

# **Transformed in the Image of Christ**

Be ye perfect, even as your Father  
which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

**Petru Loga**

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29)

We warn every man, and teach every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. (Colossians 1:28, 29)

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# Introduction

We come into the world, we prepare for life, we work, we have children and grandchildren, we enjoy this life to a greater or lesser extent, and then everything ends at the grave. This seems to be all that life has to offer. Upon a closer look, we can observe that the majority of people around the globe are just consuming this life and are not bothered to find out whether there is anything else after death.

We believe that the most important thing in this short life we live is for each of us to get to know exactly what God's plan is for man, to get to know the purpose God had in mind when He created us.

Through this booklet, we wish to offer you an answer about the purpose of this life we live on earth. We hope that the contents of this booklet will be a guide for those who believe that God is the Creator of both man and the universe.

We observe that when we are asked to give an answer as to what will be after this life is consumed, and what we need to do to dwell in God's eternal Kingdom, the vast majority of people live in total ignorance.

Because of ignorance, one can see today how many crowds of people are manipulated with various theories that explain to us how one can get into the Kingdom of God.

One of them is the theory of the purgatory. This theory which we find in Catholicism says that man can obtain the forgiveness of sins through the payment of indulgences, which secures your entrance in the kingdom of God and implicitly eternal life.

In Eastern Orthodoxy, we find the almsgiving in the name of the deceased and the prayer for the dead, then the aerial toll-houses through which the dead must pass, and many others through which man hopes in one way or another to buy the forgiveness of his sins.

The same situation applies to most Evangelical, Protestant and Post-Reformation churches. The general belief is that if we admire God for what He has done for us, if we believe in the Lord's sacrifice on the cross, if we will confess our sins, if we have a form of godliness, we will obtain the salvation that consists only in the forgiveness of sins.

It seems that very few realize that repentance and faith in the sacrifice at the cross are only some of the things that man must do at the beginning of the life of faith. It is easy to see that the lack of Scriptural knowledge is one of the things that keep man in this ignorance. (Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. Matthew 22:29)

Most of us stop at repentance, at the work at the cross... at the covenant in the baptismal water, at the forgiveness of sins. For many, this is where the work of salvation ends, not realizing that in **God's plan** there is provision for both the restoration and **perfection of the human character**.

Hardly anyone believes that in order to be found worthy of the life that awaits

us in His eternal Kingdom, we must grow to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (And he gave some, apostles... and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, till we all come unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13)

This plan of God was made in eternity, before man was created. The purpose of the Heavenly Father was to make brothers of Lord Jesus and it is the most elaborate and magnificent plan ever devised.

## Just Forgiven of Sins - Is This God's Plan?

In the pages that follow, we propose to explore God's plan in detail, which, if we are honest, we must confess that we have not learned much when we began our spiritual search.

Each of us, when we arrived in a church, received from them glasses with a doctrinal/confessional filter with which to read the Bible. We studied the Bible with their glasses and they taught us what we needed to do in order to be saved.

Most of us have been taught that God has done everything for us, that through faith in the sacrifice at the cross we obtain salvation, which consists in the forgiveness of sins. We have been taught that it is not possible to reach the **perfection of the character**, that no one can add to the work of salvation done at the cross.

Thus, many have been led to believe that after the new birth, God is somewhere far away and does not involve Himself much in human life. Many understand that the work of the Holy Spirit with man is limited to a few outward things, such as speaking in tongues, some miracles, prophecies, without the Holy Spirit being directly involved in the transformation of man to perfect his character.

We are thus left to assume that God will perfect us through a formula unknown to us, which he will apply after man's death.

And that's pretty much the first part most of us remain at. We went to church, we had our seat, we confessed our sins, we were baptized, we sang, we upheld the teachings of the church we belong, we lived a more godly life, we visited the sick, and so we will enter the Kingdom of God.

We have been taught that we will not get in based on what we did, but because we have obtained the forgiveness of sins by grace, through faith in His sacrifice, for there is no man without sin. But in order to reach the Heavenly Kingdom, to be saved, the standard of the Kingdom of God has very strict requirements. No unperfected man, who will not be like Him cannot enter it. (Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Matthew 5:48; Beloved, we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him. 1 John 3:2)

Man must have a credible response to these requirements of God. So the question we must each ask ourselves is: What does God ask of us, what is our part to have a part in salvation?

With regard to this requirement, the teaching of the Holy Scriptures reveals to us the whole plan of God which has as its objective **the perfection of character**, implying

that the sinful man must be born again and grow as a disciple in Christ's school, until he will reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Shortly after Lord Jesus' ascension into heaven, in addition to the Lord's teaching and that of the apostles (**the doctrine of the perfection of man's character**), Satan came with a false doctrine (**the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins**), which offers salvation without great cost, limiting itself only to the forgiveness of sins.

**The teaching of the Scripture** tells us that in addition to the forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice at the cross, we must also reach the perfection of our character, which requires the crucifixion of the fleshly nature (putting off the old man) and the transformation of man (putting on the new man in the image of God).

To reach the stature of the fullness of Christ, the Holy Scripture teaches us that man must fully trust in the Word of Christ, then he must repent, deny himself and make a covenant of discipleship that has the objective that the disciple become like his Master. (It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. Matthew 10:25)

Any man, no matter how simple, understands that if one were to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, if he had His long-suffering, His love, His meekness... he would have clear entrance into God's Kingdom. This is one sure thing we can rely on which will give us full boldness in the day of judgement.

Today there are very few people who accept and put into practice this doctrine of the perfection of man's character. (Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Luke 13:23-24)

At a closer look, we can easily notice that most choose to remain at the salvation that consists in the forgiveness of sins through faith in the sacrifice at the cross.

