

## The Time of Preparation

by Steve Bray

\*[See an explanation of the terms “zoe” and “psuche” used in this message [here](#).]

There was a desert wilderness that separated the old life in Egypt from the new life in the Promised Land. God used this testing period to teach His people His ways, to humble them and to lead them to depend on Him. He permitted them to go through difficult situations and then tested them to see if they would respond to His ways. If they learned to trust in His Word, respond to His teachings, and look to Him to do what He had promised, He would take them into a land flowing with milk and honey.

Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, *that you may live...and go in and possess the land* {the life of promise}... And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, *to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not*. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna {a supernatural food}...that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread {by the physical} alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. {Life is supplied by God as we yield to the voice of His Spirit.}...

You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you {to change how you think and act in order to prepare you for life in the kingdom of God}... For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs... (Deut. 8:1-7)

The number forty in the Bible represents a special time of trial and testing. While the people of Israel remained in the testing period for forty years, Jesus was there only forty

days. The number represents a principle more than a certain amount of time. God will take His children beyond this dry and arid land the moment they have turned from the ways of this world by rejecting Satan's temptations and have fully yielded to His way of the cross.

Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust {desires} of the flesh, the lust {desires} of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

[The NIV translation gives some much needed insight to this passage] – Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – *the cravings of sinful {self-willed} man, the lust {desires} of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does* – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires {will} pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2:15-17 Emphasis added)

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:2)

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. (John 14:21)

For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of

those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. (Heb. 10:36-39)

While an entrance into the life of promise establishes the Kingdom-life within the heart, it does not bring an end to temptations and trials. It is during this special time of trial in the wilderness that God's called-out children must reject the way of life that Satan fostered on the world. As our Leader revealed, Jesus was required to refuse the devil's temptations to respond to the lust {desires} of the flesh, the lust {desires} of the eyes and the pride of life before He could be strengthened from on high and come out of His wilderness testing period in the power of the Spirit. But this does not mean the devil would not come along with further temptations in an attempt to turn Him from His Father's will.

Now when the devil had ended every temptation {in the wilderness testing period}, he departed from Him until an opportune time. Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. (Luke 4:13-14)

It is during the wilderness-testing period that God's children are required to pursue holiness. But we cannot make ourselves holy. Our responsibility is to respond to God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit so we may be brought to the place where God is able to manifest His holy Presence within the temple of our body. (John 14:21) He has promised to reveal His life of holiness through each of us. "Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes." (Ezk. 36:23) We become "partakers of His holiness" after passing through the suffering that takes place in the wilderness testing period. (Heb. 12:10)

This *pursuit of holiness* is what prepares us to receive "the gift of righteousness" and "reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:17) When Christ manifests

Himself to the soul "according to the power of an endless life," we "put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." (Eph. 4:23) If we do not press on through this time of testing in the pursuit of Christ's life of holiness, we will end up falling short of the grace of God. (Heb. 12:14-16)

It is not enough to believe only certain parts of the gospel. God expects His children to fully submit to the way of life that exists in His eternal kingdom. Receiving Christ as Lord entails submitting to everything He teaches. It includes entering into the way of life described in His Sermon on the Mount. This is where He explained how people live in His kingdom. It is also the way of life as depicted in First Corinthians chapter thirteen.

If God's called-out people are never told how they are required to live, they will never make it through the testing period. Many ministers do not reveal the truth to their people. Charles Finney, in noting how ministers often fail to perform their duty in this matter, said in his *Lectures to Professing Christians*: "They seem to hold up a different standard from that which is inculcated in Christ's Sermon on the Mount, which was Christ's exposition of the moral law. Christ expressly taught in that sermon that there was no salvation without conformity to the rule of life laid down in that sermon." If the people are not being taught of the necessity of fully conforming to the way of life found in God's kingdom, they will never be prepared to enter into it.

Many Christians have never seen this Pearl of Great Price. The tremendous value of His Kingdom-life has remained hidden from their view. Because the leaders of the flock have never opened the real meaning of salvation to their view, they are never truly prepared to pay the full price to receive this heavenly life.

