living in his land. So everything in the kingdom belongs to him. There is neither private property nor personal claims that can be made by any person staying in the kingdom.

Psalm 24:1 The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.

Often we think that we need to serve Jesus and that we are appointed to build His Kingdom and consider ourselves valuable and superior since we are doing His service. We plainly forget that Jesus the King builds His own Kingdom and does not need anything from us and our hands. Our very life and breath is His grace and choice to give. He chooses us and gives what pleases Him to give. What could we possibly own and possess that we can offer Him when we do not even possess our very own breath?

Acts 17:24,25 ²⁴ God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. ²⁵ Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

3. As everything in the kingdom belongs to the king, the king has the rights to take and give whatever he wants. He decides what his people will have and will not have. Nobody in a kingdom has any right to question the king's decisions.

1 Samuel 8:10-17 ¹⁰ So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. ¹¹ And he said, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be

his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. ¹² He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. ¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. ¹⁴ And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. ¹⁵ He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. ¹⁶ And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. ¹⁷ He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants.”

The prophet Samuel here clearly explains all the prerogatives of an earthly king according to the instructions he received from God. If a king appointed by God could have this authority, how much more the King of Kings? We can see that the king gives what he likes to whom he likes and removes what he wants from whoever he wants. Therefore, whatever the king gives or doesn't, is his mercy. If we think we own our children, job, wealth, education, house, etc. we have failed completely in getting the truth that nothing was ours to begin with.

1 Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Romans 9:18-20 ¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. ¹⁹ You will say to me then, “why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” ²⁰ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?”

God is our creator and reigns with supreme authority and power. We, the created do not have any rights to question the King and creator! If we do, then we the formed, simply are rejecting Jesus the Christ.

Romans 9:21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

4. We need to understand one basic fact very clearly. In a democracy we have the rights to object, question, protest and express our dislikes. We have an influence over the decisions made in the country. Whereas, in a kingdom the king's word is final. The word uttered by the king becomes the final commandment and law of the country. For e.g. If the king wants all the houses in his kingdom to be painted pink, it has to be done and it is the law whether we like it or not. There is no other opinion or discussion entertained on the subject.

Leviticus 22:31 “Therefore you shall keep My commandments, and perform them: I am the LORD.”

We often address Jesus as ‘Lord’. This is not just another word or a means to simply address Him; instead, it denotes again a very important role of Jesus and who He is. ‘Lord’ is the translation of the original Greek word ‘Kyrios’. ‘Kyrios’ means “supreme in authority, controller, master, and owner and to whom a person or thing belongs to, about which he has the power of deciding”. Therefore, when we call on Jesus as ‘Lord’ we are acknowledging that we do not belong to ourselves, have no authority and rights of decision making over our lives but He is our owner. Many times we call on Him ‘Lord’ completely ignorant of the glory it holds and thereby we abuse the word. When we say “Lord Jesus Christ” we

simply mean: “Jesus our owner and King, whom we belong to.”

5. A king and his kingship is irrevocable and not dismissible. Those who protest or rebel against him will be cut off from the kingdom, labeled as rebels and possibly executed or thrown out of the kingdom. We have a clear example of rebellion that was staged in the Kingdom of God.

Luke 10:18 And He (Jesus) said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”

When we often resist, fight, question and ridicule God’s ways, we forget that we are the dust of this earth, unworthy of anything without Him. Moreover, we also do not realize that He does not hesitate to cast rebels out of His presence.

6. In a kingdom the king does not require suggestions from the people to make his decisions or how to execute his work. No one can tell or counsel the king on how he needs to function.

Job 38:1-6 ¹ Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: ² “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? ³ Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. ⁴ “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. ⁵ Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? ⁶ To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone?”

Chapters 38 to 41 in the book of Job are full of God’s expression of His might, wisdom and power as creator. When God is the one who laid the very foundation of this universe, what advise can we possibly give Him and what suggestions can we give on how He should work in our lives? Job, till chapter 37, questions

God, complains, justifies and professes to have been undeserving of all that had happened in his life and demands vindication. But after he understands the function of God as a King, creator and supreme authority, note the change in his behavior:

Job 40:3-5 ³ Then Job answered the LORD and said: ⁴ “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. ⁵ Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.”

This is the attitude that is fit and worthy of us with Jesus the King simply because:

Isaiah 55:8,9 ⁸ “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. ⁹ “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

7. The king in a kingdom is the supreme judge. The verdict issued by the judge supersedes any other statement or fact. We may have certain situations or experiences with people in which unavoidably we judge them. Often we think that judging someone negatively is wrong but considering someone as good is acceptable. Both good or bad, we have no rights to judge anyone because each one runs his own race and takes his own cross and we are in no superior position above the other to pass judgments.

Matthew 7:1 “Judge not, that you be not judged.”

When God decides to put one down and exalt another, who are we to judge anyone’s poor or successful life or character?

Psalms 75:7 But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another.

Moreover, when we are accused, persecuted or judged wrongly, we find it in our nature to rise up in our defense and work towards exonerating ourselves from the shame or disgrace, but we do not realize that Jesus is the supreme judge who can vindicate us and all our efforts at it are not in line with His Kingship. He has promised to bring everything to light in His judgment. If we desire to work for our justice, then we reject Him as our judge.

Hebrews 10:30 For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.”

8. A king can never be taken for granted. We all think that Jesus the Christ is merciful and long-suffering, so we can go about our ways, enjoy a little while and when we decide we have had enough, we could always get back to Him. We think He will work in our own sweet time. We forget that He also does not show mercy to those who despise and disrespect Him.

Matthew 22:2-7 ²“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, ³ and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. ⁴ Again, he sent out other servants, saying, “Tell those who are invited, ‘See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.’” ⁵ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. ⁶ And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. ⁷ But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”

9. A king is not our servant. Yes, Jesus washed the disciples’ feet. He came to serve so as to give us an example of how we should

serve one another and not to be our servant whom we can exploit whenever we need to fulfill our desires.

John 13:12-15 ¹² So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”

Matthew 23:8 “But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.”

We do address everyone as ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ but in practice we are strictly hierarchical, wanting recognition and expecting to be served. But Jesus left an entirely different example. There is no pyramid of hierarchy in the Kingdom of Jesus. He is the only one supreme authority and everyone else takes just one similar position under Him as brethren. Each may have a different role to play as preacher, administrator, pastor, translator, writer, manager, praise and worship leader etc. but it is not a role to exhibit power or ownership rights towards anything or anyone, as all rights belong to the only King, Jesus.

Though we are required to serve one another and may have received certain authorities from Him, our equation with Jesus is that of Him being our Lord and King. This implies that He is not our servant. Often we pray with our bucket list of desires to be fulfilled and even set deadlines to Him to accomplish it. We want Jesus to work for us according to our will; but only servants work for us according to our desires. We fail to understand that He will fulfill only His uncontestable and supreme will and not ours.

Considering all the above discussed attributes of a king, it might be discouraging because we are used to being our own kings. The earthly kings could be cruel, partial and unjust, but Jesus is a good King. He takes care of us, protects us, is concerned about us and loves us. There is nothing He would do to destroy us as long as we do not rebel His Kingship.

ANTICHRIST

An antichrist need not be one who has to appear with two horns and a tail or with numbers inscribed on his forehead. In light of the truth we have discussed so far as who actually Jesus is, anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ i.e., anyone who rejects His Kingship and Lordship in his/ her life and desires to be his/ her own king is basically an antichrist. This realization and acknowledgement is a function of the heart and not mere acknowledgement by lips.

1 John 2:22 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

THE KING'S PRESENCE

By now, we hope it is clear that Jesus is not only our savior and redeemer, but is also our Lord and King. Since we do not know this truth, we take Him for granted and are not even aware of how to enter or stay at His presence. Imagine you are being called to make an appearance with the king of England. What would you do? We call ourselves as sons and daughters of Jesus and treat Him with utmost casualness and carefree attitude. Would we do that to an earthly king? If we are to stay in the presence of Jesus the King or approach Him, what is required of us? We imply this even for our routine activities where we come in contact with Him every day through prayer.

A. Requirements to enter the presence of the King:

1. Washed with water

Exodus 29:4 “And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall wash them with water.”

John 15:3 “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”

When we meet a king, the preparation we first do is to clean up. When we meet Jesus the Christ and stay at His presence, we need to be thirsty and be ready for His word. His word is the one that can make us clean. Our minds are filled with the things of the system of this world. His word, the truth is the one that will clean us off our convictions, self-held beliefs, traditions etc. that are not according to His ways.

2. Clothed appropriately

Ephesians 6:14-17 ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

The next step we do after cleaning up is to find the best clothes to wear in the presence of the king. What better clothes can we have than Jesus our Christ Himself? Truth, righteousness, faith, peace and salvation can never be ours without Him. Unless Jesus

the Christ becomes our truth, righteousness, faith, peace and salvation, we are never clothed but naked in His presence.

3. With valuable presents

Isaiah 1:12-15 ¹² “When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, to trample My courts? ¹³ Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies - I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. ¹⁴ Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.”

Hebrews 10:19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus.

Once we are presentable before the king, we finally make sure that we take the best gift or offering possible to please the King. When our God is the owner and ruler of this entire universe, what could we possibly give Him? He does not require our festivals, sacrifices, offerings, and prayers. He says that He cannot endure our efforts and that His soul hates it. The only present that makes us eligible to enter His presence is the blood of Jesus; our trust in His blood will be our only righteousness. If we ever think that we by our works and self-righteousness can please Him and stay at His presence, we are simply infuriating Him.

B. Our position in the presence of the King:

Our position we take while we approach Jesus, usually is physical, which is commendable but mere physical position with an arrogant or empty heart is of no value and is just a sham. Often our physical

position shows our reverence, but the heart does not. No matter the level of reverential physical attitude, if the heart is empty, what good can it account for? The points we are discussing below, address the position that our hearts need to be in.

1. Kneeling

Romans 14:11 For it is written: “As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

Philippians 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.

2. Bowing down

Revelation 1:17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.”

Ezekiel 3:23 So I arose and went out into the plain, and behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, like the glory which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face.

Whenever we think we pray, we usually go into God’s presence with plenty of rights and usually make demands with a checklist. Once we recite our checklist, we think we have poured our hearts before Him and leave His presence. Just imagine going into the presence of a king in this manner. If we ever have the guts in the first place to treat a king’s audience with this attitude then the next thing we know, we would be thrown out of the door and on the street. Then, why do we treat Jesus with this attitude? It is because we never comprehend and perceive His value and who He is in the first place. We consider Him as a ‘buddy’ and

a casual friend who can be treated with minimum respect and easy-going attitude. No, He is the King of Kings. That is why as you can see, in the presence of Jesus the Messiah, John and Ezekiel (and many more examples could be given), fall on their faces as dead. The level of reverence and fear they had for their King did not even make them worthy to stand before Him. This shows how well they had understood Him as their King.

Matthew 4:8,9⁸ Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”

Jesus, the King of Kings is standing in front of Lucifer, the fallen one. Consider the trick of Satan. He is trying to undermine and test the confidence of Jesus Himself in who He is (the absolute, sovereign King), because he knew that this was the only way to defeat the purpose of the Messiah.

The King who has to be worshiped is Jesus. How many gods do we worship in order to get what we want, other than Jesus? Do we worship our wealth, money, job, security, success and family? Then we have denied Jesus as King of our lives and instead are worshipping Satan!

Matthew 17:5-7⁵ While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” ⁶ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.”

The first step in approaching a King is to worship Him with the right attitude. If we find favor in the eyes of the King, then He by His mercy lifts us up and gives an audience with Him. We do not have the rights to barge in and demand as if He is our servant who is obliged to work for us. We need to find favor through His mercy for us to rise up enough to converse with Him. Conversation begins only after this attitude pleases Jesus the King. This is the same attitude that Samuel as a child developed when He said “Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.” This permission is not for us to rant on our needs. It is simply to say “Nevertheless, not what I will but what You will.” Jesus Himself showed such reverence while speaking to the Father.

WORSHIP AND FEAR OF THE KING

The Bible is filled with instances of angels, saints and throngs of people worshiping God, and the foremost example is David. We, as Christians consider worshiping God as a vital part of our relationship with Him. Have we ever wondered what worship literally means? Often, worship is associated as a one hour session or a period of time where we need to sing songs, shout and praise or lift up His name. The Hebrew transliteration for worship is ‘shachah’. It is defined as “to bow down self, fall down flat, prostrate, humbly beseech, do reverence.” It does not mean that we need to always fall down physically on the floor whenever we want to worship Him. It talks about our inner attitude. We may sing praises for endless hours and lift our hands how much ever higher, but if our hearts have not acknowledged or do not revere Jesus as our King and have not bowed down and prostrated before Him, then our praises are in vain. If our hearts are proud and we are still owners of it, then nothing we could do is accounted as worship.

Isaiah 29:13 The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.”

Note how God rebukes this form of worship through Isaiah. We have understood worship through human knowledge and traditions but are completely ignorant of its true essence. We offer many thanksgiving, songs, glory etc. with our lips, instruments and dance but often do not consider the condition of our hearts in His presence, which is actually the only vital part of worship that matters to Him. Worship is nothing but the state of our hearts and the service it offers to the King of Kings, Jesus, by prostrating itself to Him and His authority.

The next important truth that has been ignored is ‘fear of God’ and its association with worshiping God.

Psalms 5:7 But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.

Psalms 2:11 Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

If we note the above verses, worshiping God is associated with fear. David in fact says that we need to rejoice with trembling. How is this possible? How can we worship and rejoice and fear at the same time? We all know that fearing God is to tremble with trepidation for consequences of our actions or for failing to keep His commandments that could incur His anger upon us. We follow His commandments, go to church, read the Bible, fast, pray, offer tithes, try to stay away from sin as much as possible and undertake many precautions to please Him, because we fear God’s wrath if we fall short of biblical

standards. Again, we have been deceived by centuries of man-made interpretations on 'fear of God'. To understand the concept of fear, we need to read the original text of the Bible, where 'to fear' God means 'to revere'. Reverence is nothing but "profound adoring, awed respect or honor that is felt or shown to someone or something."⁽²⁾ Therefore, the basic principle of worshipping God is to fear Him, which is nothing but showing profound honor and respect to Him as our King. David was clear in this concept; hence, fearing God was a matter of rejoicing for Him. Yes indeed, we need to tremble in the presence of the King not because our King is heartless but for His might and glory. He is a good King and He needs only our hearts to love and worship Him.

How many of us go to His presence to worship Him - for the pure joy of listening to Him or to simply seek His face? What can be the highest privilege for a citizen in a Kingdom? It would be to have an audience with his king and simply enjoy his presence. Unless Jesus becomes our King, staying at His presence will not become our highest privilege.

Psalms 27:8 When You said, "Seek My face," My heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek."

David was a man after God's own heart. It is evident why God gave such a certificate from the above verse and many other similar psalms where David simply adores God just for His pure love and greatness. We can see the proof from most of David's psalms of His complete acknowledgement and understanding of God as the supreme King. David himself was a king, so he easily related with God as his King and lived in complete reliance and abandonment to Him. The love, trust and adoration he had towards God as his King

(2) Merriam-Webster English online dictionary.

made him seek God not for what He could do for Him but just for who He is. Similarly, we find another woman who discovered this truth in the time of Jesus.

Luke 10:38-42 ³⁸ Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus's feet and heard His word. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." ⁴¹ And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. ⁴² But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

Both Mary and Martha had the good heart for Jesus. They loved Him, but worshiped Him with two different attitudes. Martha believed in serving Jesus with her strength, whereas Mary considered that just sitting at His feet was her paramount necessity and lifeline. Jesus does not rebuke Martha for her service. It is commendable and it does arise out of love but she forgot the better part i.e. Jesus and His presence itself. Indeed, cooking and preparing for the King is necessary and arises out of noble intentions but the issue here was her misunderstanding of worshiping and serving Him and the wrong prioritization she made, ignoring His very presence in the first place and neglecting the 'better part'. What use is it to cook, serve and constantly be worried and miss the joy of relishing the King's company when the King is actually present and delights the company more than the service? Like Martha, many times we are stuck in our 'service' to the Lord Jesus but we forget that this service is of little value and we are still lost unless we choose the better part of staying with Him at His presence. We are distracted and troubled

Who is Jesus?

many times with regard to the things we can offer, work and do for God but He is absent in our midst. More than our service, our adoration and love for who He is and enjoyment of His presence is a pleasing sacrifice and sweet aroma for Him and is the true expression of the state of our hearts.

Chapter 2

KINGDOM OF GOD

Usually, whenever the subject of Kingdom of God is broached, it gives an inherent impression that it is the eternal ruling of Jesus after His second coming and our lives in heaven thereafter. This perception by default is imprinted in our thoughts. Of late, the other dimension that the ‘Kingdom of God’ has taken is that, it is our ruling this earth with all the might, power and authority of God, our claiming the Eden we lost or our success and prosperity as Christians in this world. We understand that a Christian is not living the life of the Kingdom unless he/ she has dominion in every aspect of his/ her life, resulting in a pain-free and self-willed life. We never bother to meditate or understand the Kingdom of God beyond this, as we often think that the ‘Kingdom of God’ is too mysterious to bother with and it is not important to understand it to live the Christian life. Unfortunately, with this attitude we have completely ignored the truth about Jesus’s coming to this world and the good news He preached, which is the very essence of Christianity. We have deceived ourselves by calling ourselves ‘Christians’ without living the Christian life at all. We have assumed according to our will and comfort that we lost the dominion and hence we need to claim it back. This is why it is imperative to first know what the ‘Kingdom of God’ is.

In the scripture, we find Jesus often mentioning that the ‘Kingdom of God’ is the gospel that He came to preach. We often associate the gospel to the four books written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We assume that these four as ‘books’ constitute the gospel. But ‘gospel’ means “good news”; good news of the Kingdom of God.

This good news that Jesus preached is what the four disciples have recorded which is referred as 'gospel'.