**The doctrine of the atonement or the forgiveness of sins.** Satan, through his servants, has come with a cheap teaching, which says that God reduces salvation only to the forgiveness of sins, because man cannot overcome sin. In this false teaching there are several offers by which you can be saved.

**It is a first teaching,** specific to the first centuries, but which is still very relevant today. It is a cheap offer with which Satan comes to the ignorant man who knows neither the Scriptures, nor the requirements of God. This teaching gives assurance to man that salvation is reduced only to the forgiveness of sins and is obtained by the payment of indulgences, of alms, by rituals. (here we find Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy)

The sinful man who does not know the Word of God easily receives this offer, because it allows him to live his life in the fleshly nature and it assures him a cheap formula by which he can obtain salvation.

**Another teaching,** also cheap, entrusts man that salvation is obtained "**by faith alone**", the price for the forgiveness of unconquered sins (past, present and future) being paid by Lord Jesus. (here we find the Protestant confessions, see Luther's and Calvin's Reformation)

This offer of Satan entrusts man that the perfection of character is not possible

and gives him still a cheap formula by which to obtain salvation. You believe in the sacrifice at the cross and you obtain salvation, which is also reduced to forgiveness of sins. (Lord Jesus paid for it)

There is a third teaching, specific to the recent centuries, which is closer to God's plan. It is addressed to the one who is not content with these cheap offers and who seeks more.

This teaching says that salvation can be obtained by faith in the sacrifice at the cross and through repentance, followed by partial sanctification, without having as an objective self-denial, discipleship and attaining the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (here we find the Post-Reformation movements)

We find in this doctrine the new birth and a life of sanctification, but without overcoming sin, the general belief being also in this teaching that perfection of character is not possible in this life.

It can be easily observed that repentance, followed by incomplete sanctification, (a form of godliness) without self-denial, which still leaves room for living in the flesh which has no real finality, cannot bring man to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

This is the case of the man who still retains things of the fleshly nature: greed, anger, idle words, money under the table, defamation, going to the seaside, wasting time on facebook, youtube...

It is quite clear that the one who embraces this teaching in which unconquered sins remain, is bound to abide by the doctrine of forgiveness of sins. This assumes that perfection is to be made by God through an unknown formula, at the moment of death or resurrection.

We may note that Satan, in order to deceive the man who does not make salvation the object of his earnest search, has made use, in addition to alms, indulgences... even the sacrifice at the cross, offering people a cheap without much cost on their part.

In order not to be deceived, it is very important to investigate the role of the sacrifice at the cross, to know what place the Lord's sacrifice has in the salvation plan.

## The sacrifice at the cross - Its role in the salvation plan

The sacrifice at the cross is part of God's plan and has a well-defined place in it. We cannot diminish the importance of the sacrifice at the cross because without it, man cannot reach salvation.

God's plan foresees the restoration of the sinful man, in which is included the cleansing of sin through the sacrifice at the cross. However, God's plan is much more complex and does not limit itself only to the cleansing of sins through the sacrifice at the cross, but also envisages the perfection of our character. We believe it is very clear to all that the sinful man could not by his good works pay the price of redemption. (Ephesians 2:9).

It was necessary for someone without sin to die for it and that was Lord Jesus. (...holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Hebrews 7:26)

The Scripture tells us that in order to be delivered from the dominion of the devil, that we may be cleansed of our sins, that we may be reconciled with God, that we may be redeemed and to make it possible to be born again and to be translated into His Kingdom, the Son of God accepted to die on the cross. (...to give his life a ransom for many. Matthew 20:28)

The work at the cross is God's gift to every man who repents of his evil deeds, who denies himself and puts his trust in Him. Man cannot come with his works to obtain the forgiveness of sins. (For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9) The sacrifice at the cross makes the forgiveness of sins and redemption possible. (He... hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13)

The sacrifice of Lord Jesus does this so that we can be put in a new state in which He can work with us through the Holy Spirit at restoring and sanctifying us. (...through sanctification of the Spirit. 1 Peter 1:2; ...we are changed into the same image of the Lord from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18)

The sacrifice at the cross enables entrance into His school and is the beginning of discipleship for those who decide to deny themselves and enter into covenant with the Lord. While we are in the process of change until we reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, sins done accidentally, unwillingly, are cleansed from us by the blood of the Lord. (But if we walk in the light... we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 1 John 1:7)

The Lord's sacrifice will be of no use to us if after the new birth, after entering into the new covenant, we will sin willfully. (For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? Hebrews 10:26, 29)

## God's Plan – Restoring His image in man

To know the things that are set forth in God's plan, we have to investigate the purpose the Lord had when he created man.

By reading the Scripture we can see that in His eternal plan, God had in mind not only the creation of beings superior to angels, but His purpose was to make a being in which His nature would be manifested; to be in His image and likeness. He created a being totally unlike anything He created before. (And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him. Genesis 1:26-27)

We can affirm with certainty that when God created man, He had a totally



different purpose than with regard to angels, who were created with the statute of servants. God decided to create brothers to Lord Jesus, to populate His Kingdom with beings who would be like His Son. (For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:29)

We have soul, spirit, He endowed us with the ability to think, to reason, to believe, to make decisions, to admire, to love and to choose. This is because He foreordained in His plan that we should be like Him.

However, He did not limit Himself just to this resemblance. God created us and endowed us with these abilities to use them, and it is our responsibility to make the most of them, to work with Him to reach the stature decided by Him.

God's plan is not just limited to a cheap salvation that stands only in repentance (**putting off the old man**) and in the forgiveness of sins, but foresees **the restoration of the image of God** in us (**putting on the new man**) and bringing us up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13)

This is the highest thing to which man can aspire. (Put ye on the new man, which after God is created. Ephesians 4:24)

If the first man was deceived by Satan and his sin passed upon all, it does not mean that God's plan was flawed. All things happened as it was foreseen in this plan made in eternity, which God has carefully worked out down to the smallest detail.

