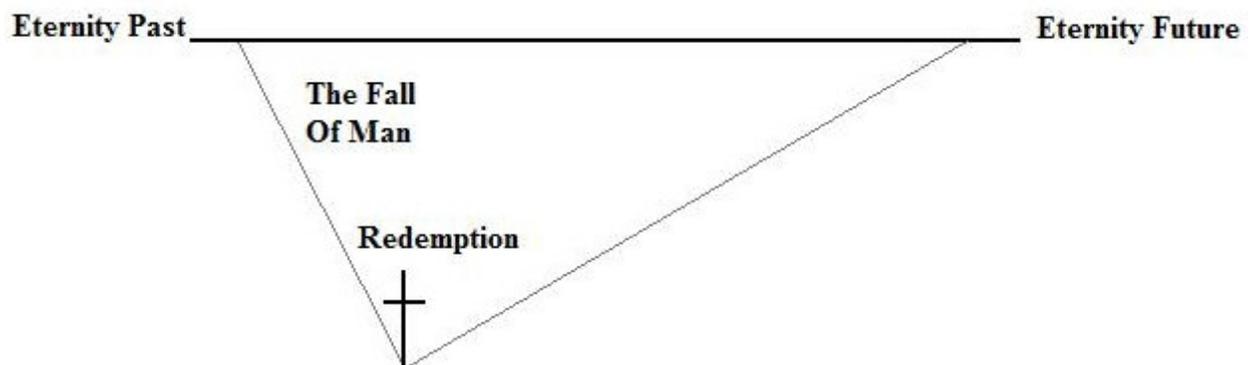


Our High Calling In Jesus Christ

By Michael Clark and George Davis

From the beginning of time, God has had a single purpose in His eternal design for His creation. He has desired as the Father of all to have a family of many sons who walk in His love and holiness.

They have a divine fellowship with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The will of God is like a straight horizontal line, drawn from eternity past to eternity future. A second line representing the choices man has made since the fall of Adam and Eve falls away from the first line. At the bottom of the sag is the cross of Jesus Christ, and from there the line slowly rises to rejoin the first line, the will of God. This ascending line is the restoration of God's will among men, His upward call in Christ. God has never changed His perfect will for His creation, but rather has made a way for man to return again to living in that will. He has never "lowered the bar," but in His Son He has given us an upward call that we might once again be restored to our Father.



This upward call has been in the heart of the individual since Adam fell. The work of the cross of Christ goes throughout the process of time of which it was written, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:3-5 KJ2000). God has had this heavenly place prepared for us from the foundation of the world as well (See Matthew 25:31-34). Not all men will obey that upward call of the Father, but in His eternal purpose a remnant will not only be saved, but be drawn into His perfect will to

accomplish the divine purpose that He foreordained from the beginning-- many sons unto the Father's glory.

The writer of Hebrews explained what it means to walk by faith with God. In chapter 11 he gives us a roll-call of those who walked before the Father by faith and the fruit that they bore in their lives as a result. These were outcasts in this world, "of whom the world was not worthy." These followed an upward call and defied the downward pull of the world system, often at the cost of their lives. The writer then starts out chapter 12 with this statement:

Therefore seeing we also are surrounded with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily ensnare us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such hostility of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, "My son..." (Hebrews 12:1-5a KJ2000)

First we are called to lay aside every weight and sin in our lives by God's grace within us and then we are invited to run the race that God has set before us. What is our goal? What is the finish line in our race? Who is the Author and the Finisher (Perfecter) of our faith? It is Jesus Christ. He is the Goal, the Finish Line, the One who sets us free to pursue that goal, and the One who has unlocked the grace of God so we can reach it. He is also the plumb-line by which the Father measures all things pertaining to godliness. He is our All in all.

When the Corinthian church began attaching their loyalties to mere men instead of looking to Jesus, Paul wrote to rebuke them. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase...All things are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's." All things that are ours are found in the Son and the very nature of His sonship is ours. God speaks to us as His children and ministers to us as His sons. All His workings are designed to change his children (Greek - *teknon*) into mature sons and daughters (Greek - *huios*) who have taken on Christ's likeness in thought and action.

Jesus is the divine pattern that Father has put before us. He is the standard of righteousness and the Father will settle for nothing short of His Son in His many sons. We have been given the high calling of Jesus Christ, the Pattern Son.