It might help to note how God backed up the Jordan River all the way to "Adam" when the people were miraculously taken into the Land of Promise. (Joshua 3:16) It is an example of how God intends to reverse what occurred at the Fall when Adam first turned from the Tree of Life to enter into a self-originated form of life. Those who choose to die to their self-originated form of life {living by self-will in our own sufficiency}, will come to a place where the heavenly paradise of God can be established within their eternal soul so they may enjoy His Presence forever.

Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to {the ever-present} eternal life. (John 4:14)

Jesus said, "Difficult is the way which leads to life {the eternal "zoe" life}, and there are few who find it." (Matt. 7:14) Even though others may preach a different gospel, our Lord has warned of this difficult time of testing that separates the soul from the self-originated form of life. And there is no way around this "difficult" way. (Acts 14:21-22) However, it is our prayer that the following lessons will help earnest souls avoid unnecessary chastening and suffering. By knowing what God is attempting to do and by responding to the truth, we can save ourselves some chastening in the time of testing.

For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives {into His heavenly life of promise}...for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 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. (Heb. 12:6, 10-11)

## **The World's Value System**

The devil has fostered a value system on the world that must be recognized. He will have the advantage until the light from God's Word has exposed the evil in his ways. Scripture has used such terms as "the spirit of the world" and "the spirit of error" to refer to this corrupt way of life. Yes, even if we have been a part of the Christian church and have sought to be followers of Jesus from earliest childhood, we have still "walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience." (Eph. 2:2) Most Christians do not even understand what it implies to follow the course of this world. They have remained deceived and are still under the sway of "the spirit of the world."

Life in the eternal kingdom of God requires a complete change in how we think. The Son provided a little insight into just how offensive man's ways are to God when He said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to me, *for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.*" (Matt. 16:23) The difference between the ways of this world and the way of life in God's kingdom is so great that Jesus could say without qualification, "What is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15) And since it is detestable in God's sight, we can begin to see how important it is to clearly identify "the things of men" and "the course of this world."

A careful reading of the Bible will reveal the following facts: The "spirit of the world" teaches everyone to become independent and self-sufficient. It is an evil influence that turns people from a childlike dependence upon God to a self-seeking and self-exalting form of life. The people of this world reject the light of life as revealed through Christ's self-denying and self-emptying way of life. They prefer to build up their own image and live for their own pleasures.

While fallen man may become religious and serve others as a part of this image building process, his main focus is to

develop a personal kingdom where he becomes great. These are the ways that are highly valued by men and are detestable in God's sight. It helps us to see how far we must go in renewing our mind before we can be lifted by the power of God into His eternal kingdom.

Those who live in the kingdom of God empty themselves of their own glory so they may live as mere vessels of God's life and works. In His kingdom, He receives all the glory because He becomes the source of everything that takes place. Jesus provided an example of what this means. The Son of God left the place of prominence to become the lowest servant. Instead of living for His own pleasures, He willingly "suffered" for the good of others. And He assures us that He did not do anything "out from" Himself. (John 5:30; 8:28)

Can we begin to see what it will require if we intend to follow Him? And we must be mindful of the fact that we can only find His eternal Kingdom-life by following Him. (Matt. 16:24-25; John 8:12) Instead of living for our own pleasures and desires as worldly-minded people naturally do, it actually entails choosing to suffer for His kingdom while living in this world. We can become "joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." (Rom. 8:17)

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone {separated forever from the eternal life}; but if it dies, it produces much grain... If anyone serves Me {in the kingdom of God} let him follow Me {through the cross}; and where I am {in the Kingdom-life}, there My servant will be also. (John 12:24-26)

The world teaches us to save ourselves and to live for ourselves as a means for finding "life." When Peter was on this "save thyself" course, which reflects the fallen way of

life that Satan fostered on the world, Jesus knew that he was under Satan's influence. In contrast, the Spirit of Christ teaches us to deny ourselves and to lose our old self-originated form of life so we may find life from above. It is here that we must choose which of these two conflicting courses we are going to follow.

The world leads people to direct their own steps. The objective is to be free from servanthood so we may "pursue life" as we please. Individuals want the right to develop their "psyche" life according to their own will. And while no man should bind another man, this so-called "right" to personal freedom has been promoted to such an extent that even Christians have been unwilling to become servants of the living God.