God begins this work of restoring the image of Christ in man at the moment of the new birth and has all the power to bring us to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)

To illustrate this, we can think of the construction of a car in a modern robotic plant, where the manufacturer has on the production line a point zero where the first component is put. At the end of the manufacturing process appears the car which is fully worked and finished down to the smallest detail.

This is also how it is in God's production plant. He begins this work of restoring His image in man, and then He carries it out down to the smallest details.

If man created by God can finalize what he begins, how much more can God. God has the most efficient production plant in which He works together with every man who answers His call.

He gives birth to us anew and transforms us step by step into His image, until we reach the measure of the stature of his Son. (We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18)

It is a perfect plan, drawn up with great precision, point by point, without missing the slightest detail. That which He starts, He finishes. (He shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:8)

In God's plan it is foreseen that Lord Jesus will have more brethren who will be

like him. All the things that happen in our lives are foreseen by God to work on our character until we come to resemble Lord Jesus. (All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28)

Our life on this earth, everything we do from morning till night must be subordinate to this great plan of God. (If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. Colossians 3:1-2)

If we do not do so, if we live this life in the fleshly nature to enjoy it, we have in fact not understood God's work with man and we will resume ourselves only to Satan's offer who offers us a cheap salvation that consists only in the forgiveness of sins. (For many of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. Philippians 3:18)

God, in His eternal plan, has determined to make us His sons, to grow and to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (We are now the sons of God. We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him. 1 John 3:2)

We warn those who do not carefully search the Holy Scripture, who do not understand that they must attain this statute and are content only with the forgiveness of sins, that on that great day, they will have a great surprise, because in God's Kingdom, Lord Jesus will only have brethren who will resemble Him, who have prepared and reached the measure of the stature of His fullness!

Many think that this standard is too high for us, but this is our calling. The true God calls us to rise up from the wickedness of this world, to come to attain the image of Christ, for only so will we be able to dwell with Him.

## The perfection of man in God's plan

In order to carry out this extraordinary plan of making beings in His image, and to bring them to the perfection required by the statute of His children, God made the heavens and the earth, and man was given a body from the dust of the ground. (Thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. Isaiah 45:18)

God did not choose the heavenly Kingdom as a dwelling place for man, as it was in the case of the angels, but made the earth with all that is on it, this being the place which meets all the conditions to bring man to the perfection He requires. It is a place that is not free from danger, for on earth the devil and his angels have been cast.

There are some questions we can ask ourselves that have hidden answers from the inattentive eye: When God created man, why did He not directly put him in His presence as the angels were? Why did He place him in the place where he was in a constant danger of being influenced by the devil and his angels?

Why did God have to cast Satan to earth and not to another place? Why did He let him tempt man? Why did man in his innocent state have to be such an easy prey to Satan and end up in this vile situation in which billions of people find themselves in today?

We have to observe that God's plan was perfect, without mistakes, and now He is carrying it out. (His work is perfect. Deuteronomy 32:4)

Upon a closer reading of the Bible, we can easily notice that in His perfect plan, the fall of man was foreseen. (He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world... having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:4-5) We can also note that in His plan there was provision for both the restoration of man (the new birth) and his perfection.

Thus, God created the perfect setting so that man, living on earth in the presence of Satan, would be put through various trials without which it is not possible to reach the stature required by the Kingdom of God. (Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:21)

Man, the being created as a crown of His creation, in His image and likeness, was set to dwell in this visible world (the universe seen with our eyes) in Satan's presence. This was not a mistake on God's part, but this was very carefully foreseen in His eternal plan.

God created this seen universe, the earth and all the constellations of heaven, in order to fulfill His purpose with man, that of bringing him to the measure of the stature of Lord Jesus, His firstborn, to the perfection of our character.

It is the ideal place for man to be raised, tried, tested and brought to the perfection required by God. It is astonishing to see how perfect His plan is.

We can see that Lord Jesus was also made perfect by the things through which He was tempted by Satan and overcame. Lord Jesus was made perfect by the suffering which came from Satan and which He overcame by the death of the cross. (For it became 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. Hebrews 2:10)

When we look at the life of natural man, we observe that no man is born perfect, perfection is achieved only through tenacious, persevering work, copying the one who teaches us in every detail. (see the path a pianist must take to become perfect at playing the piano)

**The perfection of our character** is attained only through work, it is not a state with which we are born or which will be given to us after we die.

If in no area of practical life can one attain perfection simply by studying, without practicing what one studies, how much more cannot one attain the perfection required by the statute of a child of God by a mental, passive faith, which is likened by the Scripture to the faith of devils. (Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? James 2:19, 20)

When the rich young man asked Lord Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal

life, we see that Lord Jesus answers his question and makes his inheritance of eternal life conditional on the state of perfection that he must reach.

Lord Jesus said unto him, "If thou wilt be perfect... come and follow me." (Matthew 19:21). That is, drop the cares of this world, come and live as I live, learn from Me, follow Me in all things, and you shall become perfect and thus inherit eternal life.

You can't become a pianist just by studying the theory of the scores, without copying the teacher and without devoting a good deal of your life to practical exercise. In the same way, the faith that we can be like Him can only be perfected through practice, by the works of faith. (Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect. James 2:22)

In spiritual things, in order **perfect your character**, that you may become perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect, you must believe that it is possible, then you must work, imitating or copying the Master in everything He does, and give time of your life living practically in His teachings, down to the smallest detail. (think how many hours a day a pianist works to become perfect)

It is easy to see that if at creation man had been made perfect, as He who created him is, there would have been no need to place him on earth in Satan's presence, he would have dwelt directly in heaven in God's presence.