Paul wrote to the Philippians,

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if indeed I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as would be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything you be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, to what we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. (Philippians 3:12-16 KJ2000)

We are called to reach forward, not to boast in our present status or focus on our past. If we are to gain what Father has apprehended us for we must press on and reach for the Father's high calling in His Son, Jesus Christ. We must press beyond a mere head-knowledge of Him to fellowship with and in Him. Knowing about Christ and His sufferings is not enough. Paul pressed forward toward the mark of a personal, experiential knowledge (Greek - *ginosko* - intimate knowledge) of Christ. Paul wrote, "I gave up all that inferior stuff so I could know Christ personally, experience his resurrection power, be a partner in his suffering, and go all the way with him to death itself" (Philippians 3:10 Message Bible). Paul bids us all to walk by this same rule (measurement or standard), the Son of God.

In Hebrews 12 we read that great joy kept Jesus going onward to and through the suffering of His crucifixion. What was this joy that made him willing to embrace such suffering? What made Him willing to endure such hostility against Himself for our sakes? What was the vision that kept Him going? Was it the knowledge that his death would set men free from the burden of sin? Maybe, but there was more. In chapter two of Hebrews we read,

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it befitted him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things,

in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. (Hebrews 2:9-11 KJ2000)

We read further of this joy that caused Jesus to lay down His life and pay the ultimate price in Matthew 13 where He said, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father... Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; which when a man has found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field" (Matthew 13:43-44 KJ2000 - emphasis added). What is this treasure that caused our Lord such joy that He gave all that He had to obtain it? He had a vision of the righteous ones of God shining like the sun as sons of His Father and He knew that by His death and resurrection, He would lead the way as "the First Born of many brethren."

Is our calling as sons an easy one? Does it just consist of saying a "sinner's prayer," filling out a church membership card and going to church every Sunday thereafter? Remember that Jesus is the Pattern Son. If this world rejected Him and caused Him to suffer, can we who are created in His image and are being conformed into His likeness expect anything less? Look at Hebrews 2 again. "For it befitted him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." We are perfected as we join Jesus in the fellowship of His sufferings.

Our Father does not spoil His children. I, Michael, thought as a young believer that God should wave His magic wand over me and Shazam--Super Christian! I was soon to find out that He had a different process in mind to get me to His goal. That process was the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and being conformed unto His death that I may also know the power of Christ's resurrection (See Philippians 3:10-11). There is a divine fellowship that comes when we share in the sufferings of Christ. Part of it is when we finally see that it is because our Father loves us that we are called to such adverse things.

Earlier we read a passage in Hebrews 12, but we cut verse five short to emphasize a different point. Let us look at where the apostle was going with his description of the children and sons of God.

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? But if you be without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then are you illegitimate children, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are trained by it. (Hebrews 12:5-11 KJ2000)

The joy that kept Jesus pressing forward through and beyond the cross is an example to us in all our sufferings. "But unto the Son he says, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness [joy] above your fellows" (Hebrews 1:8-9 KJ2000).

Why all this joy in the face of death? Hebrews 1:9 in the Greek reads, "God has anointed you with the oil of joy because of your associates." Jesus saw this great cloud of witnesses who would faithfully run the race and join Him at the finish line as sons of His Father. We have been invited to be His associates both in life and in suffering. We can have that same joy as we look beyond our sufferings to the purpose behind those sufferings, the high calling of Jesus Christ in us. In Colossians we read of this great mystery:

Even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is *Christ in you, the hope of glory*: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; *that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*. (Colossians 1:26-28 KJ2000- emphasis added)

In the gospel of John we read of an encounter between Jesus and His Father that His disciples also heard.

If any man serves me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serves me, him will my Father honor. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify your name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. (John 12:26-28 KJ2000)

Jesus was about to go to the cross, and in that one act of obedience He would glorify the name of His Father. He desired to glorify His Father above all else, even if it required Him to pay the ultimate price. Notice the way the Father answered Him, "I have glorified it and I will glorify it again." Father was glorified in Jesus' sacrifice and was about to be glorified again in the martyrdom of millions of saints as the church suffered for His name.