In all the gospels apart from Matthew, we find the phrase used as 'Kingdom of God'. Matthew refers as 'Kingdom of Heaven' but both have to be considered synonymous.

GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Luke 12:32 "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Let us try to approach this from a practical point of view. What would we call as the kingdom of any king? What would we define it as? A kingdom is simply an area or territory that is ruled and influenced by a king who exercises his authority, power, dominion and control over it. So Kingdom of God is nothing but the area of influence, dominion, and authority of the King Jesus.

When Jesus started His ministry the first teaching He began with is:

Mark 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel."

The Jews were waiting for the Kingdom of Israel to be restored. When Jesus said that "the time is fulfilled now", it is very clear that what they had been waiting for was accomplished. He communicates that the time of waiting is over because the Kingdom of God is at hand (present tense). At hand means 'near' which could denote proximity by space or time. Here, Jesus refers to the space because He, the King was visibly present and therefore He said that the Kingdom of God is at hand. He then calls for repentance and trust in this good news. So, in this verse Jesus is making it very clear that He, the Messiah is among the people, therefore the Kingdom of

God has arrived and accomplished the promise to Israel which can be inherited through repentance and trusting in this good news.

Philippians 2:10,11 ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We inherit or become a part of the Kingdom of God when we truly in our hearts recognize and acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ (King) and Lord. This means that we agree to surrender our kingdoms, will, ways etc. in exchange for His'. But it is not as easy as we have written to come into this abandonment, because we are very much used to living our lives by our own terms and comfort. In other words, we have built our own kingdoms for ourselves and have embraced idols that serve in our kingdoms. We never realize that we cannot be in the Kingdom of God unless our kingdoms and idols are completely destroyed. We want Jesus for what He can do for us, and we want ourselves for the comfort and control we can wield over our lives. It is never half way with Jesus. It is always all or nothing.

HINDRANCE TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We are normally experts in drawing blueprints for our life and planning and charting the course it has to take. We meticulously calculate and determine what is good and what is avoidable in order to lead a comfortable and secured life in this world. We act as control freaks because we trust our judgments and capacities that it will ensure a peaceful life. In this bridled race we run, we live a shallow Christian life where the role of Jesus as master, owner and King is completely lost. We have built a kingdom for ourselves, founded on the knowledge of good and evil and built with bricks of lust, desires, wants, comfort and worldly motivations. We are the kings of our

own kingdoms and we operate these kingdoms with our will, ways, knowledge, strength and self-made ideas of peace and joy (money, job, marriage, reputation, appreciation etc.). We basically trust ourselves and the security of our kingdoms. The role that Jesus often plays is reduced to that of an idol serving in our kingdoms. Instead of considering Him as our absolute sovereign and ruler, worthy of all respect and fear, we treat Him like a ‘genie in a bottle’ that is subject to our rubbing through our prayers and willing to satisfy all our wishes to lead us on the path to unquestionable happiness. Jesus is the genie who is obligated to heed our prayers and wishes and accomplish them for us in the smoothest way possible so that our strategies can succeed and our kingdoms can be established. Jesus is our way and the coin we move in the kingdom to attain our goals, aspirations, desires and the plans that we approve of. In such blithe ignorance to the truth about God’s Kingdom and His Kingship and with complete lack of reverence, we constantly approach Jesus absolutely unaware that we have become an abomination and are vile in His presence. This self-made and self-functioning kingdom is the first enemy to God and His Kingdom. In addition, we have other idols that we preserve and depend upon for our kingdoms’ welfare as follows:

1. Our convictions and traditions

Mark 7:9 He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.”

Though we call ourselves as Christians, we often neglect the ways of God, because the traditions, culture and beliefs that our families have followed for generations that are in tune with the respective country, community or caste we are from, form a very vital part of our existence in the community. Our social and

family life often revolve around traditions and cultural practices than the commandment of God because we are born into and raised in it. Without our own knowledge, we conform to the practices of the society, country and culture. Even if at times they may be uncomfortable, in order to have a smooth sailing and avoid frictions in the family and society, we compromise. Never do we think that this ingrained way of our life is against the very principle of the Kingdom of God. For example, we set an age limit for our children to be married or we follow a pattern in expecting settlement in their lives and set timelines with regard to education, job or marriage. We are so concerned with marriage and our own checklists for a successful one, that we do not care to think if God's principle of marriage is actually being fulfilled through the particular union.

2. Our religious beliefs

Matthew 5:20 “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”

When we read about Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, from the scripture in John chapter 3, we see that He comes by night to Jesus to avoid being caught by other Pharisees. Most importantly, when Jesus is trying to teach him about the Kingdom of God and being born from above, it is impossible for Nicodemus to assimilate it because he has his preconceived notions about the scripture, which he is unwilling to give up though he desires to learn from Jesus. This resistance from Nicodemus eventually leads Jesus to rebuke him for his lack of trust in Him and unwillingness to be exposed to the light. We are religiously taught that unless we make efforts at all times through prayer, fasting, Bible reading,

tithing, controlling lust, avoiding sin etc. we can never enter into the Kingdom of God. As long as we do not realize that we have meaningless religious behavior as short cuts to enter the Kingdom of God and that we need to forego them to inherit His righteousness, we can never come to His light. This is the righteousness of the Pharisees whom Jesus rebuked and disliked the most and the only ones whom He ever labeled as ‘vipers’ and ‘serpents’. He even went on to say that the Pharisees were the ones who were hindering others from entering the Kingdom of God through their religious teachings. Then how can we, holding the same religiousness of the Pharisees, ever enter the Kingdom of God? We need to surrender our self-efforts and righteousness and imbibe from Him His righteousness without which we have no place in His Kingdom.

Matthew 21:31,32 ³¹“Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.”

Jesus cannot get more plain-speaking than this. He is very directly explaining that those who trust their own righteousness to get them to the Kingdom of God miserably fail, but those who trust and put on Jesus the Christ so that His righteousness supersedes all their misdeeds and covers all their sins will be the first to enter His Kingdom. As long as our self-efforts and church attested self-righteousness do not cease, He can never be our King and therefore we can never be partakers of His Kingdom. Harlots and tax collectors were considered the worst group of sinners in the time of Jesus and they make it to heaven ahead of the Pharisees and the religious because they do not have any

righteousness to hold on to. Abandoning ourselves comes easy when we stop judging ourselves as ‘holy’ and stop trusting our moral and ethical values as justifiable.

3. Our families and relatives

Matthew 10:37 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”

Family is a gift given by God Himself. It is a very essential part of who we are. But often we forget that it is a gift and rather consider it as our right! Therefore, we end up investing our very souls into it and making it our idol. We often love our family to the extent that Jesus Himself takes the second place. Often, He becomes a servant who is used to ensure the wellbeing of our family. We love the gift more than God who gave it in the first place. This misplaced love and idolatry will never allow us to be a part of His Kingdom.

4. Money and Power

Matthew 6:24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

The importance we associate money with, often indicates how little we trust God. We believe that money is the most essential commodity to live in this world and forget that Jesus said that without Him we can do nothing. Many times we try to access money in the name of God. We conceal our love for money by justifying we need to serve Him with our money as if He were short of cash!! We saw already in the previous chapter, how He does not require anything from us to build His Kingdom.

HOW CAN WE ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

Luke 7:2-10 ² And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. ³ So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. ⁴ And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, ⁵ "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue." ⁶ Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. ⁷ Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." ⁹ When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" ¹⁰ And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick.

The centurion was a Roman, a pagan. He was not a church going, praising, anointed and tongues speaking excellent Christian, well versed with the scriptures. But he was aware of who Jesus was. The first step to the Kingdom of God is to realize who Jesus is, what His capacity as a King means in our lives and the real impact of the Messiah as our foundation. Jesus the Christ is the light. Unless we come to the light we are in darkness. In other words, we are outside His Kingdom. Coming to the light simply means to recognize Jesus as our Lord and King and surrender to His authority and might.

KINGDOM OF JESUS THE CHRIST

Though the Israelites expected a very physical and rigid kingdom to deliver them and restore peace through the Messiah, Jesus was very clear and often kept emphasizing that His Kingdom was not going to be a kingdom of this world as per the misunderstood expectations of Israel.

John 18:36 Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”

The Kingdom of Jesus the Christ is of a different realm. His Kingdom is not physical, visible or tangible but it will be in us. We do not see it with physical eyes as an obvious presence or rule, because it is a spiritual Kingdom; a spiritual influence that nevertheless has tremendous impact, dominion and rule over us and all the circumstances of our lives. The life of the King Jesus in us, controlling and influencing our lives is the Kingdom of God within us. This is the underlying implication of the prayer Jesus makes, “Your Kingdom come.”

Luke 17:20,21 ²⁰ Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; ²¹ nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ for indeed, the *kingdom of God is within you.*”

John 14:16-18 ¹⁶ “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

Romans 8:9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Therefore, Jesus the Lord and King through His Holy Spirit, ruling and

influencing our lives and destiny is the 'Kingdom of God'. Now going back to the beginning of this chapter, we hope you understand when we mentioned that it is not everlasting life in paradise or our dominion on this earth and claiming back Eden. If we focus on gaining back the dominion and control over our lives and the earth, then we are claiming something different from Jesus's definition of Kingdom of God. This is just what the Israelites expected and failed terribly at inheriting. We need to first of all understand that our kingdom is not from this world and does not work as per the system of this world. We will not inherit His life by simply praying for the Holy Spirit. Unless we surrender ourselves as a whole to Jesus the Christ, the exchange of our sinful nature of feeding from the tree of knowledge of good and evil for His life will not be possible and by no means can He dwell in us and His Kingdom be ours.

Therefore, the good news of the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached, or in other words, the whole purpose of Jesus coming into this world, was to redeem us from sin and place in us, through His blood shed on the cross, His eternal life i.e., the indwelling of Jesus the King himself. Through this, we can become God's sons and daughters and members of His Kingdom. No wonder did He invariably end up preaching only this truth through different means and Satan through His deception blinded us to it completely.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed you are disqualified.

We guess by now it is explicit what we need to examine and test ourselves for. It is nothing but constantly surrendering ourselves to Jesus the Christ, His life, blood, Kingship and Lordship. If we choose not to, then as Paul says we consider ourselves already disqualified for the Kingdom of God.

Chapter 3

SERVANTS OR SLAVES?

In light of this new insight and refreshed understanding of who Jesus actually is, and what His Kingdom means, the next most important aspect we would like to discuss is our position or status in His Kingdom and relationship with regard to Him as our King. As much as it is important to understand the Kingship and Lordship of Jesus, it is equally mandatory to understand who we actually are and what our role in His Kingdom is. Without this understanding, the principle of the Kingdom of God is not complete.

In a democracy, if our place and role has to be defined, we can simply term it as ‘citizens’. The democracy has tiers of bureaucracy where nothing is autocratic. There is no one single person who holds sovereignty. Therefore, as citizens, we play an important role in determining the function of the democracy and are eligible for demanding privileges that are due a citizen. It typically functions as defined, “of the people, by the people and for the people.”⁽¹⁾ Basically, the citizen plays a crucial and foundational role in a democracy; whereas, in a kingdom, the scenario is reversed, where the king is the sovereign ruler and foundation of the kingdom. If we live in an absolute monarchy, we can only be ‘residents or people of the kingdom’ with no authority over it. The king owns every property, livestock and human being in his kingdom. Hence, we can utmost be tenants or temporary occupants in the kingdom with no rights to claim ownership over anything. The king decides the fate, life,

(1) The Gettysburg Address speech by U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, November 19, 1863.

function, tax payment, occupation etc. of his residents. In simple terms, we are the king's 'slaves' because he is the owner, master and lord of everything. Likewise, in the Kingdom of God, Jesus is the sovereign ruler and King and we are His SLAVES!

Well, this might be shocking and hard to digest and it may look anti-biblical but this is a long forgotten truth and as a consequence we are lost and living outside the Kingdom of God. We often consider ourselves as important members of the church who are serving Him. Some of us, when we possess certain gifts of the Holy Spirit and have the capacity to preach or pastor people, consider ourselves 'servants of God', closer to God and hierarchically better than the normal 'souls'. If you remember in the first chapter, we emphasized that there is no pyramid of hierarchy in a kingdom. There is one king and everyone else simply falls below him in just one same order as 'slave'. Often, we admire the so called 'affluent people', putting them on a pedestal and regarding them far superior than us who are normal regular people. Likewise, we give a similar status to the 'servants of God', considering them almost equal to God, having direct communion with Him. We often seek them as primary consultants for solving our problems and obtaining answers to our questions. This is precisely idol worship and a principle that opposes the one of the Kingdom of God. In short, the point we are trying to make here is that no one is a servant in the Kingdom of God. There can be only one category of people in His Kingdom and they are His 'slaves'. The difference between a servant and a slave can be understood as written below:

Servant – A person who, upon payment of a salary, performs duties for others, especially a person employed in a house on domestic duties or as a personal attendant.

Slave – A person who is legally owned by someone else.

The word ‘slave’ simply identifies the legal ownership without any regard to the role of the person.

Often in our prayers we say, “I belong to you Jesus” but this simply is equal to affirming that we are His slaves. “I belong to you” in fact is another way to say “I am your slave.”

It is now clear from the above definitions that if we choose to be servants, we simply perform duties as a part of a deal where we expect wages in return for the duties performed. We are merely employees and the employer is in debt with us to pay us back for the chores accomplished. There is no personal relationship between both and it is purely contract based. It is a formal, impersonal and business relationship; whereas, a slave is completely under the legal ownership and guardianship of the master. The relationship is more personal, where the problems, day to day affairs and existence of the slave are the responsibility of the owner. As long as the slave is tied to the particular owner, he/ she needs to do nothing out of his/ her capacity and control to survive, instead is completely dependent on the owner.

Jesus never is in debt with anyone. He does not owe anyone anything for duties performed. Therefore, if we consider ourselves as His servants, it simply means that we are rejecting His Kingdom and Lordship. However, if we consider ourselves as His slaves, then we are His possession and there is nothing that will affect us beyond the master’s control and authority. We are simply at His mercy and abandoned into His hands, under His control and complete rulership.

You may wonder, then why often in the scriptures, Jesus Himself refers to servants working in His Kingdom in His parables. Slavery

was a social stigma in the 15th – 16th centuries when the colonials were heavily criticized for the highhanded dominion and brutal slavery they introduced in the countries they ruled. Therefore, at the same point of time, when the Bible was being translated into English, the translators wanted to avoid the word ‘slave’ and rather resorted to more dignified terms such as ‘bondservant’ or ‘servant’ instead of ‘slave’. This becomes evident when we read the original Greek text of the Bible where the word used whenever our relationship with Jesus was addressed, was ‘doulos’ which means, unquestionably, ‘slave’; and whenever ‘servant’ as such was implied for an employee, the Greek word used was ‘diakonos’. Therefore, the original Greek text used two different terms to indicate servant and slave respectively, but in translations over the centuries, to avoid presenting the Bible as harsh, the two terms were merged into one and mellowed down to ‘servant’ or ‘bondservant’, which has inevitably led to dilution of the gospel itself.

From the Greek Bible dictionary:

Doulos – A slave. Properly, someone who belongs to another without any ownership rights of their own. Ironically, ‘doulos’ is used with the highest dignity in the New Testament – namely, of believers who willingly live under Christ’s authority as His devoted followers.⁽²⁾

We can understand this concept better from the following verse by using the original literal translation from Greek in place of the current one.

Matthew 6:24 “No one can serve (*be a slave to*) two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve (*be a slave to*) God

(2) HELPS™ Word-studies, copyright © 1987, 2011 by Helps Ministries, Inc.

and mammon.”

If we consider this verse from the aspect of ‘servant’ as in our current translation, it loses its whole meaning because a servant is not bound to one master but can serve two or more of them. He/ she can work for as many employers as possible. But a slave can have only one owner. No two masters can own the same slave. In this perception, if we read the above verse, it makes sense when Jesus says that we cannot be slaves to both Him and mammon and that when we are His slaves, we are owned by Him totally. Consider the following verses again using the original literal translation from Greek, where Paul, James, Peter, Jude and John address themselves in their letters.

Romans 1:1 Paul, a bondservant (*slave*) of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.

James 1:1 James, a bondservant (*slave*) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bondservant (*slave*) and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Jude 1:1 Jude, a bondservant (*slave*) of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants (*slaves*) — things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant (*slave*) John.

In all of the above mentioned verses, most of the English translations use the word ‘bondservant’ instead of ‘slave’, but the original Greek

word used in its corresponding place is actually ‘doulos’. The disciples of Jesus were very clear on the principle of His Kingdom and their role in it. But most amazingly, we can see that Jesus Himself took on the form of a slave.

Philippians 2:5-8 ⁵Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant (*slave*), and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus, the son of God and being equal with God, took on the form of a slave which is actually the form of every man. He did not hesitate to bring Himself to the standard of men, thereby, setting an example of how we ought to be and importantly making apparent what our form is. Unlike us, who consider taking the form of a slave as something demeaning, Jesus humbled Himself to the lowest point to make us His’.

BEING MADE A SLAVE

How did we become slaves or why are we slaves of God? In answer to this, let us consider how an earthly slave market functioned and draw parallels as to how it applies to the Kingdom of God. Anyone who wanted to buy a slave undertook the following procedure:⁽³⁾

1. Go to the slave market – in our case the ‘sin market’.

The world is the devil’s fortress. We were bound by Satan and were sin’s slaves.

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you,

(3) John F. MacArthur ‘Slave: The Hidden Truth About Your Identity in Christ’.

whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.”

Jesus came into this ‘slave market’ to redeem sin’s slaves from the ruler of this world. It is important to underline that the word ‘redeem’ is a commercial term that means “pay off, buy back for money.” Redemption is basically a transaction, where someone buys back an object for himself/ herself from another person.