But to reach the measure of the stature of Christ's fullness, we must do the tenacious work of a disciple who is copying the Master. Only in this way can one reach the state of perfection required by the standard of God's Kingdom.

The perfection required by God is not in music, in painting or in walking on water, but it is perfection in long-suffering, in kindness, in meekness, in love... and this is achieved only by attending His school, by imitating Him.

God's work is only finished as it was with Lord Jesus, that is by overcoming the trials that come upon us. (My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. James 1:2-4)

The perfection of our character is not obtained merely by faith in the sacrifice at the cross, but by real work and battle in the temptations that come from Satan and that are permitted by God for our growth.

For man to overcome these trials he has God as his partner, who is faithful and will not allow him to be tempted above his power. (God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. 1 Corinthians 10:13)

It can easily be seen that the traits of Lord Jesus, namely love, gentleness or long-suffering... can only be obtained through work, through perseverance, having Lord Jesus as a model. (Come and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart. Matthew 11:29)

No man, when he is born again, is born with long-suffering, with gentleness, with love. These qualities must be obtained through God's work with man. In this

ministry we have school of Christ, in which we find the Word that works with us, the Holy Spirit who urges and guides us, the Body of Christ, which is the Church, and our work in obedience to the Word.

## Modelling God's Image in Us

What an extraordinary plan God could make! What grace we have to be able to work together in His workshop as disciples with Him, to grow in every way until we reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

For His plan is that we be conformed to the image of His Son, and everything is subordinate to this grand plan, God sent His Son, who in turn sent His disciples to describe to us what He looks like, because only if we get to know His traits will we be able to model ourselves after His image. (For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:28-29)

Just as no sculptor in the world, no matter how talented, can carve the face of a man unless he has seen the features of his face, so no one will be able to work at having the image of Christ unless he knows the traits of His image.

No one in this world can conceive that a sculptor can reproduce Nero's image as long as he has never seen Nero.

A sculptor who makes a work of sculpture always has a model, an image of the one he will reproduce in stone. He has in his workshop an image of the model at which he has to look at, and he reproduces every feature with great care, until the stone takes on the image of the model.

God's work with us is similar. From the moment of the new birth, the Holy Spirit, like a sculptor, is the One who works with us and transforms us step by step until Christ is formed in us.

At the beginning, His image will be found in the seed of God which is sown in us, bearing God's genetic code. The Holy Spirit germinates this divine seed and works at this.

For this He provides us with the model, that is, the image of the Lord, to which we can look at as in a mirror, as the Holy Scriptures tell us. Then we work under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, step by step, until we come to have the image of Christ; until all His traits are imprinted on our hearts.

We all behold as in a mirror in which we see all the features of the Lord, and we refine, until there are no more differences between us and our Model. (We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18)

The outward image of the Lord cannot be seen, but the inward image can, that is what His heart looks like, what is in His heart, and this we can see through the eyes of our heart/understanding. (The Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling. Ephesians 1:17-18)

There is an inner part of the heart where we can resemble God and which can only be seen with the eyes of the heart, but is ignored by most people. (For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Matthew 13:15)

When Moses wanted to know Him, he did not ask to see His outward appearance, but he asked Him to show him His ways, His way of being, that is, the features of His heart. (Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee. Exodus 33:13)

Accordingly, God revealed to him the hidden facet of the heart, that is, the traits or attributes of His heart. (The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Exodus 34:6; The Lord is long-suffering. Psalms 145:8; God is love. 1 John 4:16; He is a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. Deuteronomy 32:4)

When God tells us that His image must come into being in us, He is actually telling us that our heart will have to change according to what His heart is like, the attributes/features of His heart have to be imprinted in us.

When we look with the eyes of our heart, we must see as in a mirror the features of His heart and we must allow ourselves to be shaped and molded according to these features of His, so that at the end of the Spirit's work, our heart will be like His. (The LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart... 1 Samuel 13:14)

He works to restore His image in us and guides us through the Holy Spirit to clothe us with His attributes, which will be the fruit of the Spirit's work with us. (Put on therefore, as the elect of God... bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. Colossians 3:12)

In the Gospel we find the features of the heart of Lord Jesus, with which He draws all people to Him. (And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. John 12:32)

However, we can see that Satan has blinded the eyes of the heart of most so as not to see the shining beauty of the Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, so as not to see in the mirror the Model after which they ought to change. (But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

Very many of us do not see the image of Christ and remain only in the knowledge of a few things about Lord Jesus.

Many know what healings Lord Jesus did, they know about His sacrifice at the cross, where He walked, what miracles He did, when He prayed, where He prayed, and to this are limited the things concerning Lord Jesus, yet what is essential and what they need to know for their salvation, they do not know.

We will have to understand that we will be unable to resemble Him/be like He is unless we do not seek to discover the beauty of the features of His heart (His ways) and without wanting to have a heart like His. (I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy

sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee. Exodus 33:13)

The question we should all be asking ourselves is: What can determine me to look in the mirror and work with the Holy Spirit so that the Lord's image may come to birth in me? Is there anything in particular? Is it the fear of hell? Is it the promise that He will take us to heaven? Or is it the beauty of His heart?

## Attracted by the beauty of His heart

We can easily notice that in an election campaign to elect a candidate, those who promote him present him in the most brilliant poses in order to convince people to elect him. They do this through billboards, on the radio, on television...

The candidate puts together speeches with the most convincing offers to get as many people as possible to choose him.

It is done so because we were created with discernment, with the capacity to choose. When we admire a lot, it triggers in us the desire to act, to make decisions.