Glory and joy go hand in hand. Notice how we find suffering, joy and glory all intertwined in the opening words of Peter's first epistle to the church:

[You] who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this *you rejoice*, though now for a little while you may have to *suffer various trials*, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:5-7 RSVA- emphasis added)

Happiness is not the same as joy. Our happiness is usually controlled by our present circumstances. Things go our way and we are happy. They go against us and we are immediately in a funk. The early church understood the path and the process that Father uses to purify one's faith. Do we in this day of easy believe-ism understand the process? Do we have a vision of a transparent faith that reveals "Christ in you the hope of glory"? The early church also had Father's joy that carried them through trials. Do we?

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4 KJ2000)

Rending the Veil and the Downward Pull of Men

Oswald Chambers observed in *My Utmost for His Highest*, "The worst enemy of the best is the good." Most people would not consciously settle for something that is evil instead of something that is best, but many would settle for something "good" instead of searching for the best. Paul put it this way: "[For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die](#)" (Romans 5:7 KJ2000). Peter and the disciples boasted that they would stick with Jesus to the bitter end, and the week before He was crucified, hundreds were calling out His praises as He rode into Jerusalem. Yet when it came to the final test, they all left or denied him. On the other hand, many a man has laid down his life for what he considered a good man or a good cause.

We are told that it is a good thing for us as Christians to go to church every Sunday. It is the thing that Christians do, right? Are we not exhorted in Hebrews 10 to "not forsake the assembling of ourselves together"? What is this great assembly that the writer is describing? Is he speaking of a "worship service" with hundreds of people all sitting in rows in a nice building, facing forward, listening to a man on an elevated platform expound his knowledge of the scriptures in a well formed, three part sermon complete with a few good jokes? What does it mean for the saints to be assembled in the eyes of the Father? Let us look at that passage in its full context.

[Having therefore boldness, brethren, to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living Way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil \(that is to say, His flesh\), and having a High Priest over the house \[Grk. oikos - household\] of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the profession of our faith without wavering \(for He is faithful who promised\), and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the Day approaching. \(Hebrews 10:19-25 KJ21\)](#)

On the Day of Atonement under the Old Covenant, the high priest killed a bullock and then entered into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant with the blood (See Leviticus Ch. 16). This was a sign of things to come. It was exactly what Father did by the death of Jesus Christ. His blood was sprinkled once for all as our Great High Priest. Passing through the temporal veil of flesh and religion into the holiest of all (God's presence) is the first provision of the high calling in Christ

Jesus. When Jesus died on the cross, there was a great earthquake in Jerusalem and immediately the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. Father tore that veil apart by Jesus' perfect sacrifice and made the way open to all who walk by faith to enter into the Father's presence. The earthly tabernacle and its furnishings, which first introduced the concept of a veiled system of worship to Israel, were patterns of things in the heavens (see Hebrews 9:23), designed to draw the worshiper into the greater heavenly reality that these earthly things merely foreshadowed. They pointed upward.

God's true assembly doesn't gather in earthly tabernacles but in heavenly places in ". . . the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:2). God does not dwell in tabernacles made by the hands of men for the heavens are His throne and the earth is His footstool. Stephen chided the Jews for their carnal thinking saying, "Yet the most High dwells not in temples made with hands; as says the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will you build me? says the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Has not my hand made all these things? You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do you" (Acts 7:48-51 KJ2000). Stephen equated this carnal thinking that God dwells in houses made by men with resisting the Holy Spirit of God! The upward call of the Spirit calls us into the very presence of the Father in Christ as His body, not in a building and a church service orchestrated by men. What then shall we say if we neglect so great a salvation?

The author of Hebrews went on to write of this assembly and its location.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24 NASB)

So what is the manner of our gathering together as the saints of God? We are told to boldly enter the presence of the Father in a new and living way. Will we answer the high calling? The Jews gathered in their synagogues for hundreds of years before Christ in a way that the church still imitates today. Father never gave them a command to do this; it was a tradition that came out of their Babylonian captivity. This is not the new and living way we are to assemble. It is not new at all! We are to assemble

together unto our Father in Christ, who is the High Priest of the household of God. This goes far beyond just going to church on Sunday! This is a divine calling to participate in the unity of the Father and the Son. ". . . truly our fellowship [participation, intercourse, intimacy] is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (See 1 John 1:3). We cannot have fellowship with one another without gathering together in intimacy with the Father and the Son. This goes way beyond sitting in a pew, singing a few songs and listening to a sermon. We are to be one even as the Father and Son are one. We are to be assembled as His body in the unity of the Father and the Son. It is not hard to see how the traditions of men have made this command of God of no effect in our daily lives.