2. Choose the slave you want – “I came to call sinners,” “I chose you.”

Jesus saw us in the ‘slave market’ and chose to purchase us for Himself. Therefore, we have not ‘accepted’ Jesus as most of us think. We did not have any rights or capacity to accept Him as we were pathetic slaves bound by Satan and sin. It was purely His mercy and grace that He chose us for Himself.

John 15:16 “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”

3. Pay for the slave with money – He paid with His blood.

Once you choose a slave in a market, you need to pay a ransom to redeem the slave. Jesus the Christ gave His blood as this ransom to God. The price fixed to purchase the slave from the sin market was Jesus’s death and blood. This is the meaning of the blood of Jesus the Christ – one that redeemed us from sin.

1 Peter 1:18,19 ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

4. You own your slave – He is the Lord and owner.

Once a slave is purchased in a slave market with a price by a new owner, the slave is not set free to go out and live his/ her life. There is purely only transfer of ownership from one owner to the other. The new owner, redeems the slave from the old one, hence, the slave now has a new owner. The slave at no point has the capacity to act independently. Therefore, when Jesus purchased us from the ‘sin market’ of our past owner, He through His blood made us His slaves instead. The yoke of sin and Satan was removed through His blood and the yoke of Jesus has been placed upon us. Jesus untied us from Satan and has tied us to Himself. Therefore, whenever we pray for the blood of Jesus, we basically acknowledge this concept and truth.

Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸ “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

5. You control, discipline, feed, clothe, protect, teach and reward your slave.

Once the new owner has bought the slave, he takes him/ her home under His control and takes care of him/ her. We are very apprehensive and averse to the word ‘slave’ because we associate it with tyranny and negativity as we have seen or heard of only evil masters of this world who treated their slaves ruthlessly. But by definition as seen above, ‘slave’ is simply a neutral term that denotes our ownership by someone and we being controlled and influenced by that person. It could be either good or evil. Either we can be owned by Jesus the Christ or by Satan. There

is no state of independence for us. If we accept Jesus's Kingship and Lordship and acknowledge that we are His slaves, then His blood will unite us with Him and make us His sons and daughters and members of His Kingdom. If we reject this basic principle, then we are free, free to be slaves of Satan outside the Kingdom of God. The choice is not of being a slave or being free. The choice merely is to decide either to be a slave to Jesus the Christ or to Satan. Since Jesus is a good master, He through His rod of correction will discipline us to steer us away from the habits of the bondage that we were used to and bring us under His yoke and start exerting His influence over us. As long as we focus on seeking only His Lordship and Kingdom, the rest of the materialistic things we need will eventually not be our primary concern. The good master knows to give us exactly what we need and not necessarily what we desire.

Matthew 6:31-33 ³¹ “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’
³² For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

ATTITUDE OF A SLAVE

Jesus sets us a guideline as how an attitude of a slave should be. In Luke chapter 17, in the 5th verse we can see the disciples asking Jesus to increase their faith and we see Him give this strange answer below:

Luke 17:7-10 ⁷ “And which of you, having a servant (*slave*) plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat?’ ⁸ But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and

serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink”?⁹ Does he thank that servant (*slave*) because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.¹⁰ So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants (*slaves*). We have done what was our duty to do.’”

If we consider ourselves as slaves of God, then we should not expect the reward of a servant. Unconditional submission should be the attitude of a slave. Often, we want praise and results for the sacrifices or services we make. If we remember that we are mere slaves in God’s Kingdom and we are entirely at His disposal, then praise, glory or recognition belong to Him and not to us. Being a slave is our character and basic obligation. It is not a job. Therefore, we are just unprofitable slaves. This attitude of blind abandonment and unassuming nature is what reflects as our trust in Him. As Paul says in Philippians 2:5-7, which we read above already, Jesus the Christ made Himself of no reputation by taking the lowliest form of a slave. This is the mind of Jesus that Paul exhorts us to have.

PRIVILEGES OF A SLAVE

So far we have seen what it means to be slaves, but now, let us see what this relationship status implies with regard to our new King and Lord Jesus.

- A. The highest privilege and honor for a slave in a kingdom is to stay at the presence of the King and to see His face. Likewise, if we are slaves of Jesus the Christ then the only one thing that should matter and be our pleasure is to seek His presence and see His face as already discussed in the first chapter.

1 Chronicles 16:11 Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His

face evermore!

B. Indeed, the scripture mentions that we are the children of God, heirs and co-heirs with Jesus and we are His friends but none of this will become feasible unless we make the first and foremost commitment to Him as His slave. Being His slave is what makes us eligible for the following:

1. To become His friends

John 15:14,15 ¹⁴“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you servants (*slaves*), for a servant (*slave*) does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

2. To become citizens of His Kingdom and part of His family

Ephesians 2:19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

3. To become His children

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.

4. To become heirs and co-heirs with Christ

Romans 8:16,17 ¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Being slaves and acknowledging Jesus as Lord and King are two

sides of the same medal. If we reject the first, we are automatically rejecting the second. In fact, as discussed in the first chapter, the word 'Lord' means owner and there is no Lord (*owner*) without slaves (*owned*); implying that if Jesus is Lord, then we are His slaves.

In conclusion and to make it plain and simple, refusing our (privileged) condition of slaves is refusing Jesus as Lord and Christ.

Chapter 4

BLOOD OF JESUS THE CHRIST

Often we have heard about the blood of Jesus and even pray asking for the blood to cleanse us; but rarely do we ever understand the magnitude of this prayer or what exactly we are asking for. It is often a ritual that we perform or a ‘magic wand’ we use whenever we think we have sinned. In this chapter, we will see the actual truth about the blood of Jesus the Christ.

Hebrews 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

We are right when we ask His blood to cleanse us. But what is the exact spiritual implication in this prayer? What is the importance attached to the blood of Jesus?

Hebrews 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

We see that in order for sins to be forgiven, the prerequisite is shedding of blood. It is impossible to blot our transgressions unless blood is shed. God made this a mandate before the first human being sinned. Shedding of blood is associated with death. When a body is deprived of blood, it automatically dies. There can be no life without blood. Blood is the life in a body and bloodshed is the evidence that the body is dead. Since blood is life, the life of Jesus is His blood, therefore when He shed it, He gave His life for

us. The blood of Jesus is the very life of Jesus the Christ Himself!!

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.

As we mentioned before, the mandate given by God for forgiveness is death through bloodshed.

Genesis 2:15-17 ¹⁵Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

The tree of knowledge of good and evil was in the garden of Eden but so was another tree, the tree of life, in the very midst of the garden. But man chose death over life. He chose the knowledge of good and evil and desired to become like God with the capacity to function in his own authority and self-willed independence and to gain self-righteousness. He did not desire or choose the tree of life and to derive his life from God Himself. The consequence of this was death of the body and soul which is separation from God. Therefore the price to pay for the sin of trusting Satan more than God was death. Let us consider this example to understand better. When we drive without a driving license and are pulled up by the policeman, we receive a fine. There is only one way to get rid of this fine and that is to pay it. No amount of crying, praying, begging or promise of future adherence to the law is going to remit our debt. Likewise, the price fixed for the sin of Adam was death and only death could be an atonement for it and nothing else. Death is both physical and spiritual, it is separation from God, because God is life and when we are far from His life, we die. When Adam chose the

tree of knowledge of good and evil, we lost the tree of life and we died.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

During creation, death was not planned by God. Through Adam this price of separation from God and physical death passed on to us as well. So, for the remission of our sins, for our redemption and salvation, the price we need to pay is death. We need to die in order to pay for our sins. Instead of delivering us to death as penance for our sins, Jesus was offered as a perfect sacrifice to take our place. In the Old Testament, the priest had to sacrifice every day the atonement for sin which was not even enough. But Jesus once and for all paid the atonement on the cross. Jesus the Christ died on the cross, taking on Him the death, rejection and separation from God that we deserved. He took our place instead of us. The wrath of God because of sin that was our due was downloaded on Jesus as He came as an interceder between us and God. Once and for all He paid it in our place. From our above example, it is like a friend of ours paying the fine to the policeman when we cannot pay it ourselves.

Hebrews 10:11-14 ¹¹ And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’).

Jesus became a sin and a curse on the cross in our place so that we do not have to die. Therefore ‘redemption’ as we have seen already is not a religious or pious term as we have understood it so far. It is a commercial term associated with transactions. It means “repayment of the principal amount of a debt or the act of purchasing back.” Back to our example, If we do not pay the fine to the policeman, we will end up in prison; but redemption through repayment will save us from the prison sentence. When we do pay the fine, we receive a receipt as a token of acknowledgement that the debt is cleared off our name. Not only did Jesus die and become sin and curse in our place and saved us from God’s wrath, but He also purchased us back to God and reconciled us to Him forever. The blood of Jesus the Christ is the proof of payment for our sins. It is an evidence testifying that the debt is already paid for and is valid in front of ⁽¹⁾

God - Whenever we go to His presence we claim the blood of Jesus which turns away the wrath of God and purifies us and makes us worthy.

Our conscience - Whenever our conscience reminds us of our sins, we can reassure ourselves and keep trusting that the price was paid and that despite our weaknesses, His blood is our hope and the one that perfects us.

Satan - Satan means accuser. He constantly plays mind games to

(1) Nee, Watchman ‘The Normal Christian Life’.

always keep us guilt ridden so that we lose focus on the important fact. Whenever he accuses us for our sins, we can show Him the blood of Jesus and tell him that we no longer belong to him and he has no right whatsoever over us anymore as we have been redeemed back to God by Jesus.

The blood of Jesus is the testimony that our sins were paid for already and the cross is the testimony that the sinner died with Jesus, thereby becoming His slave. This is our only righteousness.

Romans 3:22–25 ²² even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.

We enter into God's salvation through His mercy by the blood and continue in His grace. Our righteousness comes only through the blood of Jesus and nothing else. If this is the case, then on what basis do we approach the presence of Jesus the Christ? When we initially came into the experience of redemption or came to know Jesus and began our Christian journey, it was easy for us to accept that our sins have been forgiven through His blood. We knew that we were not redeemed by our works or efforts but it was purely because of His mercy and a favor we found in His eyes. Nevertheless, our sinful nature kept generating sin and because of religious beliefs, we assessed ourselves as failures and tried to control ourselves and lead a righteous life through our self-efforts. It was somehow inbred in us that we need to keep ourselves holy. Once we experience His mercy we think that His job is over and that we have to henceforth follow

the ‘Christian rules’, continue in our efforts and works to sanctify ourselves and live the perfect Christian life. Consequently, we lead a disappointed life and in guilt as obviously we are not successful in these efforts. We fail to understand that just as redemption came through His blood, so does salvation as well, and forgiveness of our past, present and future sins is always on the same basis i.e., the blood of Jesus the Christ. Just as our initial approach to God was through trust in His blood, so should be our every approach, always. Right till the very end our only hope, trust and basis for approaching God and our righteousness will only be through His blood.

Let us consider some practical experiences to understand this better. When we have a bad day wherein, we may have lied to someone, lost patience with our children or snapped at our spouse, we assume that we have sinned or fallen short of God’s holiness and therefore decide that we are unfit to enter His presence that particular day. On another day, when things may have gone quite smoothly, where we could read the Bible and pray for enough time, have been patient with family etc. we think we can present ourselves before God. But sadly this is the deception we live in.

Leviticus 10:1-3 ¹ Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. ² So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. ³ And Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD spoke, saying: ‘By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.’” So Aaron held his peace.

Nadab and Abihu entered the presence Of God to worship Him. They burned the incense which was a commendable act. But why

did God consider it as profane and strike them down? Is worshipping God evil enough to be killed by Him? No, the difference is the basis on which we approach to worship Him. If we go by trusting our incense i.e., good deeds and self-righteousness, then it is abominable in His sight. The only token that makes our entry and worship in His presence valid is the blood of Jesus. Anything else is not commanded by Him. How can anything other than His blood be holy and worthy enough to enter His presence? What can match up to His blood that can please Him?

Leviticus 16:1-3 ¹ Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered profane fire before the LORD, and died; ² and the LORD said to Moses: “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat. ³ “Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of a young bull as a sin offering, and of a ram as a burnt offering.”

Therefore to enter God’s presence we must be holding fast to and trusting the blood of Jesus. We need to be clothed by Jesus the Christ Himself in order to be pleasing and presentable in His presence and this is the condition of His slave. A slave is one who is united and is one with Jesus Himself and this comes only through His blood which is our only righteousness.

Hebrews 10:19-20 ¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh.

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.

If we walk in the light as His slaves by trusting Him then His blood will purify us from all our sins. Nevertheless, we all need to get one basic fact right: the blood of Jesus is not a tool, a tool that can be ‘used’ and handled to attain certain purposes of ours. It is not a means to an end. If we approach it in this way, we are abusing the life of Jesus and the very cause of it. The blood was shed with all the pain and suffering to give us His life so that our souls can be saved. He did not give up His very life so that we can abuse and use His blood as a magical spell towards our situations, wants and desires.

1 Corinthians 11:27-30 ²⁷ Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. ³⁰ For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

Just because blood was shed by Jesus years ago it is not at our disposal to handle it free willingly or to be used whenever we please. The worthy manner to approach the blood of Jesus is to simply beg and cry for His mercy so that through His blood we will be eligible to receive and trust Him as our King and master and submit as slaves in order to be united with Him. This is the one and only purpose of the blood. Any other cause or purpose attached to it is a deception.

Exodus 24:3-8 ³ So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the LORD has said we will do.” ⁴ And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ Then he

sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. ⁶ And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient." ⁸ And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words."

Moses declares all the judgments of God to the people of Israel, and they with one accord give word to do all that the Lord has commanded. Then, Moses takes the blood and sprinkles on the altar and again reads to them the covenant, to which the Israelites reaffirm their promise to do and be obedient. Only after this, Moses sprinkles the blood on the people and pronounces the covenant on them. Unless the people declared their obedience and desire to stay in God's covenant, the blood was not sprinkled on them. Here, we would like to explain what obedience actually is, as it is a commonly misunderstood concept.

Obedience is often considered as having to do everything that is written in the Bible without any hesitation. In this case, Satan, diseases, wind and waves would be ideal examples of obedience. Not once have any of the above creatures of God disobeyed His commands. If obedience involves us only having to merely keep doing whatever He says, we are no different from nature or evil forces. Rather, Jesus set the perfect example of obedience, where He obeyed the Father unto death on the cross. He did not blindly convince Himself into accepting or doing what God had kept for Him. He feared the separation that the cross with sin and curse was going to bring between Him and His Father. He clearly had a will and a desire different from that of the Father in the garden of

Gethsemane. The attitude with which He approached His will was the one that set Him apart. He submitted His will to the will of the Father. It is easy to obey God when situations are pleasing to us. However, when we need to obey under unfavorable conditions, we do so as a mandate and out of fear of consequences. We never want to acknowledge the true state of our hearts in these conditions which most often is grudging or discontent. Though we have a different viewpoint or desire from God, we never want to address it with Him, rather, we try to hide it and still obey. It is of no use to obey a command with deeds or conduct and have a heart that is opposed to and in disagreement with it. God sees the heart and not the face. Jesus, though being God Himself, addressed His human heartfelt anxieties and concerns with the Father which made Him a perfect example of obedience.

We know an incident when God and Satan had a conversation about Job. God considered Job as blameless and upright but Satan argued vehemently and challenged God's own judgement. God then granted him the permission to interfere in Job's life. Here, Satan was clearly under God's authority and obeyed God's command. Nevertheless, He had a different opinion from that of God's and he approached it with arrogance and a challenging and rebellious nature. Physically he did obey but his heart was never in tune with God or submissive to Him.

In the New Testament, the Greek word translated as 'obey' is 'hupakouo' that literally means "to hear under, to listen attentively." It simply explains that we need to go to God with our desires and will, though they are different from His' and submit them to Him. This attitude is the one that showed the clear contrast between Jesus and Satan.

We may not find God's commands always pleasing enough to obey with a whole heart, but we need to acknowledge it and present it to God like Jesus. We need to explain our apprehension but acknowledge that "it is not my will but your will be done." This explains our desire to obey as well as our transparency about our attitude which is the truth. Instead, like Satan, if we obey with a double face, we are simply serpents and brood of vipers like the Pharisees, which is of no use, no matter how big the sacrifice was made in order to obey.

Therefore, in the above mentioned verse, God does not refer to the legalistic obedience but speaks about the condition of our hearts which will decide the establishment of the new covenant between us and God through the blood of Jesus.

To conclude, without our desire and commitment to trust Jesus as our King and abandon ourselves into His hands as a slave to a master, the blood of Jesus i.e., His very life will have no role in our lives. Without the blood of Jesus we have no righteousness and stand nowhere with God and hold no rights to approach Him.

Chapter 5

ETERNAL LIFE

Whenever we talk about eternal life, the common traditional understanding is, that it is the life that Christians are going to live forever and ever in heaven with God. It is always associated with a future life after death. But on proper study using the original Greek text, there were some astounding revelations on this concept. It simply does not mean everlasting life in Paradise alone but holds much deeper significance and truth which is the centrality and essence of Christian life. The lack of this revelation and knowledge has been the basic foundation of religiousness in Christianity. In order to forego religiousness the first and foremost truth we need to know is about eternal life.

‘Eternal’ means “valid, lasting, enduring or existing at all times (timeless), perpetual, characterized by abiding fellowship with God.”⁽¹⁾ So, what we have is just a partial understanding of eternal life i.e., life after death, but are ignorant about the more important and practical aspect of it.

In the English language and maybe in a few other languages as well, ‘life’ is represented with just one common word for all forms of life. But in Greek, ‘life’ is mentioned with three different words unlike English. They are represented as follows:⁽²⁾

Bios – This Greek word refers to the life of the physical body and is where we get the word ‘biology’ from.

(1) Merriam-Webster English online dictionary.