No candidate who will be campaigning will call us to elect him using threats, because no one will appreciate him and elect him. If man is attracted by the offers of a candidate who is very convincing and will consider him sincere in what he promises, he will act accordingly, he will appreciate him and he will choose him over others.

If, in addition to the offers he makes, this candidate has a nice way of life, even if he doesn't call on anyone to imitate his way of life, there will be some people who will want to imitate him out of admiration.

This is how we were created, with this ability. When we are attracted to someone, we admire them and are willing to support them, and when we admire them wholeheartedly, there will be among us people who will want to be like that man. (we can see in young people these desires to imitate, to resemble some music or movie stars, in dress, in speech...)

When it comes to the salvation of the soul, things are similar. God uses His messengers to present His plan for our lives, with the purpose of convincing us to choose His offer of salvation.

In order for people to elect the candidate, he promises them various advantages, without asking them to resemble him and live like him. But Lord Jesus, in addition to promising us eternal life, He also offers us the possibility to be like Him, to walk with Him in His ways, living a perfect life.

He calls us not only to appreciate Him for what He has done for us, but also to call us to be like Him. He calls us to fall in love with Him, and for that He shows the beauty of His character, which is perfect. (And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. John 12:32)

God does not call us to appreciate Him just because He offers us an eternal Kingdom with streets of gold, because He saves us from hell, for this will not cause us to fall in love with Him, nor to want to follow Him to be like Him.

He shows us His ways which are right, He reveals His shining beauty to us so

that we may be attracted, to be filled with awe, to be to be filled with love. (All his ways are justice. Deuteronomy 32:4)

Only in this way can we love Him with all our heart. Only then will we want to walk in His ways and have this beauty that He has. (God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth. Psalms 50:1, 2)

That is why, in His love for the crown of His creation, God uses His messengers to tell us about Lord Jesus, to show us what are the character traits of His heart. His disciples are sent to describe to us God's image, to show us the beauty of His heart and to draw us to Him with His perfect beauty.

No one can be attracted by His beauty unless he has heard of Him and unless he sees the features of His heart, if he does not know His ways, His way of being. (And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? Romans 10:14; No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. John 6:44)

If we are drawn to the beauty of His character which is perfect, we will admire and love Him with all our heart; only in this way will the desire to have the same character traits that He has be aroused in us. (I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please. Song of Songs 8:4)

If we have been called only to repentance so that we do not go to hell and to walk on streets of gold, without having been shown the beauty of the Lord's heart, if we have not been shown that His purpose for us is to have His character traits, we must be careful because those who have presented this message to us have brought us a false, incomplete Gospel. They were not sent by God. If we have received such Gospel, we have been deceived by Satan.

Let us honestly admit: Which gospel is it that has been brought to us? Were there people who preached unto us that if we do not repent, we shall suffer eternal hellfire? Have they taught us to appreciate Him, to thank Him only for what He did for us at the cross?

Or were they God's messengers who showed us the beauty of the Lord's heart? Was I drawn to His character traits? Has love awakened in us and did we desire to have the same beautiful traits as His?

God draws us with all His beauty and will make all the beauty of His heart pass before us. The way He showed Moses the beauty of His heart so will He show it to us. He will make all the beauty of His heart pass before you. (Exodus 33:17) He does this so that we may fall in love with the features of His heart, so that love may awaken in us.

David's fervent desire (which must be the desire of anyone who is in love with the Lord) was to dwell all his life in the house of the Lord to behold the beauty of the Lord. (One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD. Psalm 27:4)

If we come to God out of fear of hell, we have not partaken of the brightness of



the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

Every teaching (commandment) in the Gospel has hidden in it a feature of Lord Jesus, it hides in it the beauty of His character. By looking at His ways, His commandments, we are actually looking at the beauty of Christ who is the image of God.

His commandments must be a delight to us, because they represent Him. (And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.. Psalms 119:47; Thy commandments are my delights. Psalms 119:143)

That is why Lord Jesus says, "If a man love me, he will keep my commandments..."(John 14:23) that is to say: whoever loves Me also loves My commandments, and delights in them, because My commandments express My character, they show what I am like.

No one will be able to admire and love him with all his heart for fear of eternal hell. Wholehearted admiration is possible only if we are attracted by the Lord's splendor, by the shining forth of his Word. This is the only thing that can trigger the ardent desire to be like him, the only way in which the purpose for which we were created, that is to be like Lord Jesus, our bridegroom, be achieved.

It is only when we are truly drawn to the beauty of the Lord's heart that we will be determined to imitate Him and want to have the same heart as His.

If someone shows us the beauty of the Lord and we are drawn to Him, the result will be love. Illustratively, our relationship must resemble the relationship of two engaged couples who are attracted to each other, where there is wholehearted love.

If we admire and are drawn to the beauty of Lord Jesus' traits, we will desire them, and that is the starting point. (I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love. Song of Songs 5:8)

A person in love will always delight in the words spoken by the one he admires and loves. (My soul failed when he spake. Song of Songs 5:6; My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times. Psalm 119:20)

If we didn't start from here, if we are not drawn to the beauty of His heart, if His commandments and ways are not our delight, if we have loved Him only for His promises, then the new life has not begun. (No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. John 6:44)

## His wife has made herself ready

In our relationship with Lord Jesus, the Scripture sees us in many different roles. We are seen as disciples, as servants, as the Lord's brothers, and as his betrothed. He is our bridegroom, and we are His betrothed. Let us ask ourselves: What relationship must there be between two engaged couples? (For I have espoused you to

one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:2)

It is clear that our relationship with Lord Jesus must be one of admiration, of love. The Word of God often speaks of the Lord as being our bridegroom and that we will be His (wife) bride. (Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife! Rev. 21:9) The Lord loves me and in his love he calls me to enter into a loving relationship with him.