We use this word *unity* in a very specific way. Jesus describes this participation in a prayer (John 17) in these terms, "I in them, and you in me" (See John 17:20-23). In the beginning, this fellowship was experienced exclusively by the Father and the Son with a view toward including many sons and daughters. Jesus modeled this glorious participation long before his disciples would experience the reality.

Philip said unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it will satisfy us. Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long a time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? *he that has seen me has seen the Father*; and how say you then, Show us the Father? Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwells in me, he does the works. Believe me that *I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake*. (John 14:8-11 KJ2000- emphasis added)

Philip's words, "Lord, show us the Father, and it will satisfy us," were clearly a disappointment to Jesus. Why? For three years Philip had watched and listened as Jesus did what he saw His Father doing and spoke what He heard his Father speaking, yet Philip obviously couldn't see the mystery before Him. He may have thought that the Messiah would be like the prophets who prophesied under a direct anointing, as the Spirit of God rested on them. It is certain that he never entertained the thought that the Father was resident in Jesus and that Jesus was in the Father and that the two worked together seamlessly in rest, trust and obedience. Jesus said, "*The Father works hitherto and I work*" (John 5:17).

Philip couldn't see that Jesus' every act and word were birthed and guided by the Father within Jesus. It was evidently very important to Jesus that Philip and the rest of the disciples understand this mystery. He made a clear distinction between Him and the Father Who is in Him. Philip didn't understand "the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh...." Jesus never made Himself out to be the Father. In fact in another scripture He said to His disciples, "...my Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). He was the prototype for us, a Son abiding in His Father. He portrayed is the mystery of godliness; God dwelling in the flesh of a man. If we believe that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him, all the rest of the scriptures make sense. Jesus said, "the Father works" and "I work." Jesus did not speak of Himself; He said what he heard the Father saying. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

Not long after this conversation, Philip came to know experientially exactly what Jesus was talking about. This is where the heavenly rubber hits the road! This is where divinity fills earthen vessels. Here is where heaven touches earth and the angels ascend and descend. Here are the eternal roots of the fellowship that we are called to participate in. It is a call to be enveloped in, filled with and empowered by the life of the Father and the Son. The First-Begotten Son calls us to be begotten of and filled with the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:14-19) so that He and the Father can be manifested through many sons.

To a ragtag group of clay vessels, Jesus said, "*But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks through you*" (Matthew 10:19-20 KJ2000- emphasis added). God places Himself in us as earthen vessels that His glory might be more obvious against the clay of our humanity! This is the mystery of godliness--God in the flesh! God is in Christ, in us! "*Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*" It is not all about us, but rather it is about Him manifesting Himself and His glory.

Jesus prayed for us all that we would be united by this fellowship that He and the Father share, which He calls eternal life. He lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said,

"Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son, that your Son also may glorify you: As you have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as

you have given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:1-3- emphasis added).

Here is eternal life as Jesus defines it. Eternal life is not just continuing to live in God's heaven after we die, and it is not playing harps as we sit among the clouds forever. Life eternal is fellowship with the Father and the Son here and now. It is not "Jesus only." Neither is it the Father only. Jesus' invitation to us is to join Him in His fellowship with the Father. Our invitation to others must be the same. Through the blood of Jesus, we may enter into the Father's presence. By the gift of His Spirit, they both take up residence within us. *"Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ"* (See John 1:3).

Jesus continues praying,

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that you have sent me. And the glory which you gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me." (John 17:20-23 KJ2000)

This passage describes the oneness of the Father and the Son better than any other passage in the scripture and, as carried forward, it describes the oneness (or the lack thereof) of the body of Christ. Jesus asks the Father to include all believers in their fellowship. Jesus uses the same word one applying to Himself and the Father that He did when He said "that they may be one." That means that it is possible for us to be that same kind of one in Him. We cannot be one with each other unless we are first one in Him. This is the true meaning of "the restoration of all things." Fallen men must be redeemed, sanctified and unified in the Father through Jesus Christ before they can ever be unified among themselves.