(2) <http://biblesforamerica.org/greek-words-for-life/>

Psyche – This Greek word refers to the psychological life of the human soul, that is, the mind, emotion, and will. It is where we get the word ‘psychology’ from.

Zoe – This Greek word refers to the uncreated, eternal life of God, the divine life uniquely possessed by God.

So, our life or soul is represented with the word ‘psyche’ and God’s life is represented with the word ‘Zoe’. Now if we read certain words of Jesus Himself with this insight and clarity of ‘life’, we will realize its importance.

John 12:25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If we read this verse again with the original transliteration, it goes like this, “He who loves his life (psyche – soul) will lose it, and he who hates his life (psyche – soul) in this world will keep it for eternal life (Zoe – life of God).”

This verse indicates that eternal life is the life of God Himself. Our five senses feed the soul with all the information they perceive based on which the soul decides, desires and functions. Our soul is the seat of our knowledge, likes, dislikes, desires, wants, wishes, attitude, sentiments and decisions which control us and basically represents our human and moral nature. The soul is contaminated and manipulated by all the distorted information that the devil injects into it, the classic example for which is the serpent’s deception of Eve regarding herself, God and their relationship. This soul, which is under the deceptive control of the devil, without our own knowledge, is in opposition to the truth and nature of God. The soul that was created to love God is functioning in the exact opposite manner and against Him. Coming back to the verse, Jesus says that unless we

lose our functional and falsely perceived selves/ lives, we can never have eternal life i.e., the life of God. The contaminated soul needs complete renewal which is possible only through His truth and blood and this is losing our lives (as we saw in the previous chapter, the blood of Jesus means the life of Jesus). Let us try to understand this further.

1 John 2:25 And this is the promise that He has promised us – eternal life (Zoe).

Note that in the above verse God talks about ‘eternal life’ as the promise of God. Now, note the following verses which explain what eternal life means.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life (Zoe). No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

1 John 1:2 The life (Zoe) was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life (Zoe) which was with the Father and was manifested to us.

John 17:3 And this is eternal life (Zoe), that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

It is very clear from the above three verses that eternal life refers to Jesus, the very life of Jesus Himself! Surprisingly all the above verses clearly say that this life of Jesus is something that we can live and experience now, which John says was manifested to him, has seen, is bearing witness to and declaring it. Let us understand this concept better from the following verse:

John 6:40 “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life (Zoe); and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Note the order of words written in this above verse. **1.** Everyone who sees the son and believes in Him **2.** may have eternal life **3.** and I will raise him up at the last day. If eternal life is one to be lived in paradise, the order should have been **1.** Everyone who sees the son and believes in Him **2.** I will raise him up at the last day. **3.** and he may have eternal life. Unless we are raised from the dead we cannot enter into ‘eternal life’ if we go by our traditional interpretation. So here Jesus makes it very clear that unless anyone perceives and believes in Him and has His life in Him, will never be raised up at the last day. John repeatedly emphasizes that knowing Jesus the Christ and experiencing Him is eternal life. He implies it as a very vital and exquisite relationship between us and Jesus. Hence, it is evident that eternal life is something we have to receive and live in this world in order to live in the one to come. Let us look at the creation of the garden of Eden and the incident that followed to understand this further.

Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:15–17 ¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

We have read this passage hundreds of times but we invariably interpreted and focused on God’s prohibition of the tree of knowledge and man’s disobedience regarding it, but we neglected the most essential truth and heart of the matter i.e., the tree of life. We only

talk about the forbidden tree but never give a second thought to the tree that was inconspicuous but rather was the center of Eden. What or who was then the tree of life? Following our previous reasoning, if Jesus himself is the life, the tree of life consequently is the ‘tree’ from where we can receive Jesus. It is by now very clear that the fruit of the tree of life is Jesus. Thus, man since Adam till now has two choices in front of him; to either choose Jesus, the way, the truth and the life or to operate on his own using the knowledge of good and evil. Eating the fruit of knowledge doesn’t mean biting an apple as it has been figuratively represented. It is a more serious implication of us making the choice of using our knowledge, capacities, resources, experiences and strengths to analyze and plan any aspect of our lives instead of choosing to focus and trust the Lord of life, Jesus. This choice to surrender ourselves to His life is what will heal our souls, as we cannot consciously get rid of the contaminations and we may not even be aware of their existence in the first place. Unless this life of Jesus the Christ dominates us and becomes our life, then we by no means can adhere to the truth. This is what He says in the following verse:

Genesis 3:24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

As long as we keep making the choice to possess the knowledge of good and evil, or in other words to decide what is right and wrong by ourselves, then God Himself denies us Jesus the Christ. How sad and lost can that life be? And almost all of us live this life assuming that we are righteous. Therefore, when He says “seek first My Kingdom and My righteousness”, He simply asks us to choose to look to Him rather than ourselves because only His life, His blood can be our righteousness.

Revelation 2:7 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life (Zoe), which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

In the above verse, there is a pre clause to eat from the tree of life, ‘to him who overcomes’. Unless we overcome, we can never eat from the tree of life. What do we need to overcome? Satan? Evil powers? Darkness? Our temptations? Adam and Eve lost the tree of life because they did not endure in the trial. All of us face trials and temptations. It is not necessary that we need to be victors in these trials or defeat Satan. It is not our job to defeat evil powers. The battle is God’s. What is required of us is the choice to surrender to and stay steadfast in Him instead of depending on our ways and efforts. After Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God came in their midst. His presence did not leave them but the way they handled it incurred them God’s curse. We may fail in our trials and temptations, we may sin in our weakness but instead of blaming others or the situations or hiding from God, if we fall at the feet of Jesus and surrender to Him in all honesty, then we overcome. Jesus knows our weaknesses and struggles. The Bible is full of examples of great men of God who failed, yet found grace and were not rejected by God. When Nathan the prophet confronted David about his sin with Bathsheba, the way David handled his sin in the presence of God decided the outcome. He did receive a punishment but he did not lose God’s love and presence like Adam and Eve did and this is because of the beautiful prayer of submission and cry for restoration he makes in Psalm 51. A similar constant submission of ourselves with awareness in His presence based on our only hope, i.e., His blood, is endurance. To those who endure in this manner, He definitely gives to eat from the tree of His life.

1 John 5:11-13 ¹¹ And this is the testimony: that God has given us

eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

John cannot be more direct and precise than this. He has summarized the entire concept of 'eternal life' in simple terms in three verses. He says that God has given us eternal life and this life is in Jesus. Therefore, if we abandon ourselves to Him then we have His life. Most importantly, he says that he is explaining these things to us so that we know that we have (present tense) eternal life, meaning that it is not something to look forward to after death but it is a present experience, so that in this assurance we should continue to believe in Jesus.

Colossians 3:3,4 ³ For you died, and your life (Zoe) is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life (Zoe) appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

If we die to ourselves (psyche), our new life (Zoe) becomes hidden with Christ in God as He becomes our life and only we can then have fellowship with Him and appear with Him in glory. Our lives needs to be hidden and overcome with His life and this is the true relationship of a Christian with His King Jesus. Any other factor governing this relationship is no relationship at all.

We hope now you understand what we mentioned in the beginning of the chapter that without the truth about eternal life, Christianity has indeed become a religion.

Chapter 6

CHRISTIAN LIFE – THE FOUNDATION

In light of the basic foundational principles of Christianity and Kingdom of God that we have discussed so far in the previous chapters, we shall see what exactly Christian life is in this chapter. We will be basically explaining how the concept of ‘slaves of Jesus the Christ’ incorporates into our practical life and how these principles translate into a process that God takes us through in order to be a Christian. In other words, once we recognize Jesus as our King and dedicate our hearts to be in His Kingdom as His slaves through His blood, then there is a process that every Christian undergoes that is initiated and perfected by God which becomes the ‘Christian life’. This is the enduring process of salvation that works till the end. The entire life of a Christian is ensconced by Paul in Romans 6th chapter verses 14 to 16.

Romans 6:14-16 ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. ¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! ¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

We will start by studying verse 14 in this chapter:

To begin with, we need to understand certain key words in this verse in order to realize what God means by this statement. The key words here are, ‘sin’, ‘law’ and ‘grace’.

SIN

The first word we would like to meditate is ‘sin’. Most of us have created a checklist of ‘dont’s’ that we have learnt from society, parents and religion and consider that as long as we avoid this checklist, we are holy. For e.g. we think that if we tell a lie to escape a situation or have little trust in God and as long as we do not murder, commit adultery (the deadly sins) etc. we are doing well. We are comfortable in many ‘insignificant sins’. But read the following verse:

Revelation 21:8 “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

We never consider cowardice, lack of faith or lying as abominable and worthy of eternal fire like adultery or murder. What has gone wrong is our definition of sin. Because the country law punishes murder, it is considered a ‘deadly sin’ whereas lying or borrowing money is just ignored because it has become the accepted way of life and is not legally punishable. Our soul is dead and it cannot realize that all these are equally sinful. We are biased by the system of this world and have set it as our spiritual standard. This is an indication that our souls have adapted to the system of the world dominated by Satan and not to God’s righteousness. So the origin of sin is in the soul. We cannot avoid sin by ‘do’s’ and ‘dont’s’. Unless the soul is sensitive to God’s righteousness, our deeds are forever going to be sinful. So what exactly is sin?

Romans 14:23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; *for whatever is not from faith is sin.*

Sin is our lack of trust in Jesus as our King. Every time we are acting

in our own wisdom and ways without trusting Jesus, we sin. It need not always be the deadly things as mentioned above. It could be our routine daily activities that are not rooted in the trust of Jesus the Christ. For e.g. it could be us putting our trust in money, prosperity, benefit of education, an influential person who can make things possible, superstition, traditions, cultural beliefs, pastors, priests, prophets, temples, ourselves and our capabilities, talents and even misinterpreting the Bible to suit our personal agendas etc. Sin is best explained from the original Greek text. There is no direct word used as ‘sin’. Wherever the translation uses the word ‘sin’ the actual Greek text is ‘hamartia’. Hamartia means ‘missing’ or ‘absence’. It is explained as ‘missing the target/ focus’. Our focus and target is Jesus the Christ and to be His slave in His Kingdom. As long as we miss our commitment to this focus and do anything else, it becomes sin; simply meaning, that as long as our souls are not cleansed by His blood and does not have His eternal life, whatever we do will be sinful. So if we want to avoid sin, then the only way is to surrender our souls into His hands for healing and restoration.

LAW

First let us see what law is as mentioned in Romans 6:14.

Now, law is a command; a command given by God which is meant to be obeyed without any question. For e.g. let us take idol worship. As per the law, we are sure that none of us are blind enough to have any idol in our houses. We usually take extra care and precaution to cast away every idol from our premises that could appear in any form (on a polythene bag, on a gift card etc.). If you look at this theoretically and by the book, yes, we do not worship idols. This in other words is following Christianity as a religion and not as a principle or in the

heart. Why? Because an idol is actually defined as:⁽¹⁾

‘A greatly admired or loved person’

‘An object of extreme devotion’

‘A hero’

In simple terms, anything that is kept in equal position to Jesus the Christ is an idol. Now if we look at it from this point of view, we are sure that there are many things that occupy even a higher position than our Lord Jesus in our lives. For example it could be our parents, spouse, children, job, money/wealth, self-esteem, traditions etc. So, physically we may be casting out idols to the best of our knowledge but in our hearts we are still idolaters.

Jesus talks about law explicitly and expresses the whole crux of the matter in just one verse:

Matthew 23:23 “Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith.”

He also says “I came to fulfill the law.”

Matthew 5:17 “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

So here what looks like, are two contradicting statements by Jesus if you take the above two verses into account.

In the second mentioned verse, Jesus says that He came to fulfill the law and not to destroy it but in the first one He rebukes the Scribes and Pharisees for giving much importance to the law but introduces

(1) Merriam-Webster English online dictionary.

the crux of law. So what is He trying to say? What point is He trying to make? He simply says that law is important, but if we follow the law through deeds alone as a set of rules to abide by, then we are like the Scribes and Pharisees and we are condemned. He uses three key words – ‘justice’, ‘mercy’ and ‘faith’. He clearly says that though law is important, these three core substances of the law are ‘weightier’ and are of much more importance than the practicing of law. So, if we try to observe the law by ignoring justice, mercy and faith, then we are under a deception of false holiness. On the other hand, if our only hope is the blood of Jesus then He, through His justice, mercy and faith, will make us righteous. The law can never give us this. Jesus says that He came to fulfill the law, because only in Him we can find the ‘weightier matters of the law’. So, instead of keeping our focus on the law like the Scribes and Pharisees, if we shift our focus to Jesus then He will make us followers/ doers of His law even without our own knowledge. He had to fulfill the law because we missed justice, mercy and faith and only in Him we will find them. The basic work of the devil is to subtly steal the three fundamentals of the law and keep man constantly in the race by running in circles to observe the law with no finish line. So Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and restore the three keys of the law to man. If we see it in the perspective of Old Testament versus New Testament, we can understand this better. In the Old Testament, God’s covenant always demands us to fulfill a requirement from our part in order for him to operate from his end. For any sin a man commits, he needs to pay a penance, an offering or sacrifice and there is always a consequence for every action. But in the New Testament, He paid the penance and in return He only requires submission and total surrender of ourselves for Him to operate from His end. He only focuses on us turning to Him rather than having to do anything by our efforts so that He can make everything possible. We hope, now

you understand the difference between following the law as it is and following it through Jesus the Christ.

Paul says, “You are not under the law.” We know that law is not evil and neither is obedience. Then why does he say we are not under the law? He simply implies that law, is not action or deed oriented. It is about the three vital substances of the law and the spirit behind it. Both Jesus and Paul are not encouraging law because if we focus and try to be a slave to the law, then Jesus leaves us and we lose His presence. This is clear in the following verse:

Galatians 5:4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

How much more powerfully can this be expressed? Note the word ‘attempt’ used by Paul. Therefore, to summarize, if we think we can keep or obey a commandment by our strength or will power, e.g. to not lie or to have more faith and we try to achieve it by ourselves then we forsake Jesus and defeat and lay waste the very purpose of the cross. But if we submit our desire to not lie or to have more faith or to be free from lust etc. into the hands of Jesus, then He with His justice, mercy and faith will make it possible.

1 Corinthians 2:6,7 ⁶ However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory.

Do you think that this mysterious wisdom of God that Paul writes about can be perceived and realized by us through the physical practicing of the law? No, only Jesus through His justice, mercy and faith can reveal it to us and make us righteous.

Now what are justice, mercy and faith?

We will discuss justice and faith first as they are inter-connected followed by mercy.

1. Justice

Justice simply means righteousness. Being just or righteous means, being freed from guilt or sin and living a life that conforms with the truth. So how can we be righteous? Do you think by following a set of moral values and rules/ laws we are righteous? Not at all. We hope all of you understand this because not one among us is without failure in this attempt which has led to guilt, self-accusation and frustration. As long as we try following the law, we are self-righteous which is the spirit of a Pharisee and one which Jesus hates the most. If we allow ourselves to be controlled by God and submit to His righteousness, which comes only through Jesus the Christ and not through self-efforts, only then will we be made righteous. This is exactly what Jesus mentions in:

Matthew 6:33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

Note the word ‘His righteousness’ which is what we never bother to understand and hence completely ignore. So, what is God’s righteousness? As we have seen in the previous two chapters, the blood and life of Jesus Himself is our only righteousness. We will not explain this again as we have discussed this in detail already but it is noteworthy to mention this exemplary verse by Paul again.

Colossians 3:3,4 ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

If we think that by our good conduct, moral values, Bible reading, prayer, church going, tithe offering etc. we become righteous, how worse has the spirit of deception blinded us? Here we would like to stress on the fact that we are not disregarding or are contemptuous of Bible reading, fasting, praying, tithing etc. All these are very important and essential for the growth of a Christian but what we would like to underline is the importance of the intention behind these deeds. If they arise as a result of love and to strengthen our relationship with Jesus, they will be acceptable in His sight. The relationship as such is not formed through our self-efforts but is built by His blood and life. The foundation or cornerstone is Jesus Himself. The common mistake we make is that we use the above mentioned activities in a legalistic manner, believing that they are necessary for us to be righteous or are signs of our holiness. We consider them as mandatory duties of a Christian and make them a ritual which is what we are mentioning as religion. We use them often as tools to accomplish a duty that is required of us so that we can see blessings, avoid adverse circumstances or inherit heaven. Handling these with such intention instead of perceiving them as necessary elements to strengthen the relationship, renders all of them as useless and empty. They are not duties to fulfill, instead should be born out of love and thirst for this relationship with Jesus. The intention and focus behind anything we do should be His love and relationship as there is nothing supreme than this for His children. His life in us should induce our prayers, Bible reading, tithing, church going, fasting, offering to the needy or whatever else it may be.

2. Mercy

Mercy and grace of God are two steps in the process of God's

salvation for us. They are not separate entities but inter-related.

Habakkuk 3:2 O LORD, I have heard Your speech and was afraid; O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy.

When we live outside the Kingdom of God, not choosing the redemption through the blood of Jesus, then the wrath of God is upon us. We often live in complete blissful ignorance of this truth because we have a conscience that is dead. A dead conscience cannot understand or first of all realize when it sins. The blood of Jesus is the one that has the capacity to revive and bring this conscience to life. In other words, God's mercy is one that will arise and awaken us to the reality that we are under His wrath and worthy of destruction. It gives us the realization that we are under the yoke of sin and instills in us the desire to be yoked with Jesus and to be His slaves. To understand better, we can meditate the incident of the ten lepers who came to Jesus to be cleansed. Observe their prayer very carefully below.

