

Seeking the Undivided Kingdom of God

(The Following lesson is taken from the book - "The Gospel of the Kingdom of God" – Steve Bray)

We began our study by determining the goal of our faith. And then through Scripture, we have tried to show how God has the power and the desire to manifest a Christ-like nature through our mortal body. We have also tried to emphasize how we do not arrive at the goal of our faith through human effort. The only way someone is able to become like Jesus Christ is through the divine power of God. Our part is to seek out this new life through a dependent faith that is willing to respond to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, as He leads us toward "the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe." (Eph. 1:18-19)

Many believers have become disappointed in the Christian faith because they find little joy in trying to live out the kingdom-life that our Lord has described in His Sermon on the Mount. They do not experience the fullness of Christ's life as promised in Scripture. (John 10:10) Although He has told them they would never thirst again if they believed in Him, they continue to find themselves thirsting after the things of this world and under the bondage of the sinful nature. Without an experiential reality of the heavenly life within their soul, they end up drifting back to the temporal waters of this world in an attempt to find fulfillment in their life.

It will help clarify some of the apparent conflicts in Scripture if we can begin to understand how the salvation of the Lord is not completed in a moment of time. God must lead His people out of spiritual Egypt {the world}, through some soul-suffering in the desert wilderness testing period as He strips away the old self-life, and then into His promised land of Canaan. We cannot receive the abundant fruitfulness of Christ's life and nature until we enter into the promised Sabbath-rest of God.

"Many" are called out from the ways of the world, but "few" are chosen to enter into the divine life of Jesus Christ. Christianity is in serious trouble today because no one is being taught how they must enter into a spiritual pilgrimage that seeks out the life and nature of Jesus Christ. They are being led to believe they have everything Christ has to offer from the moment they

first believed. And consequently, they never enter into the presence of Christ's divine life and nature.

Who may ascend the hill of the Lord {and enter into Christ's life and nature}? Who may stand in his holy place {within His presence}? He who has clean hands {with the flesh-life removed} and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol {of the heart}...Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face {or spiritual image}, O God of Jacob. (Ps. 24:3-4, 6)

Blessed are those whose strength is in you {who depend on being led and empowered by the Holy Spirit}, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage {toward the Sabbath-rest of God}. (Ps. 84:5)

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up {into the presence of His divine life and nature on His holy hill} in due time. (1 Pet. 5:6)

Most Christians today want to remain independent and self-sufficient – a god unto themselves. They do not mind professing a faith in Christ with their lips, but they refuse to give themselves up to become a vessel of His life. The idea of living only for the will of the Father in heaven is too much like dying to self. The fallen nature wants a religion that permits it to have eternal security by making a onetime decision for Christ.

Their religion, however, if it is to be acceptable to them, must permit them to continue living according to their own will. This living by one's own will also includes those who may try to walk in obedience to God's laws through their own strength and efforts, but who still maintain control over much of their existence {self-determination} and so in effect have not really surrendered themselves to be vessels of the life of Christ either. Actually, there are very few who are willing to follow the narrow path taken by Jesus. He gave up His own will in order to live wholly for the will of the Father in heaven. This is why very few people ever enter into participation with Him in His life and nature. Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me {be my disciple – a Christian}, he must deny himself and take up his cross {in a death to the self-life} and follow me. For whoever wants to

save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. (Matt. 16:24-25)

Before the Father will ever fill a believer with the Son's life and nature, the temple of their body must be emptied of the self-life, along with all of its heart idols. New believers are still too full of self to be filled with Christ's life. Although they are able to receive Christ's credited righteousness while they are seeking out the life of their Lord, no one will ever have true confidence on the Day of Judgment (1 John 4:7) unless they have "put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Eph. 4:24)

Once we understand these spiritual principles, we will begin to grasp the importance of seeking out the life of Jesus Christ to indwell us. The command is clear: Seek first his kingdom and righteousness." (Matt. 6:33) The word "first" means there cannot be anyone or anything allowed to prevent us from seeking out the kingdom-life of God. This message is written boldly on every page of Scripture. But not many want to hear what it says. While they may have escaped the ways of the world for a short period of time with a joyful seeking after the Lord, many soon begin to rebel against the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. As a clear spiritual type in the Old Testament, the Lord has shown us how only the few {Joshua and Caleb} are ever willing to be led into the promised Sabbath-rest of God.