Paul spoke of being "bound" to the Spirit. It is a reference to losing all rights to his life. He gave up all rights to his own life, and stopped living for his own pleasures, so that God would be able to direct all his steps. This is what enabled him to find the Kingdom-life from heaven and consistently enjoy "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 14:17) Have you taken this same God-ordained course, or are you still following the spirit of the world?

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, *and you are not your own*? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin {to self-will and self-seeking}, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God... And having been set free from sin {self-will} *you became slaves* of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh {your unspiritual mind}. For just as



you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness {everything is unclean that is not wholly devoted to God and His purposes}...now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness {to be used by God as He has planned}. (Rom. 6:13, 18-19)

While worldly-minded people will sometimes restrain their pursuit of pleasure in this world for a season, it is generally with the intent of accumulating their resources to prepare to have more happiness in the days ahead. Being afraid of what is ahead, they anxiously make plans to protect their future "psuche" life. They try to protect themselves from future hardships because they have learned how easy their spiritual life is lost in unpleasant circumstances.

The people of the world naturally live by their own strength and will. To them, only a fool would avoid planning his own future. Because they have never entered into a Spirit-directed way of life, where they trust God to work out all things for their good, they remain caught up in the self-sufficient and self-seeking ways of this world.

Jesus' teachings are completely foreign to the worldly mind. He said to those who desired to follow Him, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on." (Luke 12:22 KJV) He knew that those who continued to live for themselves would not be able to serve Him in His kingdom. "No one can serve two masters." (Matt. 6:24) He went so far as to emphatically say, "*Do not* lay up for yourselves treasures on earth." (Matt. 6:19) He said that only those who are of "the nations of the world" do such things. (Luke 12:30) Lacking faith in the one and only God who is able to fully care for His true children, the people of this world think they must live for themselves and store up treasures on earth to protect their future.

The true followers of Jesus live as dependent little children. They trust in God to take care of their needs as

they live for His Kingdom and glory. To the children of faith, this is wise because it puts the omnipotent power of God to work in their life.

These two different ways of life present us with a very important question: Who is the wise man and who is the fool? Is the man of the world wise when he rejects Christ's teachings in order to lay up treasures for himself on earth? Or, is the child of faith wise when He trusts in the God of infinite wisdom and power to care for His future needs while he pours out his life in the service of the Lord's eternal kingdom? Jesus Himself provides the answer to our question with very clear words.

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man... But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man... (Matt. 7:24, 26)

God says that unless we are completely changed and become like dependent little children who trust in Him to direct our steps, which includes depending on Him to supply our needs according to His will, we will never see the kingdom of God. (Matt. 6:31-32; 18:3) In fact, He instructs us to give up our rights to both our lives and our resources in living for the good of others, so we may receive "the kingdom of God" as a gift. (Luke 12:32-34) He even goes so far as to instruct us to be willing to go through physical suffering for the sake of His eternal kingdom. (Phil. 1:29) Can we begin to see how our mind will need to be completely renewed before we will be prepared to enter into the way of life found in God's eternal kingdom?

For those who are willing to be honest with God's Word, it should become quite apparent how there will need to be a radical change in how we think if we are to pass through the desert testing period and enter into Christ's heavenly life of promise—the constant, abiding and eternal "zoe" life. Those

who continue to live for themselves will find that it is impossible to truly respond to God's Word. No one can serve two masters.

Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, *that you may live...and go in and possess the land* {the life of promise}... And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you...to humble you and test you, *to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not...* For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs... (Deut. 8:1-7)

In God's kingdom the "least" and the "last" shall be the "greatest" and the "first." Because everything is reversed, you will need to completely reverse your course in order to "come out" from "the spirit of the world." "Therefore, 'come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you {into the life of promise}.' " (2 Cor. 6:17)

Since our Lord's ways are diametrically opposed to the ways of this world, you should begin to see why you will need to die to your own reputation and seek to be the lowest of servants if you are to follow Him. Have you taken this course, or are you still seeking to have your own reputation so you may have honor from men? Remember, God is the one who is testing your heart. And it was Jesus who said, "How can you believe {in the Christ who made Himself of no reputation and did not receive honor from men}, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?" (John 5:44)

Those who are willing to be the least and last will be lifted into the highest levels of spiritual life in the heavenly realms. What has been the result of your system of beliefs? Has God honored you with His life from heaven?