Luke 17:12,13 ¹² Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. ¹³ And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

The ten men were lepers, unclean, living a terrible life of shame, seclusion, desolation and social stigma. But they did not ask Jesus for healing. They first address Jesus as their master. They realized that Jesus is the Lord, owner and King and they begged for His mercy. Why were they able to make this prayer? It was because they understood why they were lepers and what was needed to be free off the curse. In the Old Testament, we come across Gehazi, Elisha's servant who eventually was supposed to be His successor

and a mighty prophet just like Elisha was after Elijah. But once he developed a love for the perishable things of the world more than the love for the creator Himself, he was struck with leprosy. We also become lepers in our lives (ridden with debt, shame, guilt etc.) though not necessarily with a literal physical manifestation, because we forsook the Kingdom of God. Here the ten men clearly understood that they were lepers because they were far from the Kingdom of God and so they begged Jesus for mercy. Mercy is basically God bringing us to the acceptance of our true state of unworthiness as sinners to even eat from the breadcrumbs that fall from His table. Our nature, character, mind and personality live in a ditch and garbage like a swine, far from God and only through His mercy can we realize this and commit our lives to His redemption through His blood. Unless God is merciful to us we never enter into this realization. Mercy is the opportunity given to us by God to be in His Kingdom as His slaves and children through His blood. Unless our dead conscience is revived through the blood of Jesus the Christ, we can never be in a position to accept His grace. God's mercy, i.e., His undeserving compassion, forbearance, favor and pity, is the one that opens the opportunity for this repentance. We hope now you understand why instead of praying for healing the lepers prayed for mercy. They understood the valuable truth that physical healing is perishable and useless to the soul, rather God's mercy was the one that was going to save their souls into eternal life. Therefore, our cry for His mercy is the first step into His righteousness.

3. Faith

The Bible gives much importance to faith because we can never be righteous without faith and as a consequence we can never please God. Often we do not know how to have this faith or what it is.

Romans 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

Hebrews 11:16 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

It is very clear here that unless we have faith, we will never be righteous. So, what is faith? From our own past personal experience, we have understood faith as having to convince ourselves that God exists without any evidence. It is an effort we have to put into channeling our minds to accept and convince ourselves without any question. Sometimes it is easy and sometimes it is exhausting because the human mind needs evidence to believe. Because of this wavering mind, we often run in search of miracles and visual evidences to prove that God exists and is powerful. Yes, God also answers through miracles initially, but sadly most of us stop there and do not move ahead. As a result, when at a certain point the impression the miracles left on us, our motivations and enthusiasm seem to have vanished, we lose all hopes and the little belief we have. We are not successful often in the struggle to maintain our motivation at a constant level to believe God. And this is true by a common definition of faith itself: “strong belief in doctrines of a religion based on a conviction rather than proof.” So, then why do we have the struggle? To answer this, we would like to draw your attention to the original Greek text. Wherever in the New Testament we find the word ‘faith’ in English, the original Greek word used is ‘pistis’. ‘Pistis’ means “trust in others, faith, persuasion of a thing, confidence, and assurance.”⁽²⁾ So ‘pistis’, the original written word

(2) Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon.

which is now translated as ‘faith’, does not mean a ‘strong belief’. It means Trust! Likewise in the New Testament, we find the verb ‘to believe’ in many places synonymous to faith. The original Greek word used in these places is ‘pisteou.’ Again, ‘pisteou’ means “to trust, put faith in, rely on a person.”⁷ Therefore, wherever the words ‘believe’ or ‘faith’ is used, the original word used and the meaning implied is ‘trust’. So, what is ‘trust’? It is the confidence in God deriving from reliance on Him as a consequence of His qualities. To believe or to have faith according to our past deep-rooted understanding is a function of the mind which involves us having to think and convince ourselves of His existence, goodness, power etc. It is based on our thoughts, feelings and emotions. It is a human intellectual or emotional effort based on our strengths. Whereas, trust is a function of the spirit where we confide in and rely on Him without any self-effort. It is our abandonment based on God’s Kingship and authority. It is an abandonment of our souls into His hands so that He can act according to His will. It is to realize that without Him we can do nothing and to start giving up our ways and trusting His ways. It begins with Him and is basically a change of focus from us to Him.

In order to know what is the kind of faith we need to have, let us see the various forms of faith described in the scripture as below:

A. Faith of demons

Do you know that demons have faith in Jesus?

If we think faith is all about believing that God exists and is great, that Jesus is the Son of God who is capable of doing great miracles and we need to tremble before Him, then we need to think again.

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble!

Mark 3:11 And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, “You are the Son of God.”

How many of us worship the same way as the demons and assume that we have faith or that we are Christians? Likewise, many of us think that because we read the Bible and have memorized verses, we are Christians. But Satan knows the Bible as well by heart.

Matthew 4:5,6 ⁵ Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”

B. Faith of the lawless and unrighteous

We do not become Christians because we go to church and Christian meetings, sing songs, praise God etc. The Pharisees and the Scribes were the strictest and best attendees of the gospel meetings of Jesus Himself! But eventually, the Romans who were pagans did not condemn to crucify Jesus but the very Pharisees. Judas was a part of the ‘church’ of Jesus but ended up betraying Him as well.

Fasting, incessant prayer and regular tithing do not make us Christians either.

Luke 18:9-14 ⁹ Also He spoke this parable to some who

trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ ¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

We are not Christians or believers if we cast out demons, prophesy or perform miracles.

Matthew 7:22,23 ²² Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

C. Faith of the disciples of Jesus

‘Common believers’ like us, often have faith similar to the faith that the disciples had. The disciples agreed to follow Jesus blindly even before they could see any evidence of the worth of following Him. They followed Him wholeheartedly and were often passionate to be a part of His work. There was a tremendous amount of sincerity, affection and desire in their hearts for Jesus and His truth. They had a close relationship and communion with Jesus. At this juncture, when Jesus revealed to them that their faith was not sufficient

to sustain them in a crisis, they just could not comprehend it because emotionally they were strongly attached to Him and they couldn't imagine ever abandoning or denying Him.

Matthew 26:33-35 ³³ Peter answered and said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.” ³⁴ Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” ³⁵ Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And so said all the disciples.

But when they indeed faced reality, one denied Him, one betrayed Him and the rest apart from one, fled the scene of crisis and left Him abandoned. Why did their confession of faith falter in the crisis? We often are sailing in the same boat as well. We vow to follow Jesus no matter what may come and are sure that our faith is unshakeable. We believe that we love God wholeheartedly and we will never let go of Him. It does arise from a pure and loving heart and out of genuine intentions towards Jesus and following Him. However, when we face some crisis, we falter, question and behave in an opposite manner to our confession. Why does this happen? It is because we have founded our faith on our knowledge, strength, convictions and emotions. We create our faith and try to sustain it, convinced that this is required of us by God. Little do we realize that this will lead to a complete collapse of the faith that we are building and preserving.

So, what does Jesus consider as faith or a Christian life? What is the kind of faith that we need to have? He says that our righteousness should surpass that of the Pharisees and most of us just like the Pharisees have placed Christianity

into a strict regimen as seen above. We practice and preach Christianity as a religion. Jesus did not come to this world and take all the pain for just merely creating a religion. Christianity is a relationship, a personal and intimate one with Him that is based on us abandoning our souls to Him as a slave to a King. The truth is, we are not able to trust Him and comprehend Him as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. We are not able to surrender our souls to Him. We still rely on our kingdoms, knowledge and capacity. Our inability is never a problem with Jesus because that is our nature inherited from Adam. The problem is that we do not want to admit it to ourselves. Jesus knows all our weaknesses; it is we who do not want to acknowledge it. We continuously try to convince ourselves that we trust Him and when we face reality and life as a practicality, we dramatically fail.

Consider Abraham from the following verse. The first time God made Him a promise about Isaac, he could not believe his ears but he did not convince himself or God of something that he could not do. He fell down and laughed in front of God and openly asked Him to bless Ishmael instead, as he did not believe that he would ever have a son through Sarai. He frankly expressed his unbelief.

Genesis 17:15-18 ¹⁵ Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶ And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.” ¹⁷ Then Abraham *fell on his face and laughed*, and said in his heart, “Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” ¹⁸ And Abraham

said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!”

Many of us blame this attitude as irreverence or arrogance shown by us towards God. Rather, it is simply being honest and transparent with God that we are not able to trust Him as our King and that we need His help rather than lying to ourselves and Him. By now we realize that though we know we need to trust Him, we are unable to and that is the fact.

Mark 9:24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

So what is the solution?

D. Faith of Jesus the Christ

Hebrews 12:2 looking unto Jesus, *the author and finisher of our faith*, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Considering the Pharisees, Judas, the lawless and even the disciples, where had they failed? What was missing? The demons believe Jesus and His power. But they never will trust Him as their King nor abandon their souls to Him. Similarly, the Pharisees believed in the works of God, but their goal and foundation was their own kingdoms and used God’s name to attain their personal agendas. The disciples, though with a genuine heart believed in Jesus, founded their faith on themselves and their strength. They believed that they were in control of their faith and that it would withstand through self-motivation.

We need to understand that the author and finisher of our

faith is not ourselves but Jesus alone! Without Him, we cannot have any faith. He is the source of faith. So, unless we come into this experience of ‘faith of Jesus the Christ’, true faith can never become a reality in our lives.

Romans 3:22 (King James version) Even the righteousness of God which is by *faith of Jesus Christ* unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.

Galatians 2:16 (King James version)¹⁶ Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the *faith of Jesus Christ*, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the *faith of Christ*, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Paul says here that the righteousness of God comes only through the faith of Jesus Christ. So what is ‘faith of Jesus Christ?’ How does it bring about God’s righteousness? We know that our faith is weak, unstable and emotional. But what about the faith that Jesus had on His Father? Jesus knew that He would be tempted by the devil and would be ridiculed, questioned, called as a demon, law breaker and revolutionist by His own people. He knew He would be betrayed, left alone, persecuted, hung on a cross naked before His own mother and above all, forsaken by the very heavenly Father whom He obeyed. At this point, what could He believe and what could He trust? Paul says that Jesus obeyed God unto death, death on the cross. The worst part of all this suffering was not the pain and the shame but the disconnection and complete severing of Himself from the Father. Jesus always said that He and the Father are one, united in a perfect union, function together and can never be separated, but the cross

did. Everything He knew, His very confidence was shaken and was under question on the cross. The cross was working not only against Him but against His very essence, foundation, principle and faith. When He died, there was no hope and He even had to go down to the Hades. At this point, He still chose to trust His God or rather abandon Himself into His hands, even when He had forsaken Him. When there was no hope of deliverance and everything had gone beyond redemption, He still chose to depend on His Father and His will than having it His way though He desired for a way out. Do we trust Jesus with this blind abandon? Despite all the shame, suffering and desertion, He committed His Spirit into His Father's hands. This is the 'faith of Jesus Christ' and this was the defeating of Satan on the cross; to die in the hands of God despite being forsaken, rather than live without suffering and out of His will.

Luke 23:46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last.

This same faith of Jesus is what we find in the three young men Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace.

Daniel 3:16-18 ¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

No wonder the Son of God was walking among them with such commitment from the three men. We all seek deliverance, healing and miracles and seek God because He should make our expectations a reality. If we do not see an answer or a solution to our problems, we assume God is not at work. If so, we are like the Pharisees and are on the way of Judas and have lost the son of God, because we trust God only for the measures He takes to ensure the fulfillment of our will.

So, now that we know what ‘faith of Jesus Christ’ is, is it possible for us to have this faith by ourselves? No, it is not and that is why as discussed already, if we surrender our souls to Him in exchange for His ‘Zoe’, then our lives becomes hidden with Christ in God and He becomes our life, so His faith becomes our faith. We hope now you get the full picture. This is called ‘faith into Christ’ where Jesus’s faith becomes ours through His life which He puts in us, thus uniting us to Him, which will be our only righteousness.

Colossians 3:3,4 ³For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

GRACE

The last key word we would like to focus is ‘Grace’.

Grace is defined as “unmerited divine assistance given to humans for their regeneration or sanctification.” It is basically a step in Christian life where God works in our lives or ‘assists’ us so that we can be transformed into His image, have His life and be eligible to become part of His church i.e., His bride.

Matthew 11:29,30 ²⁹“Take My yoke upon you and learn from

Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Once we make a wholehearted commitment or choice to be united with Jesus and start taking up His yoke because of His mercy, then the system of this world or the yoke of sin that was our habit starts becoming uncomfortable for us. In other words, the life that was previously comfortable starts becoming disagreeable, distasteful and a thorn. When we desire to stay in His yoke (His Kingdom), He pours His Holy Spirit in us and begins a stepwise transformation beginning with grace.

Zechariah 12:10 “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”

The Holy Spirit can transform us and lead us into salvation and inheritance of sonship. We can neither understand nor comprehend how this will come into play because it is His doing and function.

John 3:8 “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

We often lose heart that despite our commitment to God, we never see any spiritual improvement and see ourselves in the same state as before. But we need to be aware that once we make the choice or decision because of His mercy, then the rest is controlled by

Him through His Holy Spirit which we should not try to analyze or understand. We can never understand how and when we are being transformed but assuredly He makes it come to pass. Once we make our choice for Him to be our King and us to be His slaves, then He through His Spirit will lead us into salvation. It is His function. On the other hand, if we focus on or try to approach the Holy Spirit considering ‘it’ as a token of power, a weapon and answer to all problems, then it is basically forgery and a blasphemy against Him and His Spirit. Jesus gives us His Holy Spirit only for the sole purpose of establishing a personal relationship with us to perfect us into His salvation as His children. It is His grace. There are no other earthly ‘benefits’ attached to His Holy Spirit.

John 16:7,8 ⁷ “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

The role model who experienced this in the Old Testament was Noah.

Genesis 6:8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

How did Noah find grace in the eyes of the Lord? There was a difference between Noah and the rest of the world. Whatever pleased the world did not please Noah. This is grace; the setting apart of us from the system of the world. In other words, grace puts us in the right position with God, whereby what pleases Him becomes our pleasure and what displeases Him becomes our displeasure. In Joshua chapter 7 we read about Achan who withheld some abominable things for himself against God’s command. No one realized the problem or the sin till God’s wrath was aroused to destroy Achan. If we have grace,

we can realize our sin (our missed focus) before His wrath destroys us. Hence, grace which is basically God's gift, is a process of correction, purification and restoration to separate us from the system of this world and unite us with Him. How does this process work?

We normally desire or make a confession as Christians to 'love God with our full heart, mind, soul and strength.' Hence, God tests us, our faith and this confession by the fire. In other words, our choice to be united in the yoke of Jesus will be perfected by God so that we enter His salvation. This perfection and restoration plan of God for each one of us is His grace.

Daniel 12:10 "Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand."

1 Peter 1:7 That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

This testing by the fire i.e., grace is the one that is going to purify and refine us as pure gold, making us worthy of salvation.

Job 23:10 But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.

But at this time of trial, often our confession falters and we become unstable. He knows that this testing and sanctification is painful and we do not have the strength to withstand it. Therefore, He has given this empathetic solution:

Hebrews 4:14-16 ¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot

sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

We have Jesus who had been in our exact situation yet was without sin. So when we fail or falter in this testing and purification through grace as written in the above verse, we simply need to submit again instead of looking at it as a failure. We have to acknowledge the setback and approach His throne of grace persistently and hold steadfastly our confession, which is exactly what Peter did and Judas did not, and we know the end of both these men.

John 21:15-17 ¹⁵ So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” ¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.”

We often wonder why Jesus asked Peter the same question thrice when Peter always gave the same answer. We would like to analyze this verse from the original Greek text to understand. In Greek, there are two different words used in place of ‘love’ in the passage we read above.

Agape – It is the noblest word for love in the Greek language. It is not kindled by the merit or worth of its object, but it originates in its own God-given nature. This love keeps on loving even when

the loved one is unresponsive, unkind, unlovable, and unworthy. It is unconditional love.⁽¹⁾

Philo – This love speaks of affection, fondness, or liking. It is a love that responds to kindness, appreciation, or love. It involves giving as well as receiving; but when it is greatly strained, it can collapse in a crisis.¹²

When Jesus asks Peter the first two times if he loves Him, the word He used for ‘love’ is ‘agape’. When Peter replies both times, the word he used for ‘love’ is actually ‘philo’. It has been translated as love, but Peter was very clear in His answer to Jesus that he was ‘fond of Him’. But, when Jesus asks Peter the third time, He resorts to the word ‘philo’ which translates as “Peter, are you fond of me?” He does not use the word ‘agape’ as the previous two times and Peter replies to this as usual. Let us read this verse again using the literal translation from Greek to get a clearer understanding.

John 21:15-17 ¹⁵ So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You (*I am fond of You*).” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” ¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You (*I am fond of You*).” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me (*are you fond of Me*)?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me (*are you fond of Me*)?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You (*I am fond of You*).” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.”

(1) <https://www.mcleanbible.org>. Greek words for love.

So, the point here is, Peter made it very clear that his heart was not capable of love. He was honest and transparent in his confession at the throne of grace. He did not try to hide the truth or lie because he wanted to please Jesus. That is the reason why the third time, Jesus descended to Peter's level and asked Peter if he was fond of Him and made Peter's answer a positive one.

Proverbs 28:13 He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

We are as well not capable of love because only God is love and unless His love is poured into our hearts and He and we become one, this love is not possible. What we have is 'affection' and we try to convince ourselves as otherwise. Are we going to hide it so we fall short of grace or are we going to be transparent about it? During this process of testing by the fire, i.e., grace, Jesus exposes all our weaknesses which could be our inability to trust Him, our habit of lying or the lust we have etc. and keeps purifying it by the fire though it is painful. This is the process that Israel went through in the wilderness. Constantly God was exposing their basic nature and lust through various problems and that was painful to them. These problems were the thorns that were indicating an underlying problem which was lack of love for God in the souls. Similarly, if at this point, like Israel we cry for deliverance and pray for the thorn to leave us, then we are asking God to remove His grace from us. Instead, if we just trust and submit our souls into His hands, He revives it by addressing the underlying problem. Grace is nothing but the process God uses to purify and purge our souls from the love of this world.