... {These} receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away {from their first love and return to the things of the world or} ...they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. {They fall away in the desert testing period because they have failed to seek God's kingdom and righteousness first.} (Luke 8:13-14)

The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to {give up their own will in order to} come... They paid no attention and went off – one to his field, another to his business... For many are called {out from the ways of the world by God} but few are chosen {to enter into His Sabbath-rest of

divine life because they refuse to give up their own will}. (Matt. 22:2-3, 5, NIV, 14 KJV)

So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...during the time of testing in the desert...And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter {into the promised land of inheritance even after being miraculously rescued from spiritual Egypt}, because of their unbelief. Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with {a responsive} faith. (Heb. 3:7-8, 18; 4:1-2)

...Make every effort to enter through the narrow door {of Christ’s divine life}, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to {because they refuse to die to self so they may become vessels of Christ’s life}. (Luke 13:24)

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, “This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” (Luke 14: 28-30)

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling {as you press forward in your responsive faith}, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose {through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit}. (Phil. 2:12-13)

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. {God establishes

His undivided kingdom in our eternal soul when the Spirit suddenly purifies our heart with His Pentecostal power.} (2 Pet. 1:10)

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them {so they are set free from their self-seeking and willful nature}...Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws {in the undivided kingdom of God}... (Ezk. 11:19-20)

God, who knows the heart {He can see when people are responding to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit), showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them {in Pentecostal power}...for he purified their hearts by faith. (Acts 15:8-9)

Jesus has come to establish the undivided kingdom of God in the hearts of all of His disciples *while we remain in this world*. But most of the people who have been called out from the ways of the world refuse to go forward in their faith and enter into the undivided kingdom of God. They prefer to live by their own will in their own kingdom. This is why God does not establish His undivided kingdom in their heart. *He permits us to have the will we have chosen for ourselves*.

Jesus came as a prototype Son to demonstrate how the true sons of God are to give up their own will so they may do the will of the Father, here on earth as it is done in heaven. If we want to be one of the sons of God, like the Son, our only purpose in life must be to “walk as Jesus did” in the Father’s will. (1 John 2:6) There is no other way to live in the undivided kingdom of God.

No one can serve two masters... (Matt. 6:24)

{We must remember, that only}...those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (Rom. 8:14)

I know, O Lord, that a man’s life is not his own; It is not for a man to direct his own steps. (Jer. 10:23)

“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.” (John 4:34)

...I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself {according to His own power and His own plans}... (John 5:19)

By myself I can do nothing...I seek not to please myself but him who sent me. (John 5:30)

For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. (John 6:38)

...This is how we know we are in him: *Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.* (1 John 2:5-6)

The true salvation of the Lord occurs when God establishes His undivided kingdom in our heart by removing our old willful nature. *The very essence of the fallen or sinful nature is our self-will.* This evil comes from the work of the devil. But praise be to God, our Lord has come to destroy the devil's work, so that we may joyously do the Father's will here on earth as it is done in heaven. (1 John 3:8-9) The Messiah has come to establish the undivided kingdom of God in our heart.

When Luke wrote his gospel, he used the term “kingdom of God” when he referred to the Lord's kingdom-life. The term refers to the way of life that God is now waiting to establish in everyone's heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. Matthew, however, used the term “kingdom of heaven” in the same parallel passages. From these interchangeable terms, we can see how our Lord considers the “kingdom of God” and the “kingdom of heaven” to be one and the same. Whether we call it the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven, it really does not matter. What is important is that we seek to have God establish His undivided kingdom within our eternal soul while we remain in this world.

The saints of the Old Testament were only able to come close to the kingdom of God. Even the most faithful and obedient prophets, including John the Baptist, were not able to have God's undivided kingdom established within their heart. This long awaited Promise of the Father was not available until this New Testament age of fulfillment.

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them...Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws... (Ezk. 11:19-20)

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, “Repent {by turning from self-will}, for the kingdom of Heaven {where everyone lives in God’s good, pleasing and perfect will} is near.” (Matt. 3:1-2)

...Jesus went...proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come... The {undivided} ingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:14)

And he said to them, “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the {undivided} kingdom of God come with {Pentecostal} power {into their hearts}.” (Mark 9:1)

...The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation {of the events in this world}, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you. {Christ must manifest His submissive nature within our soul to provide an innate desire to live only for the Father’s will.} (Luke 17:20-21)

{Jesus instructed His disciples to pray for God to establish this kingdom-life within their soul through His enabling power.} Your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt. 6:10)