We have inherited this eternal unity by virtue of the fact that the Son is in us and the fullness of the Father is in the Son. If I confess the Son I have the Father too. John wrote, *"Whosoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father: [but] he that confesses the Son has the Father also"* (1 John 2:23 KJ2000). This is not meant to be a mere doctrine but rather a reality that is experienced. This mystery will become more

evident to all of us as we are more perfectly hidden with Christ in God. May Father draw us ever deeper into Him! Truly our fellowship is with the Father and the Son!

The High Calling - Taking Captivity Captive

The risk-taking disciple, who dares to listen to his feelings rather than to the pontifications of authority or the clamor of the majority, may quickly find that his inner convictions do not resonate with popular opinion. He finds the situation unnerving to himself and disturbing to the palace guard. (Brennon Manning, *A Glimpse of Jesus*)

Jesus came to this earth not only to deal with the load of sins that holds man in the clutches of the devil, but He came to take all of man's captivity captive and give spiritual gifts to each member of His body. These gifts make each of them active members and distributors of the life of Christ. Sin was dealt with by His death, but there was also a resurrection. He first descended and then He ascended and gave gifts unto men. He came that we might not only have a life free from the downward pull of sin, but an abounding life that knows the upward call of a daily fellowship with our Heavenly Father. To remain here on earth with our sins forgiven and have no fellowship in the divine nature is a call to mediocrity at best.

Recently I, Michael, had a time of sharing with a brother who is faithful to sit under the teachings of a pastor at a local "church" every Sunday. I had spent some time revealing to him the nature of our upward call in the Father and the deeper things of life in Jesus Christ. I thought that he was hearing the good news that we are all called to become sons of God and to share the fellowship Jesus has with His Father. Near the conclusion of our time together he said something that totally shocked me. He indicated that in his thinking these things were all for the by and by and out of our reach today as mere mortals. "After all, we are only human and are always subject to sin." His words revealed the call from today's pulpits that permeates the minds of the faithful--a call to abide during our earthly sojourn in religious mediocrity, a call to exclude the Father from manifesting Himself in us here on earth.

There is nothing mediocre about the kingdom of God and the gospel that Jesus preached. He taught things that rocked the world of the religious Jews. There was no call to mediocrity when He said, "[Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.](#)" To a people that thought they were doing just fine with their limited understanding of who God is, His message was radical. He rocked

their religious boat. If we dare to take His words into our hearts, our neat little theological boats will be rocked as well. God is preeminent wherever He dwells.

Toward the end of Jesus' life as a man here on earth He made some interesting observations about the nature of religion. Of the Jewish religious leaders He said, "[But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither allow you them that are entering to go in](#)" (Matthew 23:13 KJ2000). Mediocrity has its priests and ministers. For these men to stay in control, have their needs met and remain preeminent among men, they must demand and condone mediocrity among the faithful, lest the congregant outgrows the need for his earthly leader. It would not do for a member of a congregation to outshine its pastor. Woe to the congregant who has a heavenly vision of the upward call we have been given in Christ. That person must be muzzled and made an example of, lest he kick the slats out of the crib we call "religion" and the other captives follow him in the high calling of Jesus Christ--walking one with the Father just as He walks (See John 17:20-23).

History is replete with examples of the "orthodox" pursuing and killing of such "dangerously unorthodox" individuals. Oh, orthodoxy, how noble you look; your silver crown, your flowing robes, your measured stride, your head thrown back, your lofty eyes seeing and yet not seeing. You move about like the Pharisees of old, unaware of the human suffering at your feet, your eyes intently searching, pausing only to cast a murderous glance toward all that is prophetic. The power brokers of religion have not changed a bit in 2000 years. They plotted to kill Jesus so they wouldn't lose their place and they are still doing it by killing any manifestation of Him in the saints of God. They sewed the temple's torn veil back together and they continue to quickly patch it back up today when God tears down the wall of separation between Him and men.

Jesus told a parable about this, referring to those who lord over the inheritance of God as vineyard keepers or tenants. Today we would call them sharecroppers. The Father sent to them at harvest time for His share in the crop for it was His vineyard, but they beat and killed the servants whom He sent. In Matthew we read, "[But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will respect my son. But when the tenants saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him](#)" (Matthew 21:37-39 KJ2000).