John 3:20,21 ²⁰ "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But he

who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

Grace of Jesus brings us into His light; and light will always bring to open what is hidden or unseen. Likewise, the light of Jesus will expose all our weaknesses, shortcomings and deeds so that they can be dealt with according to His will. It is our choice to either allow it or deny it. This is simply walking in the light of Jesus. If we do not wish for our deeds to be exposed, it indicates that we are evil.

The way of God is to make us weaker. He will never make us stronger or braver to face our situations. He destroys even the little strength we have to depend on ourselves. He strips off our every self-reliance, sufficiency, capability, confidence and assurance we have on ourselves and our talents. When we are made weak by Him, He exhibits His strength in us. Paul, who was persecuted the most, understood this truth.

2 Corinthians 12:9,10 ⁹And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

God does not strengthen us, rather He perfects His strength in us when we are weak. This is why Paul is rejoicing and is proud of his weakness because when he is brought to nothing, Christ becomes his everything. Of course it is very difficult to let go of ourselves in this manner. Nevertheless, if He desires it, He will make it come to pass in the manner that He chooses to, by His grace.

We also need to know when we lose grace.

Proverbs 29:1 He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

It is clear that God is the one who rebukes us. The book of Proverbs exhorts us not to despise God's correction. So, if we despise God's correction and consider it as undeserving and we keep hardening our hearts, then He will remove His grace, whereby we are removed from His yoke. Again, our hearts are dark, hard, dead and disobeying. We cannot force our hearts to be under His grace. We can only submit this flawed heart into His hands so that He will make it submit to His grace.

We hope by now **Romans 6:14** in its entirety makes sense and gives a clearer understanding of the truth. “*For sin* (which is the absence of Jesus the Christ and His life from our souls) *shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law* (our self-efforts do not lead into salvation and we cannot please Jesus with our justice. Instead, His justice, mercy and faith through His life in us become our righteousness) *but under grace* (the process of restoration of our souls to Jesus the Christ because of His assistance through suffering, discipline and correction).”

Therefore, Paul is clear that sin will not have dominance over us as we are not dependent on ourselves but on the grace and hand of God, which will be uniquely applicable to each of our lives according to His will.

Paul continues to explain how this process of grace and the complete restoration of a slave plays out and what is our role in it in the next verse, **Romans 6:16** which we will be discussing in the following chapter.

Chapter 7

CHRISTIAN LIFE – THE PROCESS

We have seen in the previous chapter that we are freed from sin not because of the law but because of God's grace. Moreover, so far in this book, we have seen in depth about the importance and principle of the blood of Jesus in a slave's life and how it becomes our only righteousness. It is to a certain extent easy for us to understand that the blood of Jesus is the one and only answer for our sins and when we first met Jesus, it was quite easy to believe and experience it. However, what most Christians are not aware of or do not 'sign up' for, is the cross of Jesus. Plenty of gospel is being preached on the easy solution the blood of Jesus offers us and how the blood is the ticket to heaven, but rarely it is preached about having to 'take up our cross daily'. The cross of Jesus seems to us like an ancient story which is now just a historic distant fact. Little have we realized that the blood of Jesus is not valid without the cross. We are able to accept the blood of Jesus as a present day truth applicable to our lives but we consider the cross as a bygone biblical story. The basic problem we have or the root cause of many our struggles is that we do not value and do not understand the significance and the practicality of the cross. The blood and the cross will never function without the other.

We all have started our Christian journeys and believe that the blood cleanses our sins but we do not have an answer as to why if we have been redeemed and saved by Jesus, we are still sinning. Most of our struggle is, we find our love for the world unchanged or even getting worse or a force present inside us that is still actively producing sin.

We try as we have seen till now, with all possible efforts to overcome this, but we fail and condemn ourselves in our guilt. This is because we do not know that our inner man, i.e., our sinful nature is still alive and no matter how much ever we believe in the blood of Jesus or in our efforts to overpower it, it is not sufficient to deal with this inner force.

Romans 7:18-20 ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹ For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

So what is the remedy? The answer for our sinful nature or flesh, is it having to die on the cross.

Galatians 5:24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Our dying or crucifying our flesh on the cross of Jesus is the only deliverance for our sinful inner man. It needs to die in order for us to rise again as a new creation. If the blood of Jesus is His life, how can His life become ours unless we suffer, die, be buried and raised up with Him? This seems quite confusing and complicated. Indeed, all of us were on the cross 2000 years ago with Jesus. It does not mean that this truth was long ago accomplished and it will magically be applicable to us at present, rather it is something we need to live as our daily practical life and this is Christian life. Some of us have heard about 'crucifying our flesh' but are perplexed as to how to do it. It is not something that we can consciously 'do'.

Hence, in this chapter we will delve into the details pertaining to this concept and how God works this out in our Christian journey.

We will begin with Romans 6:16 as our key verse for this.

Romans 6:16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

We would like to discuss again a few key words to understand this verse and the connection to the 14th verse better. To begin with, let us understand what it is to obey.

OBEY

We have already discussed the concept of obedience in the 4th chapter but here we will discuss in detail obedience pertaining to a slave's practical life. Paul says obedience leads to righteousness. Many of us think that doing whatever God says without doubt and question is obedience. If so, demons, the wind and the waves obey Jesus but that does not make them either righteous or 'children of obedience'. We always associate obedience with the deeds but obedience in fact is a function of our hearts. Many of us wonder why Satan still torments us or evil spirits have not left us. This is because we do not know what obedience means. Let us begin with a few examples to make this concept easy. We trust that money is the only source that can put food on the table and we panic and try to borrow money when we run short of it. But Jesus says "without me you can do nothing" and "man shall not live by bread alone." We say we do not worship idols but in simple instances like this we do not realize that money or our knowledge is our idol. A couple had called us to pray for their son who was showing hyperactive behavior and had been diagnosed with probable autism. We asked them why the boy needed prayer and the parents were quite distressed because the boy had a disorder. Why had these parents panicked? Because they did not realize that each one's race is different as ordained by God.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Each person's life is unique. Jesus never healed two blind men alike. He had a different process for each one. If autism is the way, the race that is kept for the child, we are unable to accept it because the world says otherwise. Based on a few children analyzed, some characters are termed as normal and some that do not fit into the majority or human standards and analysis are termed as 'autistic' by science and this is what we believe. We fail to see hyperactivity as 'normal' in the sight of God and are unable to apply the following commandment in this situation.

Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

We are unable to rejoice in what God has given us but always look for something more or something else because as long as something does not fit into our expectation we do not accept it as the will of God or as perfect. For example, if a child is interested in football, he is forced to learn mathematics or physics and when he does not excel, we brand him as dull and break his confidence. We need to analyze if we are helping someone run his/ her race or serving as a hindrance. So, obedience is giving into God's will and putting our will to rest. What is God's will?

John 6:40 "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

The will of God is for us to trust Jesus so that we may have His life. We need to understand that the life of each one of us is not the same as that of anyone else; hence, only Jesus can be our referral point. So, when we submit to God's will, the process to destroy our flesh is initiated by Him. No man is devoid of flesh; the difference is, as long as we submit to the will of God, i.e., to be in His kingdom and to be His slave, He is in control of our souls and keeps leading the blind in the ways they do not know. If we make a choice to leave Him and His Kingdom, then the things of the world become our joy and He gives our souls into destruction. The soul is controlled by our five senses. The five senses keep feeding ideas and information to the soul in order for life to be comfortable. If our soul is controlled by these five senses, then lust dominates us. On the other hand, if it is controlled by Jesus the Christ, then His blood and life keep it alive and it is able to do what pleases Him. Once we surrender our souls into the hands of Jesus, then the process of purification begins, wherein He starts healing our souls and this is grace that we discussed above. So, ultimately obedience is nothing but submitting ourselves to the process of Jesus's grace; it is an attitude of our minds and hearts.

While we are in this painful process of obedience and grace, we need to know certain principles or guidelines to endure it, so that we do not murmur, are not clueless or become discouraged. This can be better understood from Hebrews 12:1-11. Each verse explains why and how we need to endure this process of grace through obedience. We will meditate these verses in detail below.

Hebrews 12:1-11 ¹Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us *run with endurance* the race that is set before us, ²*looking unto Jesus*, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him *endured the cross*, despising the

shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. ⁴ You have *not yet resisted to bloodshed*, striving against sin. ⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, *do not despise the chastening* of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶ For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” ⁷ *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons*; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but *painful*; nevertheless, afterward it *yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it*.

Let us see the explanation of the above passage:

God has given us numerous witnesses and the entire scripture is full of it to prove that He is the King and we are His slaves i.e., we belong to Him. This should be our constant reminder in our race, which is the process of salvation. Though Jesus is the King of all Kings, for the sake of God’s will, He became nothing from being everything and endured the worst form of shame and suffering on the cross.

Philippians 2:6,7 ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of bondservant (*slave*), and coming in the likeness of men.

Jesus was in the image of God, but gave up the status of equality with God and took the form of a slave and the image of man. Lucifer wanted to exalt himself to be like God but Jesus who is God, made Himself of no reputation. This is the example we need to follow in our submission into the hands of Jesus and this is our inspiration when we look unto Jesus. We judge Lucifer but often forget that we ourselves desire and strive for greater and better things in life to put us in a better position than we are. Jesus took upon Himself all the blasphemy, shame, disgrace and chose to ignore it for the sake of His father's will. In contrast, we often find ourselves working for a good name and reputation and hurting when it is damaged. Jesus never promised us a good reputation. He said in Matthew 5:11 that if we need to be in the Kingdom of God, we will be reviled, persecuted and falsely accused. Following Jesus means taking our cross and following Him daily. His cross was shame, disgrace, brokenness and suffering. When Jesus the Christ, the holiest and righteous one who knew no sin took all the shame, ridicule and disgrace from sinners, how much are we willing to suffer for His sake and our salvation? When we face such a situation, we become weary, exhausted and lose heart. This just indicates that we are trying to endure this process in our flesh and are not rooted in Him, due to which, after a point of time we give up. This situation is common in many of us who seek deliverance. There are a few who stand strong and determined that no matter what the suffering, they decide to keep their focus on Jesus and keep Him supreme than the shame and suffering. The way God delivers them is beyond description. Whereas, many others become discouraged with the time and pain of the process and give up and alas, lose the joy of the Kingdom of God. If Jesus Himself endured His cross, who better than Him can be a role model for us to endure ours?

Isaiah 40:31 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.

Like Israel if we refuse to wait on the Lord and murmur instead, then we are destroyed in the wilderness. Peter says that Jesus obeyed His father until death, death on the cross. The commitment expected from us by Jesus is nothing short of this. Note the word in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 4, ‘resisted to bloodshed’. We need to be firm in our commitment to this process to the point of shedding our blood. Many of us expect ready-made comfortable solutions from Jesus once the commitment is made. In fact many of us were coaxed into following Christianity because Jesus was portrayed as one who grants all our wishes. But the scripture says otherwise. Salvation does not come without a commitment to obey God at the cost of our very lives.

Continuing further onto the 5th verse of Hebrews chapter 12, Paul introduces a new word in this process of obedience: ‘chastening’. ‘Chastening’ means “to correct by punishment or suffering, to discipline, to purify.” Many of us are not able to digest or attribute this character to Jesus. We think Jesus is full of love, so life will be easy and we can never come to terms with the fact that He Himself will make us suffer or punish us. Instead, He clearly asks us not to dislike this chastening or in other words, He asks us to love being chastened by Him. He says that He chastens and scourges (means of punishing that causes great trouble and suffering) only those He loves.

By character, we prefer to cover up our sinful nature. If we try to hide our sinful nature, then we are refusing His disciplining and correction and in turn refuse His love. Many of us, when we commit

a sin, ask for forgiveness. The motive behind this is we basically beg God to let us go without correction. This is not forgiveness. In the Greek text the original word for ‘forgive’ is ‘aphes’ which means “to send away” “to let go.” So, when we ask God to forgive us, we basically are asking him to “let us go or send us away.” Rather if we pray for mercy and grace, He will ‘forgive us our sins’ i.e., through this process of chastening, he will un-tie the sin from us and send it away from us and bring us to His way and tie us to Himself.

Matthew 6:12 “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”

Understand this insightful prayer of Jesus. He clearly says “Forgive us our sins (let our sins go away from us), as we forgive our debtors (as we let go of those who sinned against us).” This is forgiveness, where Jesus divorces us from our sins but not us from Him. He unties our sins from us and unites us with Him. Unfortunately, we Christians have manipulated this prayer as “forgive us” (instead of Him forgiving our sins) and have lost the complete truth.

Luke 18:13 “And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’”

This is the model prayer by a sinner that justified Him. When we ask for grace and mercy, He will forgive us our sins (separate us from our sins) but not us (He will not separate us from Him).

But why do we need this chastening?

Chastening is only for sons. If we despise this chastening from Jesus, we declare that we do not want to be His children. We do not chasten strangers’ children, do we? Correction and discipline are only for the offspring. Jesus wants us to be His children, His heirs and co-heirs in the inheritance. Unless we are perfected into His sonship, we are

ineligible to be partakers with Him which is possible only through His grace of chastening. If we want to be exempted from correction and left without disciplining, then we are illegitimate children or in other words children of a harlot. The original Greek Bible uses the term here as ‘bastards’. We hope this needs no further explanation. We accept the human fatherly correction as the norm and rule, but we do not associate the same principle with God who is our supreme Father. Many of us want deliverance, but not chastening. How can one operate without the other? How can the blood operate without the cross?

So then, how can we readily submit for His correction?

Just the way Job did. Many of us have understood Job’s life very differently from the truth. Job, when he had problems, persistently argued and justified his case by explaining how righteous and just he was and that he had to be vindicated. He missed one point that, though his heart was pleasing to God, his righteousness and justification were not God’s righteousness. It was his self-righteousness that he held as standard. To make him understand this, God allowed Satan to enter his life. After a certain time of Job questioning and complaining, Elihu a young man, contradicts Job and explains the unmatched supremacy of God’s righteousness over his self-righteousness. Elihu speaks unlike the other three friends who actually amidst Job’s suffering, try to accuse him that he is not righteous enough, the very opposite of the lesson that God was trying to teach Job. Finally, God speaks to him from a whirlwind in chapters 38 to 41 in the book of Job, revealing His authority and might as the King! As soon as this realization hits Job, note his reply:

Job 40:3-5 ³ Then Job answered the LORD and said: ⁴ “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. ⁵ Once

I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.”

We simply need to stop our arguments, justification of self-approved holiness and shut our mouths. Till we reach this point, Jesus will not relent. This is how we can readily submit for correction.

Our human fathers can correct us only to a certain point in life. But our heavenly Father is careful about our souls till the very end, till our death. Therefore Christian life is suffering through chastening, that brings peace, purification and salvation of the soul, till the very end. If we submit to this process of grace, then we are under the experience of salvation leading us to the unshakable rights to be His children, the ultimate honor and privilege anyone could have. If we resist this, then we are not in God’s Kingdom and forego the privilege.

Romans 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Jesus knows that His chastening and purging is not joyful but painful and distressing to begin with. Consider a person who starts training as an amateur for any arduous physical activity. He/ she suffers at the beginning. But once it becomes a habit, nothing beats the comfort it could give and he/ she feels incomplete and lost without it. It is no more a suffering but a way of life. Likewise, once we are trained in this process of obedience, this becomes our way of life. Unless and otherwise we are under this process of grace through obedience, the righteousness of Jesus the Christ can never be inherited by us. In other words, we never become Christians or have peace, joy and rest. If we ever dedicated our lives to Jesus, or prayed for the will of God to be done, then whether we are aware or not, this is the process He

takes us through and this is Christian life!

We hope now you understand what Paul means by “presenting yourselves as slaves to obedience that leads to righteousness.”

In addition to these principles, it is also important to know that the devil uses his ploys to get us to slide off this track that we run. He persuades us to give up. We often become restless and lose patience in this process and often want to question God “how long?” He will constantly use every means to convince us that we are good enough Christians and do not need this chastening. But, instead of listening to this voice, if we only ask Jesus for His blood i.e., His Life and constantly submit ourselves into His hands to be corrected and disciplined in order to be rid of the things that are against His word in our lives, then He will take control and lead us according to:

Isaiah 42:16 “I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them.”

The second word we would like to explain from verse 16 of Romans 6 is:

PRESENT YOURSELVES / SUBMIT

In many instances above, we spoke about submitting into the hands of Jesus. James speaks about submitting as well in His letter to the churches. We have seen how we need to endure submission through obedience so far, but what happens during our submission? How does this bring about righteousness? In order to understand better, let us meditate 1st Corinthians chapter 3 verses 10-15. We will go through this verse by verse.

1 Corinthians 3:10,11 ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

All of us are eager to build our spiritual lives according to our strength, capabilities and talents. But we need to remember that the foundation can be only one, i.e., Jesus the Christ. Consider Barabas who was freed in the place of Jesus and the two thieves who were punished on the cross. Barabas lost the grace and was let go free to continue to lead his life in the world without any suffering. Instead, the two thieves through punishment found grace but consider how both of them used this grace. The first thief asked to be delivered like all of us do. So, what was wrong with that? The first thief wanted to be out of the chastening. He wanted to forego the cross and tried to use Jesus to deliver himself from the cross. He basically abused God by confessing that He did not know what he needed. But the second thief used the cross for his salvation. On the cross he submitted to the will of God and preferred the Kingdom of God over deliverance. The question is, in our attempt to build our spiritual life, how are we using the opportunity given to us? Are we using Jesus for our deliverance or to be in His Kingdom? If we prefer not to lose the glorious opportunity to be in God's Kingdom and be His slaves and children, then we are on the way to salvation.