Only if love is awakened in us for the One who is more beautiful than everything in heaven and on earth, only then does the Lord enter into a relationship with us. (I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please. Song of Songs 8:4)

He comes to me and shows me His beauty, the beauty of His ways and is long-suffering with me until love for Him and for His ways awakens in me. When this happens on my part, He will enter into a relationship with me by entering into a covenant to be His.

It is not a covenant as in business relationships, but a marriage covenant, of love. (When I passed by you, I looked at you, and behold you had come the time, the time of love. (Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. Ezekiel 16:8; The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying: Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Jeremiah 31:3)

God knows the heart of man. He knows when we are drawn to His beauty, He knows when there is admiration, when love comes from the heart and when my heart is ready to follow Him. Only then does the covenant between Him and me intervene. (If ye love me, keep my commandments. John 14:15)

The beauty of the heart of Lord Jesus must awaken in us the same love the Shulamite had for her beloved, so that the burning desire to love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength may awaken in us. (What is thy beloved more than another beloved that thou dost so charge us? My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold... This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. Song of Songs 5:9-16)

It is like an engagement relationship between a young man and a young woman, which can only be entered into because of mutual admiration, because of wholehearted love. Fear of hell or the offers of heaven are excluded. He will not enter into this love relationship with us if the time of love has not come, if we do not love Him more than our mother or father, if we do not love Him more than anyone in this world. (He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Matthew 10:37)

This must be the only purpose of our lives, to live this love relationship and to make ourselves ready as a bride for our wedding to the bridegroom. (The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. Revelation 19:7)

We have been called to dwell with our Bridegroom and His Father! For He

obeyed the Father in all things, His wife must also obey Him in all things. Only then will the Father and the Son dwell with me. (If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. John 14:23)

His wife made herself ready, she became like Him, that is, she attended His school, she walked in His righteous ways and learned to be godly, to obey Him the way He obeyed the Father. Through the trials she went through she attained the measure of her husband's stature. She was made perfect as her Bridegroom was made perfect. If He is perfect, she also must be perfect!

Let us ask ourselves: Could there be harmony in God's Kingdom if the Son obeyed the Father in all things, but His wife would not obey the same? Would it be possible?

## The beauty of Lord Jesus

It is essential to know the features of the Lord's heart, His way of being, His ways, the perfect beauty that Jesus has.. (To the acknowledgement of Christ... in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:2)

It is vital to know His heart because we will have to resemble Him, because we will have to grow until we reach the measure of the stature of His fullness.

In God's plan, which was made before there was man, it was foreseen that His Son would come to earth to show us His ways which are perfect. (Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. Psalm 25:8; As for God, his way is perfect. Psalm 18:30)

He has revealed His perfect beauty with which He draws us to Himself so that we may fall in love with Him and want to be like Him. (And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. John 12:32)

However, the beauty of the Lord's heart and the way He walked is hidden from the eyes of most people. (Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Matthew 7:14)

The one Christians admire today is a different Jesus. Today is preached a different Jesus and a different way that most readily accept. (There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. Proverbs 16:25)

It is another Jesus, whom they believe rejoices when people celebrate His day of birth, a Jesus who would watch the news like they do, watch soap operas, would hang out on the internet, on facebook, would go to the seaside to relax, would drive at illegal speed, would work with money under the table... would go to the army, would take an oath, would get angry...(For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him. 2 Corinthians 11:4)

**The true Jesus** is the one we find described by the Holy Scripture. He walked the narrow way, the way he calls us also to walk. (If any man will come after me, let

him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Matthew 16:24)

**The true Jesus** loved righteousness and hated iniquity. He did not joke, did not laugh at other people's jokes. He did not use idle words and did not quarrel with anyone.

He did not live in the fleshly nature for a moment. This Jesus calls us also to crucify the fleshly nature and live as He lived.

In His relationship with the Father, He denied Himself, He was humble, He made Himself an obedient servant unto death, was godly, loved the heavenly Father with all his heart.

**The true Jesus** was long-suffering when He was mocked, He was full of kindness to those who crucified Him, He was full of gentleness, He loved His enemies. (When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. 1 Peter 2:23)

## We must live as Jesus lived!

Most of us have been taught to look admiringly at everything Lord Jesus did, at His way of being. We have been deceived that we will not be able to have His righteousness, His long-suffering, His gentleness.

We are taught that Lord Jesus lived to a divine standard, inaccessible to men, and that this is why we, mortals, are allowed have human weaknesses. We are deceived that salvation lies only in the forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice at the cross, and that at the resurrection, His righteousness will be imputed to us.

If we want to find out how Lord Jesus lived, we are shown only things that are not within the reach of the simple man. We are shown that He walked on waters, fed five thousand people with only five loaves of bread and two fish, raised men from the dead, rebuked the wind, commanded the sea to be silent... We could say that He made things that no ordinary man can do.

Satan deceives us through his servants that no one can live like Lord Jesus, and that this calling is not for us. The Word of Scripture, however, tells us quite clearly that we must live as Lord Jesus lived. It is a commandment to be fulfilled by each one of us. (He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as Lord Jesus walked. 1 John 2:6)

The Lord does not call us to multiply loaves of bread, or to walk on waters, or to raise the dead or any other miraculous thing. Not in these things have we been called to resemble Him, but to live as He lived.

The things in which we are called to live are those things in which He also lived, and which are in the power of every man, things in which every one of us can and must live as Lord Jesus lived; both the freshly born again man and the mature in faith.

We must live in those things in which He lived and which are in the power in which each of us can and must live as we have lived the Lord Jesus; both the born again and the mature in faith.