Of course, the devil will tell you that God did not really mean what He said. You will therefore need to be very careful to avoid being deceived. You must listen to the Spirit of truth. You cannot afford to be like God's people of old who did not receive the promise because they did not respond in faith to His teachings. "And to whom did he swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?" (Heb. 3:18)

As you seek out this life of promise, and search out God's ways, you will be helped considerably by remembering what Jesus said: "What is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." If the people of this world love to do something, and they commonly seek after it as a means to improve their spiritual life, then it is probably something that needs to be avoided at all cost. Their whole thought process is in conflict with the "zoe" life in God's eternal kingdom.

"But My people have changed their Glory for what does not profit. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; Be very desolate," says the Lord. "For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water {as they seek spiritual life from the temporal realm}." (Jer. 2:11-13)

Anyone who honestly opens their heart to the truth will begin to see how all independence, self-sufficiency and self-seeking, which naturally lead to a self-exalting form of life, come from an evil spirit. This "spirit of error" has led fallen man to keep his eyes on earthly things. In contrast, the true children of God lose their "psyche" life and live for the Lord and His kingdom alone. This is how we know who are the children of God and the children of the devil. And we need to say again that no one can serve two masters.

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him... (2 Cor. 5:14-15)

We know that we are of God {because we no longer live for ourselves}, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one {because they live for themselves and their own glory}. (1 John 5:19)

There is only one way to be saved from the spirit of the world and this fallen way of life. We must deny ourselves and follow Christ in His way of the cross. It implies dying to the "psuche" life. Whatever you do, do not try to justify living for your own purposes. Even if you have the whole world agreeing with you, the self-seeking way of life is still detestable in God's sight. As James has said, "This wisdom {that leads to self-seeking} does not descend from above, but is earthy, sensual, demonic." (Jam. 3:15) It always leads to the wrath of God. (Rom. 2:8)

They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God {and understands His way of life} hears us; *he who is not of God does not hear us*. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (1 John 4:5-6 Emphasis added)

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God {so we may walk in His ways and find life from Him rather than vainly seeking life from the things of this world}, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (1 Cor. 2:12)

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above... Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col. 3:1-3)

This may be difficult to comprehend, but Jesus lived in the heavenly realms with His Father while He walked in this world. It was in this sense that He was "in the world" but not "of the world." Yes, He is now in a place of much greater glory. But there is a way for man to walk in the heavenly realms with God while living in a mortal body. Jesus said, "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, *the Son of Man who is in heaven.*" (John 3:14) The Son was living with the Father in the heavenly realms by sharing with Him in the eternal "zoe" life while He walked in this world. And He expects us to live through Him in the same way. (1 John 4:9)

*Every individual must choose today where he or she intends to live. Our place of life needs to be in the heavenly realms today if we plan to live throughout eternity in God's kingdom.*

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love...raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly place in Christ Jesus. (Eph 2:4, 6)

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness {to reveal God's heavenly kingdom-life}, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (John 1:4)

## **Walking with God**

Jesus specifically stated that God hides the truth from the wise and prudent. (Matt. 11:25) He does this by speaking of spiritual truths using physical descriptions. The spiritual implications then need to be opened to the heart by the Spirit. He reveals the truth to those who come to Him as dependent little children. (Jam. 1:5)

The wise and prudent dislike having anything spiritualized. They prefer to deal with what they can grasp with their own intellect. This is the reason why Paul was

unable to speak of the deeper spiritual truths to carnal people.

We also recognize the danger of trying to spiritualize God's Word in a way that distorts the truth. With these thoughts in mind, we express the following beliefs without wanting to be dogmatic. But as we recognize Jesus as the Second Adam, we have to assume that He walked with God in the same way that the first Adam first walked with God. Jesus spoke of the Father always being with Him; and yet, no one was able to see the Father walking with Him. In effect, the Father walked with Him by walking in Him.