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John {the Baptist, but people could not enter into the kingdom-life by human effort under law}. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it {by dying to self and self-will, so they may be raised up by the power of God into Christ’s life and nature}. (Luke 16:16)

...I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like {dependent} little children {who live wholly by faith in God’s

power}, you will never enter the {undivided} kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 18:3)

Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you {if you try to live by human effort under law} and given to a people who will produce its fruit {by dying to self and living in Christ's life and nature}. (Matt. 21:43)

...The fruit of the Spirit is {a supernaturally produced} love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no {need for} law. (Gal. 5:22-23)

As you go, preach this message: "The kingdom of heaven is near." (Matt. 10:7)

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. (Matt. 11:12)

...Then they {Paul and Barnabas} returned...strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. (Acts 14:21-22)

Given an opportunity, the flesh will naturally go on feeding itself with the things of this world. So man's part in seeking out God's kingdom and righteousness is to put off the things we have been using as heart idols to fill our empty soul. Since the flesh will not give them up easily, we will be required to forcefully put them off. People generally enter into the undivided kingdom of God through great soul suffering and distress. Initially, we enter into our spiritual pilgrimage through water baptism. The symbolism of this Christian ceremony is intended to help the new believer gain a clearer understanding of their surrender. The only way to enter into Christ's life, and the Father's will, is by dying to our old self-life. While the willful or sinful nature will continue to rise up until we have been provided with an undivided heart, we enter into this spiritual pilgrimage, which will lead to a death of the self-life, through water baptism.

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If {and the word is IF} we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection {life}...because anyone who has died {to self} has been freed from sin {meaning self-will}. (Rom. 6:3-5, 7)

And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins...And this was his message {and the message of all preachers who lead people to repentance and into the symbolism of the watery grave}: "After me will come one more powerful than I...I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:4, 7-8)

When we are reconciled to God, we are justified and forgiven for our sins. However, the true salvation of the Lord occurs when we enter into entire sanctification, which means we have been wholly separated to God for His exclusive use. Christ suddenly manifests His submissive life and nature within our inner being when we are taken into the Sabbath-rest of God. He purifies our heart so we are enabled to do God's will here "on earth as it is done in heaven." This is the salvation that we are required to work out with fear and trembling. (Phil. 2:12) We must put off the things of this world and forcefully push forward in our faith. We will remain justified while we are seeking out the life of the Lord. *But reconciliation is not the goal of our faith. We are to enter into Christ's life and nature.*

"For if, when we were God's enemies {living in self-will}, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son {regeneration}, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved {from the sinful nature} through his life!" (Rom. 5:10)

We are justified and forgiven when we believe in Christ's work of atonement through the shedding of His blood. *When our faith is real and we have truly entrusted our life to the Lord, represented in the symbolism of*

dying to the old life in the watery grave, He breathes His spirit into our soul. This is what Christ was able to do to His first disciples on the day of His resurrection. (John 20:21-22) The Spirit is breathed into a new believer as the Dove of Reconciliation at spiritual regeneration. He enters into the eternal soul to provide a new sense of peace with God. At the same time, He also provides the believer with a new hunger to be like Jesus Christ. “Blessed {by God} are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,” (Matt. 5:6) because they have received a regenerate heart.

God moved the people of Israel in the physical realm to show us a shadow or spiritual type of the true salvation of the Lord. He began His work by driving His people out of spiritual Egypt – the world – in distress. They were permitted to be backed up against the Red Sea without any way to free themselves from the Egyptians, who represented the past life of sin. When there is no other place to turn for relief, the new believer turns to the Lord to be rescued from a life of sin.

As a part of this miraculous conversion and regeneration at the separating of the sea, God wipes out all past sins. Once these Egyptians were buried in the waters behind the believer, the Spirit was able to take these called out children of God into the wilderness {desert} testing period. Everyone who has been blessed with a hunger and thirst to become like Jesus Christ can know they have experienced spiritual regeneration. The Spirit then drives them into the wilderness {desert} testing period where their hunger and thirst begins to increase.

Jesus followed this same preordained way of righteousness by permitting the Spirit to drive Him into the wilderness after the Spirit had descended on Him as a dove. While Jesus did not need to be reconciled to God, He was required to demonstrate the one path that fulfills all righteousness. (Matt. 3:15) In other words, all the true sons of God must follow the prototype Son on this same path through the desert wilderness.