These are things that man does not attach importance to, but which Lord Jesus

lived in His relationship with the heavenly Father. These things we must also practice from small to great, being strictly necessary for us to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

The self-denial, humbleness, godliness, righteousness... in which He lived express the beauty of His character. For these things people despised and paid no attention to Him. (And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. John 3:19)

We are called to be filled with admiration for His way of being, to be drawn by the beauty of Lord Jesus' heart. But we must also work to transform our hearts after His, to deny ourselves, to be humble, godly, to make ourselves servants as He did, to be long-suffering when we are mocked, to be full of kindness to those who persecute us, to be full of gentleness...

If we find delight in these things and put them into practice, through them we will grow step by step until we reach the perfection of our character.

In His relationship with the heavenly Father, the "true Jesus" denied Himself, He was humble, He made Himself an obedient servant unto death, the fear of the Lord was His delight, was godly and loved the Heavenly Father with all his heart.

There are multitudes of people who appreciate Him because He gave them food, because He healed them, but concerning the way He lived in relation to His Father, they are not interested in knowing or living the way He lived. Because Satan has deceived us that it is impossible to live as He lived, these aspects of the Lord's life are not taken into account by most of us.

But it is easy to observe that in these things in which He lived, we are also asked to live. If we live as He lived, we will grow until we reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

### **Self-denial**

Self-denial according to the dictionary: renouncing one's personal interests or ideas.

In His relationship with the heavenly Father, Lord Jesus made Himself of no reputation. (He, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant. Philippians 2:6-8)

Self-denial implies abandoning your own interests, to give up on your own opinions, your own will, to give up the right of appeal.

Although he was the Son of God, Lord Jesus did not have opinions of His own, He did not do what He wanted, but submitted His will to God totally.

The definition of self-denial we find in the life that Lord Jesus lived in relation to the heavenly Father. If we do not have this image of self-denial that Lord Jesus practiced, we will not know what self-denial really means. (Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. John 5:19)

Lord Jesus chose the 12 disciples after a night of prayer with the Father. But

none of them was chosen by Him, but by the heavenly Father. (I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. John 17:12)

He did not work after His own thoughts, but remained in obedience and did whatever the heavenly Father told Him to do. When He washed the disciples' feet, when He was the servant of all, when He fed the multitudes, He was in complete obedience to what the heavenly Father told Him to do.

He did many healings, but He did not do any healing out of His own initiative, they were all done as the Father told Him to do. (I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. John 5:30)

This is the recipe for self-denial. If we are going to admire Him for the way He lived, we will take it to heart and practice it just as He did.

Lord Jesus shows us how He lived on earth, He shows us this feature of His heart, which is of perfect beauty. He draws us with this beautiful trait, so that we may desire with all our heart to have it too.

We have been called to live as He lived, to deny ourselves as He denied Himself. This is the true life to which we have been called, because new life cannot begin without self-denial.

Self-denial is the first requirement of Lord Jesus that must be fulfilled by anyone who wants to start a new life. (If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Luke 9:23)

It is easy to see that self-denial is part of the salvation plan, without which there is no new birth. This is how He lived, He denied Himself, He, our Bridegroom, and He asks us to do the same.

Examine yourself! Have you denied yourself, have you given up on human values? Have you fully accepted the teachings of Christ? Have all things been made new? (Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17)

The devil has come to deceive people with certain parts of the Holy Scripture to show us that one cannot live as Lord Jesus lived. But it is possible and mandatory for salvation! (And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. Matthew 10:38)

This is how Lord Jesus lived, this is how we must also live. We can easily see by looking around us that self-denial is one of the most despised and disregarded things. Let us ask ourselves: Do we value and want to live in self-denial as Lord Jesus lived?

### **Humbleness**

According to the dictionary, humbleness is: a humble, submissive, respectful attitude.

In His relationship with the heavenly Father, Lord Jesus was of humble heart. It is another character trait of Lord Jesus, of brilliant beauty with which He draws us to Himself. It is a thing that expresses the beauty of Lord Jesus' character, of which we must fall in love with in order to desire to be humble just as He was. (Learn of me; for

I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Matthew 11:29)

We are called to live as He lived, to live humbly as Lord Jesus lived, a life that is despised and disregarded by most Christians today.

Lord Jesus is our model of humility. In His relationship with the heavenly Father, He was so humble of heart that judgment was taken from Him. (In his humiliation his judgment was taken away. Acts 8:33)

To this humility, in which judgment is taken from us, we too are called. If we are honest with ourselves, we must recognize that it is a difficult call and one that is despised by most. (And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:8)

The attitude of humility and absolute submission is evidenced by the fact that He judged only as He heard from the Father, without seeking to do His will, but only God's will, this is how Lord Jesus lived. (I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. John 5:30)

He humbled Himself so much that He became obedient unto death. (When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. 1 Peter 2:23)

Let us ask ourselves: Do we love this Jesus who has such a humble attitude towards His Father? Do we love this Jesus who obeyed the Father in all things? Would we want to be the wife of such a Man, who has no opinions of His own, but does only what His Father tells Him to do? Do we love this character trait with all our heart so that we also desire to be like Him, to live as He lived? (Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. 1 Peter 5:6)

Examine yourself! Are you living humbly in your relationship with God? Are you humble and submissive in all things as Lord Jesus lived?

### **Godliness**

According to the dictionary, godly = one who strictly observes...; respectful and admiring behavior towards someone.

Another character trait of Lord Jesus that is of perfect beauty is godliness. The Word of Scripture tells us that Lord Jesus was heard by the heavenly Father due to his godliness. (Hebrews 5:7)

Lord Jesus admired and loved the heavenly Father with all His heart and strictly kept all His Word, this is true godliness. To this we too are called, to have the same godliness Lord Jesus had, not just a form of godliness. (Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. John 5:19)

We must understand that only if we come to live in complete obedience to the laws of the Kingdom, which are flawless/perfect, the way Lord Jesus lived, will it be possible to reach the perfection of our character.