The nature of true shepherding is not to control and abuse the sheep of the Lord's flock, but rather to usher them into His presence and then get out of the way! Someone said, "When a prostitute falls in love, she is out of a job." When the people of God love Jesus more than they love their pastor, his job is threatened. Sad to say, keeping the people dependant on themselves is the foremost task of most ministries in Christendom today. A dear saint that somehow grows up and matures and shines in the congregation is soon thrust out of the vineyard, just as Jesus was by the overseers of God's vineyard 2000 years ago. Insecure church leadership today keeps the saints living well below their high callings in the Son so as not to be a threat to them. One must not make the church leadership look inferior in any way. This is as old as Ignatius who was, as best we can tell, the first to advance this fallacious idea when he wrote:

"If any man is able in power to continue in purity, to the honour of the flesh of our Lord, let him continue so without boasting; if he boasts, he is undone; if he become known apart from the bishop, he has destroyed himself."

In other words Ignatius was saying, a man must not grow in power and purity in the Lord among his peers so that he outshines the bishop. This is exalting man (in this case "the bishop") at the expense of the gift of the Spirit in others, keeping all ministries subject to one man who keeps everyone else in submission.

In this diabolical methodology the church remains perpetually in its infancy. We have been quoting many parts of the book of Hebrews which is rich in things that the saints of God need to walk in that they might reach maturity. The writer was starting to teach them about the nature and importance of Jesus as our High Priest, but sensing their immaturity he came to a full stop.

Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to explain, seeing you are dull of hearing. For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:11-14 KJ2000)

Dear saints of God, are you able to hear what we are saying here? Or do you need to be taught over and over again the rudimentary teachings of the church which are

ground out from its pulpits Sunday after Sunday, "laying again [and again] the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment" (see Hebrews 6:1-2 KJ2000). Are you able to go on into the fullness of our fellowship in the Son with the Father? Or are you still in need of milk, having never matured into teachers of God's kingdom as the Spirit abides in you?

An infant is usually weaned by the time it is two years old at the latest, yet there are mothers that are so in love with nursing that they keep giving the child suck until he is able to reach her breasts without being held. "How sick," you say? A condition results from prolonged breastfeeding called "milk anemia." Milk is a poor source of iron and drinking too much results in a child eating less of other foods that would normally provide iron, so anemia results. This is where much of the church of today is. "For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:13-14 KJ2000).

Instead of teaching the saints of God in your churches and gatherings, how many of you are still going there to be taught yourselves after many years? If this is your state, you are a spiritual infant and chances are you have milk anemia in the true spiritual sense, nursing from the breasts of men well past your adolescence. Your spiritual senses are deprived due to lack of exercise from being kept in a well feathered nest and because of this you are often unaware of what God counts as good or evil. It is time to put away childish things!

As for you pastors and church leaders, do you not realize that you are stealing the flock of God away from Him for yourselves?

For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the wasteland of the howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest, flutters over its young, spreads abroad its wings, takes them, bears them on its wings: So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. (Deuteronomy 32:9-12 KJ2000)

Where men love the preeminence, idolatry is not far away.

We say this in love, dear Christian. Chances are, as with the majority of Christendom today, this is your state of affairs and we invite you to seek the depths and the riches of Jesus Christ. He is calling you forth into fellowship with the Father. Remember, He rewards those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). Don't let jealous men pull you back down from your upward call with appeals to be "reasonable" or with accusations that "you are becoming so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good." Like Peter told the chief priests, ["Whether it is better to obey man or God, you be the judge."](#)

Principalities, Intermediary Interference and Supplanting the One Mediator

We will here make a stark statement. He who sees himself as an intermediary between God and His people violates the New Covenant. He walks in lockstep with demonic principalities who aim to usurp the place of the One Mediator between God and men (See 1 Timothy 2:5). John called it antichrist. Paul called this ["the mystery of iniquity...sitting in the seat of God..."](#)

Probably the best biblical example of the evil of intermediary control is found in Mathew 23 where Jesus' ministry of liberation came into direct confrontation with the Scribes and the Pharisees. ["But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in"](#) (Matthew 23:13 NKJV). This was not a mere dispassionate assessment of pharisaical failings. It is a warning to all who hear it to avoid transgressing the immutable law that governs all activity in the kingdom of God. Because of their exaggerated view of their own worth, the Pharisees exalted themselves to the station of mediating-lords. Therefore Jesus warned them, ["And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"](#) (Matthew 23:12 NKJV). This warning applies to all who exalt themselves as mediators in the *ekklesia* of God.