1 Corinthians 3:12,13 ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

In order to build our spiritual life, we sacrifice many of our valued possessions on the altar of Jesus. Whatever we consider as gold or silver, we try to sacrifice, for e.g. money, talents, habits and often our very lives. We often say that we have committed our lives to Jesus and His work or will. Many of us do not understand the magnitude of the resolution we make. Just because we have given our lives to Him, it does not mean that our house will be built on the foundation magically. Rather, once we submit our lives, the fire will test, critically appraise the character and the worth of the submission. While being tested by the fire, either our sacrifice will survive the fire or will be destroyed. What will be spared? This fire from God will spare only the things that we have inherited from Jesus. Whatever is in the image of God or whatever is from the creator Himself will survive the test. Every thought, wish, desire or habit we have inherited without Jesus will be burnt by the fire. Submission is in our choosing this process than choosing a way out for a comfortable but lost life. This entire process is grace or in other words we can call it as ‘baptism by fire’.

1 Peter 1:7 That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Job 23:10 But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.

Many of us think that speaking in tongues or having an experience close to the day of Pentecost is what qualifies as ‘anointing by fire’. It is nothing but acknowledging that He is the God who purifies us and that we come forth as gold once tested and therefore submitting to it.

1 Corinthians 3:14 If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

If our submission on the altar survives, then we are like the wise man who built his house upon the rock. So, basically in submission we are preferring to give whatever we have inherited from the system of this world or in other words, whatever we inherited by missing Jesus the Christ to be burnt on His altar and this is what makes us His slaves. This is abandoning of our souls into His hands. If we do not abandon our souls to be tested by the fire in the day of grace, ultimately we have to do it on the day of judgment into the eternal fire where it will no more be testing but destruction. We need to decide whether we are going to present ourselves and prefer this process in the days of grace or suffer eternally.

What is the reward if our submission survives the testing?

Mark 10:29,30 ²⁹Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, ³⁰who shall not receive a *hundredfold* now in this time – houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with *persecutions* – and in the age to come, eternal life.”⁽²⁾

It is interesting to note the words ‘hundredfold and with persecutions’. What does this mean? It does not mean that He will give us hundredfold of the material blessings we lost i.e., replace one house with hundred houses. If we sacrifice ourselves as slaves on the altar choosing Him being our Lord and King as more important than any material blessing, then He exposes, burns and destroys all the

(2) A better translation of ‘in the age to come’ according to the Hebrew interpretation would be ‘in the Messianic age’. The Messianic age for the Jews was the period of time starting with the coming of the Messiah, which means the hundredfold blessings mentioned in the verses above apply to all of us who have received Jesus and believe Him as the Messiah in our present earthly life. It is not something referring only to a future life in paradise.

ungodly things which are in contradiction to His word and blood. This refinement leads to our transformation without any shadow of darkness because all the things that turn us away from Him will be destroyed by the fire. This pure refined gold is hundredfold blessing because the blessing itself is Jesus the Christ being our life and His love being poured into our hearts and nothing else can supersede this. There could be no greater blessing than God Himself who is love, becoming our life. This in turn should not become our pride and pave way for us to be lured back into the world. This blessing, if at any point gives us pride in our strength or confidence, He gives a thorn to constantly remind us that we need to depend on Him and puts us through the process again. This is called hundredfold blessing with persecution. The persecution is to remind us of our inability and to depend on Him and one that will keep us from deviating off the track we need to run upon.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 ⁷And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelation, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. ⁸Considering this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹And He said to me “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Note that the messenger of Satan was given to Paul for chastening by God Himself!

We can further understand the importance of submission through Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac on the altar.

When God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only precious son, the very promise itself, it makes no sense because God Himself

promised Abraham a son (Abraham never asked for a child), named the promised child as Isaac even before he was conceived, made it very clear that Isaac was the covenant and not Ishmael or any other child of Abraham and promised that Isaac will be the everlasting generation. The very purpose and faith of Abraham's life seemed to be destroyed, because the promise that God Himself made, He wanted it to be sacrificed. But Abraham, instead of analyzing or holding the blessing from the creator, submitted to the creator Himself. This was the abandoning of his soul.

Genesis 22:1,2 ¹ After these things, God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" He said, "Here I am." ² He said, "Now take your son, your only son, whom you love, even Isaac, and go into the land of Moriah. Offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will tell you of."

Genesis 22:15-18 ¹⁵ Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, ¹⁶ and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son – ¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

God acknowledged this as Abraham's obedience and made no more future requirements from him. Immediately after this incident, God considered Abraham to have passed the trial (He says "because you have done this"), stopped expecting, made a covenant and established and explained the execution of the promises He had made previously. The promise became complete and Abraham

entered into the blessing. Abraham had given the maximum sacrifice a human being can give and this completed his transformation. This is the same example that Jesus set for us as well through His faith on His Father on the cross and in His death.

Our lives are still painful and blessings have not come to pass because many of ‘our’ possessions have not become Jesus’s on the altar through His fire yet, and this is the biggest reward of submission.

1 Corinthians 3:15 If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

When the fire of Jesus burns our kingdoms, precious possessions, habits, ways, wisdom etc. we suffer loss. This loss is painful. Despite the loss, there is salvation for our souls and it is assured only through burning by the fire. There is no other way to ‘buy’ salvation. We are deceived if we think just because we have ‘accepted’ Jesus or know Him (knowledge wise) we are saved. If we deny the suffering by the fire, then we deny salvation. There is no other way to salvation other than this testing by the fire. This loss can be through any means as decided by Him for each one of us.

1 Corinthians 5:5 Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

This is a shocking verse by Paul. Many of us pray for deliverance from evil spirits but little do we know that sometimes the path created by Jesus for us to be delivered from our flesh and lust is through the suffering in the hands of Satan. Most of us seek Jesus and try to love Him only when we encounter evil spirits and suffer the damages they can evoke in our lives. Little do we know that it is one of the tools that can save our souls regardless of the physical loss. Yes, in order to save us, Jesus allows us to be tested, tried and suffer in the hands of

Satan, but sadly most of us fall away as we are not willing to suffer loss for our salvation.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.

None of our works or good deeds can save us but only grace. If we possess gifts of tongues, prophesy, performing miracles etc. without this experience of salvation, then Jesus calls us ‘lawless’ and says He does not know us. This is simply in other words, ourselves using Jesus to build our own kingdom like the first thief on the cross instead of Him being our King. We now hope you understand the verses in Matthew chapter 7 where Christ rebukes ‘His servants’ for not actually doing His will. Will of God is nothing but that Jesus must be our King, we need to be His slaves, have His life, trust Him and submit to Him for His disciplining process which is the way for our transformation.

1 Peter 5:10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

After we have suffered a while, we become perfected, strengthened, established and settled. If we lack any of these in our lives currently, then it simply means we have not submitted to suffer yet and have not come under grace to be disciplined. David understood salvation very well and hence made this beautiful prayer of submission which should be ours as well.

Psalms 139:24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Therefore, submission is ourselves understanding God’s love and preferring His rod of correction, i.e., His grace and staying under

His yoke whatever may be the cost, so that we will enter salvation. And in this process of submission, truly our transformation takes place from glory to glory.

The final word we would like to discuss to complete Romans 6:16 is 'slave'. We have already seen who a slave is and how or why we are slaves of the King Jesus. Here we will complete the concept in view of the discussions we have had in this chapter so far and how it reflects in practical Christian life.

SLAVE

There could be no better role model than Jesus Himself to understand how a slave will be transformed or journey into his/ her salvation. So far we spoke about grace and submission that encompass suffering, discipline, correction and perfection, but it does not end here. Jesus suffered for one day on the cross. His suffering lasted one day but he was dead for three days. Similarly for us, death has to follow suffering in order for the process of salvation to be accomplished. Unless we die, we can never enter into God's salvation.

Romans 6:3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Jesus died in the most hopeless situation. He did not die expecting a reward for the 'job well done' and the 'well endured suffering'. We may think that since we gave ourselves to obedience and purification through the fire at the altar, it is enough for us to be restored into eternal life. There has to be a conclusion to our sacrifice.

There will definitely be death and a tomb which will have guards, a huge stone that cannot be moved and all hopes of escape are crushed. But the point is, God watches the tomb. He watches and will not move till the appointed time for us to come out of the tomb

has come. Let us think for a moment how a tomb will be. It will be dark, foul smelling, silent with complete stillness and absence of any indication of life. Likewise, suddenly our life of suffering will eventually become still and hopeless like a tomb. Till we become dust to dust, have no life whatsoever, become nothing, till there is not enough strength left to praise and all hopes of ‘one fine day’ are completely crushed, the process of a slave is not complete. There has to be a complete and thorough destruction and burial of our lives for His life to come to fulfillment in us. In other words, what was burnt on the altar through suffering should have absolutely no hope or capability to rise again. Basically there has to be nil expectation out of the process of suffering. Many of us think that, because we suffer, submit as a slave we will get something back or will have a reward. There is a secret hope for a blessing. Tomb is the one which destroys this expectation. When God commanded Abraham to sacrifice His only promised son, Isaac, He set out to accomplish the task. He must have journeyed in his anguish, but he travelled silently for two days. On the third day he put Isaac on the altar and was about to kill him with no assurance of receiving him back. That was when he saw the ram. Only through this destruction and death like Jesus, we can become partakers of the inheritance and co-heirs with Him. All the deeds of the old Adam have to die completely. The Egyptian nature in us that still dominates us even after leaving the bondage should be dead and buried in the wilderness before entering the promised land, Canaan.

We came from dust of this earth and God removes the dust in order to make us His bride. Dust should return to dust itself, because the life of Jesus and the dust of man can never co-exist. If we are rid of the world and its desires, we do not have the confidence that we will be happy or joyful. We do not want the world in us to be buried

because we cannot imagine a life without it. We cannot come to terms with the fact that a life outside the system of this world could ever be comfortable. This is because we have still not tasted the joy that comes from Jesus the Christ becoming our only system and life. Unless we die, we never become His flesh and blood i.e., His bride. This is the essence of ‘belonging to Jesus’.

Lazarus was dead for four days. Jesus knew he was sick but He never went to prevent Lazarus from dying. He allowed Him to die and went after four days to resurrect Him. It may seem purposeful the way Jesus operated especially when He had the capacity to perform a miracle, but He knew the concept of death and resurrection very well. He was four days late, but still on time. Though it seemed like everything was finished and when there was no hope for any life thereafter, the true and eternal life began for Lazarus. Most often we are worried that we see no change after all the suffering. As Paul writes, Jesus only asked us to ‘present ourselves as slaves to obey’ and not as ‘slaves to change’. Our job stops with submission. Transformation or change is His job. As at the tomb of Lazarus, we can only roll the stone away. Rising Lazarus is His job.

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

The final end point in Christian life is this transformation into a slave who is dead to the world and is alive only to Jesus the Christ, whereby eternal life i.e., the life of Jesus becomes our life. Therefore the blood of Jesus is not only a testimony that He died for our sins and that sin has no more dominion over us, but more importantly is a testimony that we died with Him on the cross.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer

I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Romans 6:8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.

Till we reach this point we always find ourselves in the same situation as Paul in this verse:

Romans 7:21-25 ²¹ I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!

As we discussed in the beginning of this chapter, the sinner in us constantly generates sin out of us and we find it unmanageable beyond our desire and control. Unless the death on the cross and burial with Jesus in the tomb becomes a reality in our lives, we find the sinner in us at constant work. The blood of Jesus and His cross is a testimony that we suffered and died with Him. It is a spiritual reality that happened 2000 years ago but it becomes actual and real in our lives only when we submit our souls into His hands as slaves. It does not become true just by our convincing ourselves or believing that it happened already and we are free. Unless we become one with Jesus the Christ, we can never be one with Him in His suffering, death, burial and resurrection. We, being united with Him and having His eternal life is what will make this a spiritual and practical reality in our lives. The system of the world is to mix different principles in order to create a hybrid which is religion. But the system of God

is to transplant a part, i.e., us, to the new host i.e., Jesus, so that we become one with Him. Unless the transplanted organ assumes and adapts to the same nature of the host, it will be rejected. Therefore, to become slaves means to agree and be willing to give up our wild nature i.e., to put to death ourselves and to become the same nature of God, thereby yielding His fruits. Unless we die with Jesus, there is no possibility of rising with Him or being glorified with Him. Many of us want to rise with Jesus and share His glory but little are we willing to die and be buried in the first place.

Romans 6:3,4 ³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Colossians 3:3,4 ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

John 15:4-6 ⁴ “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.”

A life free from Jesus is only good for the fire. In our lives, if we still do not see good fruits, then it simply means that we are not yet dead and risen with the Lord of Life. If we are slaves to the world, we continue to see bad fruits, but this is a good sign because He has given us the mercy to see that we are still implanted in the wrong tree.

Matthew 7:17,18 ¹⁷“Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.”

Dying or being buried in practical life is never going to be easy though it seems pretty straightforward and neither will it be a one-day event but a continuous process. The more we die to ourselves, the more we will be transformed into the image of Jesus the Christ and it is His Holy Spirit who is working it. We need to understand that it is a process from glory to glory lasting till the very end of our earthly life. The process only requires our awareness of it and perpetual willingness to stay in it though after a point, it becomes our natural choice as anything outside this seems vain and vapid.

2 Corinthians 3:18 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.

Let us now have a comprehensive look at:

Romans 6:14-16

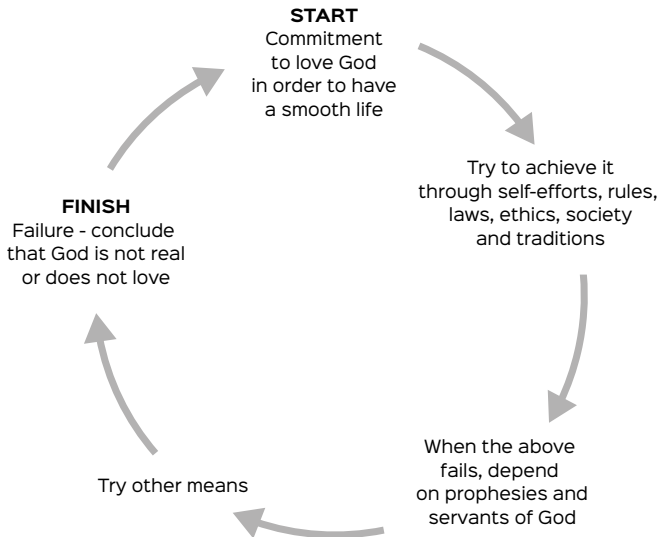
Our focus and center is Jesus the Christ because through His mercy i.e., His blood and redemption, we are not under law but under grace through which we are perfected day by day to be His bride. Therefore, we need to submit ourselves as His slaves constantly at His altar for His purification through obedience and this is His grace. Through our preference for this grace, we are dead to the system of this world and take on the life of Jesus Himself in order to be glorified with Him into His salvation. If we submit to anything else, then we submit to sin and ultimately death. In this process, let us not assume that since we are under grace, we can sin. When we are under grace, we can never sin but as mortals we do sin in our

daily life because of our sinful inner nature and the only solution is to constantly fight the good fight to stay in the process of Christian life and run the good race. Irrespective of whether we see the desired results or not, the point is to endure and holdfast to Jesus at all times so that His grace can be at constant work in us till the very end.

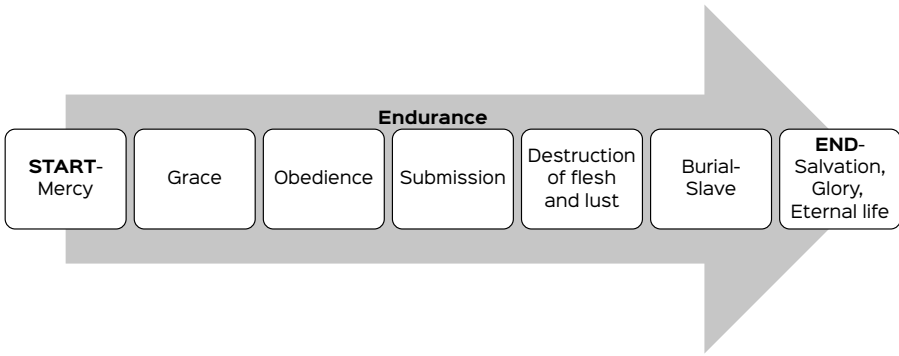
2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

To make it simple and conclude this chapter let us follow this flow charts.

1. Religion – Jesus as an idol in our kingdom.



2. Christian - Jesus as the King, Master and Lord of Life.



In conclusion, the focal point and essence of Christianity is Jesus the King, Master and Lord. The emphasis in our life should be centered on Him and not on us, which is the reversal of religiousness. All of the above that we have explained so far in this book are technicalities, the process and the principles of the Kingdom of God. It is like having a recipe for a cake. It is good to know the recipe but what is more important or what matters is to enjoy the richness and flavor of the cake. It is not mandatory to know the recipe to relish the cake. Likewise, it is good to know the process of a Christian life, because often we are confused, perplexed or live with questions as to what or why something is happening in our lives. More importantly, many of us live a disappointed and dejected life as our expectations of a Christian life and reality do not go hand in hand, and this is because of the wrong perceptions we have regarding the truth about Christianity itself. Therefore, all the above chapters will explain most of the questions and concerns you may have regarding your spiritual life and struggles you face in your journey and encourage you to keep moving ahead with a better understanding of your situation; but what matters ultimately is to enjoy Jesus with total surrender as your King and Lord and taste the joy that a life of a slave can give. You may be

in different stages in this process with respect to various areas of your life. You need not or do not have to analyze and understand where and which process you are in or how you are progressing. It is not the point and it can neither be understood. As we have mentioned before, it is His function. Most often, we may find ourselves in this process even when we never consciously make any choice or submit to it as discussed above. We find ourselves automatically and forcibly thrust into this experience and the only explanation for this is His abundant undeserving mercy and grace that He chose to bestow on us. Because of His love, He through His mercy pulled us into His grace as He is the only one who knows our hearts and operates accordingly. Therefore, it does not matter whether we are aware of the process or not; there is only one message: Jesus is our King and we are His slaves and children and we need Him and His life which is our only hope and glory. To this cause we need to keep surrendering ourselves into His hands persistently till the very end.