We therefore believe that the Garden of Eden, which is the Paradise of God, should be looked upon as a spiritual type used by God to help earthly-minded people—those who think in temporal terms—to better understand spiritual principles. Before the Fall, God {who is Spirit} walked with Adam in this world as He walked with Jesus. You might say that the heavenly realms touched the earth. In heaven, everyone shares with God in His life because He is omnipresent. When there was no darkness separating the heavenly realms from the earth, the Divine Life that is throughout the heavens touched the earth. The heavens and the earth were one with each other. There was no darkness separating the two. God, who is Eternal Spiritual Life, walked with Adam because Adam walked on earth in the heavenly realms, sharing with God in His spiritual life.

When Jesus brought "light" {the eternal life} into the fallen world, He penetrated the darkness that had separated the heavens from the earth after the Fall. Once He had completely overcome the "spirit of the world" by denying the self-originated form of life to the point of death on a cross, He was in a position to share His overcoming life with everyone who chooses to walk as He did. When man was no longer living "out from" himself, God could once again walk in man.

We now have an opportunity to overcome the darkness. We can walk with God in the same way the first Adam walked with God before the Fall and in the same way the Second Adam walked with God after the Fall. Our spirit can be lifted into the heavenly realms where it is possible to share with God in His eternal "zoe" life. God is then able to "dwell in" us and "walk in" us as we live in this fallen world. This is the way of life that every believer needs to lay hold of by faith.

For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them. (2 Cor. 6:16)

But God...because of His great love...raised us up to together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:4-6)

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. (1 John 5:11)

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called... (1 Tim. 6:12)

Now that the barrier of darkness which had separated man from the eternal life of God has been torn apart, we can overcome the world and enter into the Presence of God. The veil that separated man from God has been rent. We can now live in the heavenly realms and eat from the Tree of Life by sustaining ourselves on God alone. As the Son consistently shared with the Father in His heavenly life while walking in this world, we too are enabled to share with Him in the spiritual blessings found in His eternal life. (Eph. 1:3) It is in this sense that He can establish the firstfruits of the Paradise of God within our eternal soul.

As the living Father sent Me, and I live {in the eternal "zoe" life} because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me {the Tree of Life} will live {in the same eternal life} because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven... He



who eats this bread {by sustaining their spiritual life on Christ alone} will live forever. (John 6:57-58)

To him who overcomes {the world and the flesh-life} I will give to eat from the tree of life {so they may sustain themselves on the Son's eternal "zoe" life}, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. (Rev. 2:7)

The Son has given every believer access to the Glory that He shares with the Father. (John 17:22) We can now become like Him in heavenly love. (1 John 4:17) And yet the people of the world and many deceived people in the church have "changed the Glory for what does not profit." (Jer. 2:11) There are earnest but deceived Christians who are still turning away from the Bread of Life for the temporal food of this world. It is the reason why they are not enjoying Christ's heavenly Presence within their soul. And until they are consistently sharing with Him in His overcoming life, they can expect to find themselves periodically being beaten up spiritually by the devil.

We need to distinguish between life in the desert-testing period and life in the land of promise. God only supplied His people with periodic wells of refreshment while He was taking them through the wilderness. This is where He works to break the self-sufficient spirit. He can only perfect His power through His children when they have no confidence in the flesh and have begun to live wholly by faith in Him. He therefore takes them through long dry spells to drain their cracked cistern of everything that is self-originated. Of course, He sustains them with the promises in His Word and occasionally takes them to special wells of refreshment to build up their hope and to keep them from completely turning back to a self-directed way of life. He wants to keep them encouraged so they will fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on the eternal life that flows without ceasing.