We cannot walk in that acceptable day or Jubilee of the kingdom of God and avoid being a hindrance to others who would enter it, without a clear understanding of God's priority of freedom. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Christ for freedom's sake. Paul put it this way, ["For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery"](#) (Galatians 5:1 RSV). There is only one yoke allowed in

God's kingdom and the reins of that yoke extend directly into the hands of the Father Himself. Jesus is our Yokefellow.

When Jesus spoke to the weary multitudes who were burdened under the Old Covenant law and its enforcers He said, "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 NKJV). No other yokes are allowed!

Isaiah prophesied to a disobedient people who sought God daily and delighted to know His ways. They fasted. They prayed. They afflicted their souls. They delight to draw near to God. Wow! Having done all that, what could they have possibly done wrong? God's initial words to them give us a powerful clue. "... loose the bonds of wickedness...undo the bands of the yoke...let the oppressed go free...break every yoke" (see Isaiah 58:6-8). Here we see God's concern for freedom. He was so serious about freedom that He structured the laws that governed Israel to protect it. Israel was commanded to retire all debts and release its captives on a regular basis, the year of the Jubilee. He withheld their light because of their refusal to honor freedom as He does and let their captives go free. He promised that their light would break forth as they obeyed Him in these things.

When we get out from between God and his people and stop placing heavy religious burdens on their shoulders in the name of "ministry" or funding our building programs, our light will break forth as well. In short, when we honor freedom as God does, all heaven will break loose among us. Out of abject dread of this light, the prince of this kosmos (world system) manipulates, sways and pressures the children of light in an attempt to lead them away captive, and even worse yet, to make them lead each other away captive. God will not employ such tactics, not even for the most righteous objectives. He doesn't force or trick anyone. He seeks to bring us into His viewpoint by spiritually wooing us. Where His Spirit reigns, there is liberty and where there is liberty there is freedom to answer the upward call.

We wish that all God's people would join Him in His ministry of freedom! May we stand with Christ in His ministry, and profess that "The Spirit of the Lord" is upon us for one reason and one reason only. Freedom! He has sent us to proclaim release to the

captives, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord [the year of Jubilee] (See Luke 4:18-19).

Jesus has come to the oppressed and downtrodden. He has come to bind up their wounds and to declare freedom. His love demands it. The center of the gospel and work of Christ is the message of freedom from bondage and oppression. Where He reigns there is freedom! And that freedom insures man's direct, unhindered access to the Father. It is here that the battle rages. It is here that vicarious false christs position themselves between God and His people and in so doing shut up the kingdom against men. Jesus does not do this. He is not a fence or a wall. He is the way. He is the door to the sheepfold of God and by Him they come in and go out and find pasture (See John 10:9). He is the way to the Father and that way is opened by His precious blood. The veil of separation is torn in two. We may freely enter into the holiest place; into the very presence of Abba. Dave Browning wrote a hymn that calls us to go beyond the mediocrity of religion:

Take me past the outer courts
Into the Holy place
Past the brazen altar
Lord I want to see Your face
Pass me by the crowds of people
The priests who sing Your praise
I hunger and thirst for Your righteousness
And it's only found one place.

Take me in to the Holy of Holies
Take me in by the blood of the Lamb
Take me in to the Holy of Holies
Take the coal, cleanse my lips, here I am
Take the coal, cleanse my lips, here I am.

Jesus taught His disciples to live unto the Father without as much as a "by-your-leave" from men. He taught them that the fear of men, living in constant deference to men, either by giving them glory or receiving glory from them is the way of unbelief and bondage. Belief in the Father and looking for the honor of men are radically incompatible. Jesus said "[How can you believe who receive honor one of another, and](#)

seek not the honor that comes from God only?" (John 5:44). The fear of man makes void our trust in the Father. If you reverence the Father, living unto Him, you will not need or want the affirmation of men. You will only want the honor that comes from Him alone. Jesus is not talking about the proper honor of parents or the proper honor and respect we are to pay to one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord. He is speaking of men giving and receiving the kind of reverence that only belongs to God.