In our wilderness pilgrimage, we must permit the Spirit to empty our heart of the things of this world. While Jesus fasted physically, we are to fast spiritually. We must turn from every heart idol we have been using to fill our empty spiritual life. We cannot continue in an adulterous relationship with the willful and self-seeking ways of the world, and also enter into a union with the life of God within His undivided kingdom.

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. (Jam. 4:4)

Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing {through the willful nature}, and I will receive you.
(2 Cor. 6:17)

A man can receive only what is given him from heaven {while responding to the leading of the Holy Spirit}. (John 3:27)

As we cut ourselves off from other sources of spiritual sustenance, we will continue to become weaker in self. But remember, God will be able to perfect His power within our inner being when we do not have any strength left in self. (2 Cor. 12:9) *As long as we remain filled with the things of this world and our flesh-life remains strong and active, we cannot be clothed with power from on high and immersed into the nature of Jesus Christ.* Only after our heart is emptied of all else, and the temple of our body has been prepared according to God's specifications, will He fill it with the glory of the Lord. (1 Kings 6:38; 2 Chron. 5:13-14) This is when we actually give birth to the divine life and nature of Jesus Christ.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness {in the wilderness testing period}, for they will be filled {with Christ's life of righteousness in the Sabbath-rest of God}. (Matt. 5:6)

...For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, *I will dwell in them, and walk in them;* and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing {touch no unclean thing – NIV}; and {then} I will receive you {into the divine life}. (2 Cor. 6:16-17 KJV)

When Solomon {had prepared the temple according to God's specifications and had} finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices {a

type or representation of the self-life}, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. (2 Chron. 7:1)

{Jesus said to the Father}, “I have given them {access to} the glory that you gave me, that they may be one {in life and nature} as we are one: I in them and you in me... (John 17:22-23)

...Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple...he will purify the Levites {who represents the regenerate Christians of today} and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness. (Mal. 3:1, 3)

Jesus tried to explain to His first disciples why it was good that he was leaving them behind. As long as He lived with them in bodily form, He was only able to tell them about His kingdom-life in a mere human language. But by going away to be glorified in the heavenly realms, He was then able to use His divine power to fill them with His “Spirit of glory.” He was able to communicate His life within their soul to enable each of His disciples to participate with Him in His nature. (2 Pet. 1:3-4)

He {the Spirit of holiness} will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine {meaning his life and nature from the heavenly realms} and making it known to you. (John 16:14)

The Living Word – Jesus Christ – was then able to manifest from within their inner being a life that cannot be taught or even described by human words. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in {the life of} Christ.” (Eph. 1:3) While we are required to respond to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in the wilderness testing period, we must ultimately wait for the Lord to fill the temple of our body with His life and nature. We must continue to persevere in our faith until we receive the Promise of the Father. (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4 NKJV)

I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:49)

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (Matt. 5:6)

Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete {or perfected in the faith}, not lacking anything...Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of {Christ's} life that God has promised to those who love him. {We are to receive the first fruits of His eternal life in this world.} (Jam. 1:4,12)

God, who knows the heart {and can determine when someone is willing to die to self}, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them {in Pentecostal power}...for he {suddenly} purified their hearts by faith. (Acts 15:8-9)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matt. 5:8)

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me...and I too will love him and show myself to him {inwardly as a new life and nature}. (John 14:21)

...No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared {in the eternal life} for those who love him – but God has revealed it to us {in its firstfruits within our inner being} by his Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:9-10)

The Pentecostal baptism with power is what suddenly purifies the hearts of Christ's consecrated disciples. We cannot over-emphasize the need for seeking out this undivided heart. It is this one baptism with power that immerses us into the life and nature of Jesus Christ and provides us with confidence as we wait for the day of judgment. (1 John 4:17)

While we are to forcefully put off our heart idols and the willful ways of this world, only Christ can provide someone with a life of true righteousness and holiness. The baptism with power by the Spirit is given to consecrated disciples for the purpose of cutting off their willful nature – the flesh-life.

Until this supernatural event occurs, when God suddenly purifies our heart, our willful nature will continue to rise up and deny the ways of our Lord.

To help the reader understand what this baptism or immersion into the nature of Jesus Christ does to our character, we will use a quote from a well-known Christian. George Muller became a living witness to the power of God to save people from their willful nature. Here, then, is a description of how the Holy Spirit is able to suddenly provide a consecrated believer with an undivided or purified heart and take them into the undivided kingdom of God: *“There was a day when I died, utterly died...died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will – died to the world, its approval or censure – died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends – and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.”*