Unfortunately, the “spirit of the world” and “the spirit of error” keep turning them back to the ways of this world for their relief. As they keep relying on their own sufficiency and the temporal pursuits and pleasures of this world for their spiritual support, God is required to use greater measures of suffering. It is not easy to cause someone to lose all hope in this world and die to their self-sufficient spirit. The flesh-life is not easily weakened and prepared for death. God therefore continues to scourge His children to take the strength out of their flesh-life as He prepares them for the cross and a complete death to the old self-originated form of life. (Heb. 12:6, 10)

Blessed is the man who endures temptation {in the time of testing}; *for when he has been approved* {when the mind has been renewed and he is fully submitted to God’s way of life}, he will receive the crown of life {the Kingdom-life that is held in the heavenly realms and can now be imparted to the soul} which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (Jam. 1:12 Emphasis added)

He who has My commandments and keeps them {in the time of testing}, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself to Him. (John 14:21)

But may the God of all grace, *who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus* {to share in His glory}, *after you have suffered a while* {in dying out to the old flesh-life}, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (1 Pet. 5:10 Emphasis added)

God never presses His children beyond what they can bear. He recognizes the need for a careful balance between suffering and encouragement. He does not want anyone to completely turn back to the world. But the special times of refreshing that He supplies should not be mistaken for the life of promise. Christ has come to supply the soul with an endless supply of His Living Water. “As the Scripture has

said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." When He comes in "the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:16), His people "never thirst." (John 4:14) Those who still experience an up and down "psuche" life can know there is a better life – the eternal "zoe" life, where it is possible to consistently enjoy the indwelling Presence of the Lord.

Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord {to work out his own affairs}. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness...

"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, *and whose hope is the Lord*. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green {because the Living Water never fails}, *and will not be anxious in the year of drought* {because the river of life continues to flow}, nor will cease from yielding fruit... *I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways* {whether you are living by the flesh or the Spirit}... (Jer. 17:5-10 Emphasis added)

The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought {regardless of the conditions around you}... You will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. (Isa. 58:11)

It is in the wilderness testing period that God determines if we are willing to become like Jesus. In this age of fulfillment {the New Testament}, God has spoken to us through His Son because He is the target of our faith. We are to become like Him in this world. And those who do not cease from their own works and learn to yield to His way of life so that His "light" may be manifested through them, will end up being like the foolish virgins. They will come before the Lord, referring to Him as their Lord, but He will insist

that He does not know them. Their problem is that they never permitted Him to manifest His life through the vessel of their body. They therefore are not fit to enter into the kingdom of God and to be wedded forever with Christ in His eternal life.

Can you begin to see why we must choose today where we plan to live throughout eternity? There are only two choices. Either we will choose to live through Jesus in His light of life, or we will find ourselves eternally separated from His life and in outer darkness where there will be misery forever. With this thought in mind, we close this chapter with some thoughts from G. D. Watson. In speaking of "A Gentle Spirit," he reminds us of the absolute necessity of yielding to the Spirit who was in Jesus. For "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." (Jam. 3:17)

...Unless we, from the bottom of our hearts, desire a gentle spirit, and then by the grace of God determine that we will have it, it is not likely that we will ever know its inexpressible blessedness.

It is possible for us to desire sanctification [to enter into the life of promise], and even resolve on having it, without involving the proper appreciation of having a soul filled with all the meekness and gentleness of Jesus. It is a law in the spiritual life that we get from God just about what we determine to have. It is amazing how God watches and honors the deep, serious determinations of the will of His creatures. Most men do not know that they determine to go to hell [and this includes many in the church], but such will be proved to be the fact in the Day of Judgment...

Every advance step in grace must be preceded by first apprehending it, and then a prayerful resolve to have it. Real gentleness is not a mere set of parlor manners that we

can put off and on; it must be soaked into every fiber of our being, and must be drawn from a divine fountain.

So few are willing to undergo the suffering out of which gentleness comes. We must die before we are turned into gentleness. Crucifixion involves suffering, and it is not a painted death but a real breaking and crushing of self which wrings the heart and conquers the mind. There is a good deal of mere mental and logical sanctification nowadays which is only a religious fiction...such a one goes forth with a gay, flippant, theological prattle about the deep things of God; but the natural heartstrings have not been snapped, and the Adamic flint has not been ground to powder...and the beautiful self-constructed air castles have not been crushed to pieces. And not having the real death-marks of Calvary there cannot be that soft, gentle, floating, victorious, overflowing, triumphant life that flows out like a spring morning from an empty tomb...

To have a real gentle spirit there must not be the least secret feeling of anything bitter, or sour, or severe, or combative, or dictatorial, or a sitting in judgment, or religious braggadocio spirit. If we do not know how to suffer, then we will never know how to be gentle.