Chapter 8

WHY DO WE PREACH JESUS THE CHRIST?

Often we have certain thoughts and doubts concerning our faith which we wonder about, but cast aside and never bother to actually look into them, as we think they are unreligious or unholy and satanic thoughts. We guess most Christians have asked themselves these questions at least once in their lives. “Why should I follow Jesus? What is so different about Him? What is the purpose of acknowledging Him as the one true God? What sets Him apart? Why or on what basis can I tell that He is the true living God?” Often when we preach Jesus, we preach Him for the miracles He can do, the deliverance that comes from Him, the problems He has the capacity to solve and the peace He can offer by meeting all our desires. Don’t other pagan gods do it as well? Don’t we see around us sorcerers, magicians and other idols performing miracles and promising deliverance to people? We may say that as Christians we talk to Jesus and have a personal relationship with Him. Also pagans claim they have a personal relationship with their gods. So, what is different about Jesus? Why should He be preached as the one and only savior?

1. He is the eternal life and love

Jesus did not come to bring a religion by ordaining some sacraments, laws or codes of conduct. The Jews already had all of it. In fact, Jesus was against religious attitude. He came only for one purpose and that was ‘LOVE’. This was His only principle. He came to give

His life and love to us, irrespective of our deserving status, worth and acceptance of it. The key area where most of us have fallen away is, we carried religion as a practice and tradition into Christianity and assumed that this is the life that Jesus came to give us in order to enter paradise. We mixed Christian life and religion together.

Religion is nothing but trying to perform certain duties as a Christian in expectation of some benefits. Many of us convince ourselves that we do not have any expectation when we are keeping up our good conduct. It could be praying, fasting, Bible reading, tithing, doing social work, serving in a ministry, sacrificing, humbling ourselves, performing duties in family with all patience etc. Though we say that we do all this without expecting any returns, we do it with an ulterior motive to at least go to heaven. We use the Bible as our reference and misquote it without understanding the truth, saying, “Even if we give only a cup of cold water to a prophet or servant of God, assuredly, we shall by no means lose our reward.” There is always a certain degree of selfishness involved in all our good Christian behavior and works. This is not love. These are merely calculated moves to achieve our means. Jesus did not come to be manipulated. He did not suffer and die so He can be foolishly subjected to our calculations and manipulations. He came to restore us back to Him so that we can be united with Him as He is with the Father.

This restoration of us to God through His life is true Christianity. His life living in us is our only way to restoration and salvation. When His life has to be united with our life, it involves intimacy and a relationship. A union cannot come to pass between two people, unless there is a relationship, specifically a deeply intimate one. There is a natural, unspoken understanding, love and communication in a true and genuine relationship. This is why Jesus likens the relationship between Himself and the church i.e., we with Him, to that of a

husband and wife. He came to bridge the relationship gap between us and the Father. This is the purpose of the blood and the cross. Nevertheless, the devastating mistake that we all make and have been taught through generations is to 'buy' or establish this relationship with God through our efforts and good behavior. We are either unaware that God is real, Jesus is personal and is looking for a union with us for eternity or we are aware that we need Him, but follow the traditional religious teachings to reach Him. We are blinded to the fact that only His very life can bring us into a relationship or oneness with Him. What we need to realize is that, Christianity is all about relationship with God and Him being personal to us, which is possible only through us surrendering ourselves to Him entirely.

We are unable to surrender because we associate surrender with defeat and uncertainty. Nevertheless, surrendering into God's hands is not defeat but the first step towards inheriting His eternal life. Unless we have completely let go of ourselves and become empty in the hands of God, relationship with Him can never be fruitful. Our nature by itself wants to prove something to God, ourselves and society. We want to be of some good. We want to be worthy, valuable, willful, strong and brave. We are unaware that these very things are our 'psyche' and fortresses of religiousness. We are constantly pushed by the church, elders and family to attain this level of worthiness to demonstrate in front of God. Therefore, we never cease from adhering to our moral ethics and religious duties, albeit our measure of righteousness in the sight of God being just a filthy rag.

Isaiah 64:6 But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.

Since our righteousness, however excellent, can never measure up to God, Jesus came to give His life to us so that when we are united with

Him, what will be exhibited in front of God will not be our filthy rag but the garment of salvation of Jesus. Unless God can see this garment of Jesus on us, He can never be appeased. His wrath will be upon us as long as we try to display our filthy rag instead of hiding in Jesus so that He and His righteousness will be displayed instead of ours. This garment of salvation is eternal life that Jesus made possible for us to relish through His death on the cross.

Adam was created by God in His image, but he still needed to endure to inherit the sonship that was offered to Him, which he never did. As we have seen so far, the enduring process of grace leads to salvation. God has given us the freedom of choice to stay in this process or leave. This process begins by His mercy, continues till the end by His grace and we are under grace if we choose it, but we also are free to leave at any point. Once we leave, we also lose His life, the tree of life like Adam. Because of the choice Adam made, sin and death entered the world through him and he never tasted God's life. This loss of eternal life was against the very purpose of God's creation. The world could not go on forever without inheriting the life of Jesus. No matter the atonements and sacrifices that were made as per the law, the true transformation into God's children was not possible without the life of Jesus. For e.g. children carry the parents' DNA and life. If they carry any DNA other than that of the parents then they are not their children biologically. There can be make-do attempts to adopt. Unless the DNA is identical, the child does not belong to the parent by flesh and blood. In the same way, we are adopted by God as His children, but it does not stop there; in addition, He also gives us His life i.e., His 'DNA' and very nature when redeemed. Unless we carry His life till the very end, we can never continue as His children.

This is why Jesus had to come into the world to restore His life in us, through His blood that we failed at inheriting. No amount of self-

effort or sacrifice will buy us this life, but only our total surrender to Him and desire for intimacy with Him will restore it back to us. This life of Jesus is the one that makes us worthy to be in His presence as His children. We lose God Himself and Christian life is meaningless if we still do not choose His life over our life and submit to it. We can never have a life apart from the life and love of Jesus.

2. We are His children

Romans 8:16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

At this point we would like to ask a very important question. What is the purpose of our life? Why have we been created? There could be many answers: to rule the world, to have back the dominion that Adam lost, to be successful and prosperous, to do God's work, to preach the good news to others etc. But as we have seen in the above chapters, the Kingdom of God is not of this world and God does not require any service from our hands. Then, why have we been created? Why should each and every person be created? There could be numerous people in this world but why have each and every one of us been fashioned and specifically created by God? The answer is simple: we have been created for love, to be children of God conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. Who can be conformed to our image? Only our children and we love them.

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world

does not know us, because it did not know Him.

If we were to ask you “why do you want children?”, there could be many answers - some want children to avoid bareness, to be secured in old age, to have a standing in the society etc. but the one answer from any parent who will have true love in his/ her heart will be that he/ she wants children for the pure joy of loving his/ her flesh and blood. Therefore, God created us to be His children so that He can love us. God had tremendous and abundant overflowing love in Him that He wanted to shower on His creation whom He created in His own image. Though we were created in His own image, we still need His nature to be His children. This nature is His love i.e., the Holy Spirit which is His eternal life. But as we read previously, we rejected Him and went after our evil desires. But His love was unending that He again made a restoration plan through Jesus, which regrettably even now we reject and suffer in pure ignorance.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Repeatedly God refers to Israel as His children and He required them only to trust Him as their King and enjoy the royalty of being His children, but the whole of Old Testament records their rebellion and love for everything apart from God. God was with them, guiding, protecting, feeding and clothing them in Egypt, in all the battles, in the wilderness and in every hopeless situation but their hearts forever did not rest in His love but rejected His dominion and Kingship, thereby the sonship as well.

1 John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.

In light of this revelation, if we rethink about our purpose in life, it is not for us to toil and succeed and accomplish great things for God or for ourselves. It is just to be His children, so we can only enjoy His love. What great peace and rest can this offer us? There is nothing more required of us, but to just surrender to Him and enjoy the richness of His love. Sadly, we Christians have been deceived by many false ideologies and have missed the core truth of creation and God Himself, and are suffering, which is what Jesus refers as “Come to me because you are weary and burdened. Only I can give you rest.” Anyone may think that their purpose is to serve God or be a doctor, a missionary, a teacher etc. All these are our temporary functions in this world. But it is not the purpose of our creation by Him. We may by any chance fail in these functions and be frustrated but the ultimate purpose of God for us is eternal and true peace, joy and rest.

3. He is our only peace and joy

John 15:11 “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”

In the 15th chapter of John, Jesus talks about our personal relationship with Him. He talks about how we can do nothing without Him and we need to be totally dependent on Him to have anything good in us. After emphasizing on this relationship, He then speaks this verse where He tells that He is saying all these things so that the joy that He has can become ours through this relationship. Jesus basically implies that He alone can be our joy; joy that is full and complete. Just before talking all this in the 15th chapter, Jesus says in the previous chapter:

John 14:27 “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

In both the above verses, He says that He is giving us His peace and joy that are not according to the worldly standards i.e., based on the pleasures of the five senses, incomplete and wavering. Though we are Christians, most often we lack peace and joy just like everyone else. There is nothing that sets us apart from the rest of the world. We have the same problems, difficulties and struggles, if not even more than the others. We are like the world running after and searching for peace and joy. We wonder how it could be possible to live in this world with peace and joy in the middle of our personal life crisis, joblessness, sickness, family problems, unsure future etc. We feel dry, worn out and are thirsty for rest and comfort. But Jesus says:

Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸ “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.

He is promising us His rest not just after death but in this world itself. He promises us that His rest will be the solution to our weary, worn out and burdensome lives. But He gives a precondition to this rest: “Come to me, take my yoke and learn from me.” When we fulfill this condition, we find rest, but He clearly says that this rest is for our souls and that He does not give rest like the world does. He does not say that He will fulfill all our desires so we can find rest and peace. In the world, peace, joy and rest depend upon having a secured job, being sickness free, being married with children, owning a house and having a secured future. For us religious Christians it could even mean being sin free, working for God with all our resources and leading a perfect holy life. The list goes on. But sadly, most of us as

Christians oppose God by desiring such materialistic, self-decided or self-centered things and decide that He has to fulfill our list of requests for us to be at rest, which is rest as per worldly standards. But note these important words by Him in the above verse “you will find rest for your souls.” He did not say “you will find rest for your body or for your life, future, family etc.”

We may still not understand what He means by rest for our souls. The problem we often have is that our deepest and most sincere desires are misplaced. We were created to love and worship God. There was no other purpose in Him creating us. Sadly, we left His one purpose and are chasing deceptions and think or convince ourselves that we love God; but then there are other priorities that occupy our hearts. These misplaced priorities become a burden to us even without our own knowledge. God does have a place in our lives, but not as the only true King. He is often a means to an end to our priorities. It could be any materialistic blessing or even an aspiration for a perfect holier life. There is nothing wrong in desiring for a holier walk with God or working for Him but the mistake we make is, we think it is we who have to walk this life and we put the focus on our holiness or our ministry and miss Jesus and reliance on Him in the whole picture. This just becomes a self-kingdom. We need not explain again that self-efforts and self-made rules for a holy life is not Christian life, rather it is abandonment to Him and trusting Him, whereby His love, faith, justice, righteousness and truth will become ours. We have nothing to offer or work for Him when our very breath itself is His grace. Just as we start our Christian journey through His blood, it continues till the end on the same basis. How many of us can still follow and love Jesus selflessly even if He will not grant us anything, even our own lives? Will we still be able to stand steadfast in Him even when our desires will never be fulfilled and we will be a failure

in this world? Our souls by nature, inherited from our forefather Adam, are programmed to love the world and ourselves more than God; thereby our deepest and sincere desires are often our own idols and our souls are simply not able to love God.

This is what David writes:

Psalm 41:4 I said, “LORD, be merciful to me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against You.”

David has understood that his soul that is supposed to love God as the one and only love, is sick and therefore, he is missing his focus and his life in God. So, he is crying for mercy and healing of his soul. Through this verse David also clearly communicates to us that he cannot heal his soul or control and divert it to love God but can only submit his desire for a restored soul into the hands of God. By now it is clear that we lack peace and joy because we missed the very purpose of our creation. As long as we miss this target and try to control and build our earthly kingdom, we are forever bound to the prince of the world and it is obvious that we will never find rest.

Yes, we may walk through the fire, wilderness and deep waters in the process of our transformation but through this, He separates the world from our souls and this is true rest. The world and its concerns are forever a burden because the ruler of this world is none other than Satan. Because of our submission, Jesus will change our deepest desires and love from this world and the things of the world to His love and life. This will bring us His joy and peace which is true rest. This is why He says that His yoke is light and easy.

Now, let us see what He means by the preconditions He mentions in Matthew chapter 11 for us to enter His rest. In the original Greek text, the word used for ‘rest’ is actually ‘anapausin’. It means two

things 1. Stop 2. Recreate or refresh. Therefore, when we go to Him as mentioned above, He removes the yoke of the world that is burdensome and heavy on our necks and places on us His yoke that is easy and light because we are under the control of the King. His yoke will deliver us from the yoke of the world and requires no self-effort from us but a complete reliance on Him, whereby we have nothing to do but surrender to Him and trust Him with all our hearts which gives us rest. His yoke will tow us in His direction and He will teach us His truth whereby wherever He goes we go, what He says we do and His life dominates us and this becomes our Christian life. He stops the system and love for the world in our souls and refreshes it with His life, which is our true rest. Once we seek Him and His Kingdom in this way, He will take care of our worldly life as well. It will stop being a burden in our souls because He has shifted our love to Him and is in control of our earthly life as we are being yoked with Him.

Matthew 6:31-33 ³¹ “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

We hope now you understand why we Christians do not have peace or joy when we are actually supposed to have as it is one of the greatest promises of God. Since we follow a deceptive Christianity and left the Kingdom of God and His rest and have not understood what is meant by taking up His yoke, we struggle like the rest of the world for the things of the world and lack joy in our souls.

CONCLUSION

Our ultimate objective through this book is to introduce Jesus as the Christ to you and share the good news that only He can be your joy, peace and rest and how you can experience and enjoy it; because the sole purpose of our life in this world and creation is to enjoy His pure and perfect love. He is our only life and His love is our only joy. We desire for you to acknowledge Him and surrender to Him so that you may enter His yoke and be bound to Him and come into a mutual and personal relationship with Him where you are completely abandoned into His hands and mercy. His Holy Spirit will guide you into the process that you have to walk through in your Christian life and make you a recipient of His love. Not only do we want to introduce you to Him, but to also to encourage you in this process to not lose hope or become weary and dull, because in the process of restoration and healing of the soul, there will be pain and suffering as we have seen in the above chapters. We have our own personal walk with Him and what we experience we do not force upon you to learn as the dictum as we believe that each one's personal relationship with Jesus is the one that can introduce him/ her to His truth. His truth to you will be your deliverance; deliverance of your soul.

John 8:32 “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Yes, pagan gods may speak back to their devotees but Jesus is the only King who speaks and when He speaks it is deliverance, joy and rest for the soul. His truth is the only one that can set any man free.

No other divination or communication with evil spirits sets any man free or brings love in his life. God is the only King who created us purely for His love. Therefore, the essence of Christianity is to trust Jesus, the King of Kings and feast at His table with Him and taste and see personally that He is good and experience His joy and peace.

Psalm 34:8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

When you dedicate your life to this tasting and seeing that the Lord is good, it does not mean that your life will become rosy and delicious. We do not want to explain this again because we have already discussed this in the previous chapters; but, we would like to present the reality of tasting God.

Luke 9:23 Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*, and follow Me.”

Following Jesus involves two things: denying yourself and taking up your cross, not once but daily!! This is not a one-day affair that most Christians think happens on the day they encounter Jesus and that thereafter life is going to be bright, perfect and great. This denying yourself and taking up His yoke daily is what leads you to taste Him and His goodness that eventually pours His love in your heart. This involves a lot of sacrifice which will be painful because your carnal mind has been your way of life till now. This concept maybe disappointing to some and a shock to others as opposed to the deceptive principles of Christianity which you may have followed so far. The Pharisees did not like this teaching of Jesus as well especially when He said:

Matthew 7:13,14 ¹³“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate

and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

By this we do not mean that you should suffer all your life in order to have eternal life. When you dedicate yourself to this difficult way, though it is arduous, eventually He brings peace, joy and love into your life. If you will holdfast in this dedication of denying yourself and taking up your cross, then He will also be steadfast in giving you His rest. They are like two sides of the same coin. One cannot exist or make sense without the other. Our earthly life simply is a reflection of the condition of our souls. Likewise, just as David prayed for the healing of his soul, if we do not shift our attention from our perishable bodies to our souls, then we are lost, miserable and far away from God’s purpose and Kingdom. This is why His rest, peace and joy are for the soul and not for our sensual and misplaced love of the world. God, with His supreme and royal purpose of loving His children through the sacrifice of His only son Jesus, intended to redeem, restore and save our souls back to Himself. Our endurance and submission to this restoration process which lasts till the very end of our lives is the true tasting and seeing His goodness at work.

Amen!

Slaves of Jesus the Christ

Christianity, sadly has been categorized as a religion just as many other religions in the world. Jesus the Christ did not come into this world to make the greatest sacrifice in order to bring a religion. Rather, He came to bring His Kingdom to the lost and starving mankind. He is the Messiah, the King, but He went on the gruesome cross for the sake of all His lost sheep because of His love. The blood He shed on the cross has inevitably made us His slaves, redeeming us from the yoke of the world. Through His death and resurrection He re-opened the way for us to inherit His life and love. This is the gospel of Jesus. Our only purpose is to continue in His life and be faithful to this love through the process of His grace till the very end which is true Christianity.