In Matthew 6:1-13, Jesus began by teaching on the evils of seeking the adulation of men. Jesus calls us to a life of selfless, secret devotion to our Father that results in an unpretentious life of blessing to God and others. In this passage of scripture Jesus exposes the greatest impediment to this blessed life with the Father. Just as the flesh is at enmity with God, so is fleshly religion. He made it very clear that acting pious before men and the reward of the Father are mutually exclusive. A secret life with the Father is maintained by avoiding any show of righteousness before men. "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven." Play-acting before men is contrasted with a life of secret interplay with and concealed obedience to the Father that the Father openly rewards. The reward of play-actors who proudly sound the trumpet and openly display their giving is all the reward they are going to receive. They have traded treasures in heaven for earthly adulation.

Brennan Manning wrote,

"Freedom in Christ produces a healthy independence from peer pressure, people-pleasing, and the bondage of human respect. The tyranny of public opinion can manipulate our lives. What will the neighbors think? What will my friends think? In Christ Jesus freedom from fear empowers us to let go of the desire to appear good, so that we can move freely in the mystery of who we really are. Preoccupation with projecting the "nice guy" image, impressing newcomers with our experience, and relying heavily on the regard of others leads to self-consciousness, sticky pedestal behavior, and un-freedom in the iron grip of human respect. Unconsciously, we may clothe the Pharisee's prayer in the Publican's formula. For most of us it takes a long time for the Spirit of freedom to cleanse us of the subtle urge to be admired for our studied goodness. It requires a strong sense of our redeemed selves to pass up the opportunity to appear graceful and good to other persons. Alms-giving affords such an

opportunity, but the applause we hear will be payment in full for our generous offering. Self-consciousness, not virtue, is its own reward." (*The Ragamuffin Gospel*)

Charles Wesley wrote, "Many of the scribes and Pharisees did this, (sounded the trumpet) under a pretence of calling the poor together. They have their reward - All they will have; for they shall have none from God." This is pretty strong language, but no stronger than that of our Lord. "Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward." Jesus said, "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Just before he was martyred, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in his book *Life Together*,

"Every cult of personality that emphasizes the distinguished qualities, virtues, and talents of another person, even though these be of an altogether spiritual nature, is worldly and has no place in the Christian community; indeed, it poisons the Christian community. The desire we so often hear expressed today for "episcopal figures," "priestly men," "authoritative personalities" springs frequently enough from a spiritually sick need for the admiration of men, for the establishment of visible human authority, because the genuine authority of service appears to be unimpressive..."

Soren Keirkegaard was even more explicit. "Those who speak to the crowd, coveting its approval, those who deferentially bow and scrape before it must be regarded as being worse than prostitutes. They are instruments of untruth."

Only those who have a secret life before the Father, a life hidden with Christ in God, are openly rewarded by Him. In fact that sweet fellowship is reward enough in their minds. Paul put it this way, "Obviously, I'm not trying to be a people pleaser! No, I am trying to please God. If I were still trying to please people, I would not be Christ's servant" (Galatians 1:10 NLT). Solomon wrote, "The fear of man brings a snare: but whosoever puts his trust in the LORD shall be safe. Many seek the ruler's favor; but every man's judgment comes from the LORD" (Proverbs 29:25-26 KJ2000).

How much power and blessing is withheld from the church because of our overt, man-dependent, man-glorifying ways? We are taught to filter every thought and action by "bouncing them off" church leadership and if they pass muster then we may carry them forward (under their direct supervision of course). Who is Lord in this situation, Jesus

or man? This kind of control over the flock of Christ is nothing more than "over-lording" that Jesus forbids. We are to encourage and entreat, but never to act as rulers over the people of God.

They love to sit at the head table at church dinners, basking in the most prominent positions, preening in the radiance of public flattery, receiving honorary degrees, and getting called 'Doctor' and 'Reverend.' "Don't let people do that to you, put you on a pedestal like that. You all have a single Teacher, and you are all classmates. Don't set people up as experts over your life, letting them tell you what to do. Save that authority for God; let him tell you what to do. No one else should carry the title of 'Father'; you have only one Father, and he's in heaven. And don't let people maneuver you into taking charge of them. There is only one Life-Leader for you and them--Christ. "Do you want to stand out? Then step down. Be a servant. (Matthew 23:6-11 MSG)

We will never be able to fully answer the upward call until we pass through the veil and break free from the self-appointed guardians who shut up the kingdom of heaven against men.