Lord Jesus came to earth to teach us godliness, which is admiration and strict obedience. (If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to

godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing. 1 Timothy 6:3-4)

We must learn to be godly as Lord Jesus was, so that in the end we may be found obedient in all things the way Lord Jesus obeyed the Father.

An example of obedience we can see in Abraham when he was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac. He did not murmur, he did not bargain, but did only as he was commanded. (And the angel said: Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God. Genesis 22:12)

All men will have to undergo the examination of godliness to be verified and found worthy or unworthy of the Kingdom of God. The status of citizen of the Kingdom of God obliges everyone to godliness, obliges everyone to admiration and to the strict observance of His commandments. (For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 1 Timothy 4:8)

Only the one who will reach this godliness, of complete obedience, of steadfastness, the obedience that characterized Lord Jesus and that is the opposite of Adam's disobedience, will be found worthy to dwell in eternity in the Land above.

We cannot live our whole lives in a form of godliness and think that yet in the end by invoking mercy, we will be received into God's heaven. (For men shall be lovers of their own selves... having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 2 Timothy 3:2-5;)

Examine yourself! Do you admire the godliness that Lord Jesus had so much that you desire to be as godly as He was?

### **He took upon Him the form of a slave**

According to the dictionary, slave = a person deprived of all rights who is in full ownership of a master; a person who blindly and slavishly satisfies the will of another.

Lord Jesus is the Son of God, but when He came down to earth, out of His great love for the heavenly Father, He offered himself a slave unto God.

That is how Lord Jesus lived His whole life on this earth, and He calls us to have in us this thought that was in Him. (Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant. Philippians 2:5-7)

This was Lord Jesus. Let us think of a servant, a slave who is by his master. He has no right to decide what to do in his master's court. He goes to the master and is a slave who does only what the master says.

He is the Son of God and we appreciate Him for that, but to appreciate someone who willingly offers Himself as a slave and calls us to do the same humiliating thing, not many get that.

Lord Jesus did nothing of Himself, absolutely nothing. This thought was in Lord Jesus and He asks us to have it too.

Even though He had the image of God, and even though He was the Son of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. He made Himself of no reputation, took the form of a slave and became obedient unto death.



Lord Jesus admired and loved the heavenly Father so much that He kept God's Word as a slave. This is what we have been called to as well; to keep the Word of Christ as a slave to his master.

It is one of the most despised things, it's the lowest position to offer yourself to someone, to stop doing whatever you want. It is to be despised, it is to be disregarded. But to this we are called. (But now being made free from sin, and having offered yourselves slaves unto God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Romans 6:22)

**Once you have offered yourselves slaves to God...**

God does not enter in relationship with us as partners. He does not just want us to bring Him our sacrifices (offerings) and thus buy our place in His eternal Kingdom. No, He wants us to love Him so much that we willingly offer ourselves as slaves. (Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Psalms 40:6)

Slaves to Christ, to this we are called, to live as He lived. (He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as Lord Jesus walked. 1 John 2:6). This is how the disciples of the Lord lived, so must we live as slaves of Christ. (Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ. Romans 1:1; Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:1)

Only if we find in Him the embodiment of perfect beauty, the goodly pearl, only then will we love Him with all our heart, with all our mind, only then is unleashed in us the desire to be like Him, to deny ourselves, the desire to offer ourselves as slaves and to learn only from Him.

It is only love with the whole heart and mind that drives me to offer myself as slave willingly, without being forced by anyone. Only this obedience of a slave to master can have as a result the building up of the Lord's image step by step in every detail.

It is only when His statutes become my delight, only then will I deny myself and offer myself willingly as His slave. (I will delight myself in thy statutes. Psalms 119:16; I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. Psalms 40:8)

It is only when His words are a delight to us, only then we build in obedience to all the details which are brought to us by the Holy Spirit, only then we will be truly transformed. The Spirit changes us from beauty into beauty in the image of the Lord only if we obey Him fully, to the very smallest details. (Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness. Psalms 119:40)

You cannot become a slave of Christ until the old man dies, until you are determined to obey in all things. (It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him. 2 Timothy 2:11)

Our model whom we have to imitate in all things is Lord Jesus. He admired and loved the Father so much that He willingly made Himself slave, obedient in everything. He willingly made Himself a slave because both the ordinances and the commandments of the Father were His delight. (Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form

of a slave. Philippians 2:5,7)

Only those who are attracted by His traits and willingly offer themselves as slaves will have their fruit in holiness and everlasting life as an end. (But now, having offered yourselves slaves unto God... ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Romans 6:22)

It is essential to understand that all the commandments of the Lord by which we are to live by are a faithful picture of His character, His way of being; they show us how He lived, they show us His ways. All, absolutely all His commandments in fact represent Him.

Therefore we cannot neglect any commandment, because the Lord's traits are found in His commandments. In every one of His teachings is hidden a trait of the Lord. Just as in the human embryo are hidden all the traits of the one that is to be born, so are the traits of Lord Jesus hidden in the seed of God. (The seed is the Word of God. Luke 8:11)

Thus, if I desire with all my heart to have the traits of His character, then His commandments will be a delight to me, then I will love them. I will joyfully obey all His commandments as a slave and I will become like Him. (I love thy commandments above gold. Psalms 119:127; I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.. Psalms 119:131)

Examine yourself! Have you offered yourself to live as a slave, obedient in all things to Lord Jesus as He did His relationship with the heavenly Father? Are the Lord's commandments a delight to you?

### **Righteousness**

Dictionary definition for righteousness: without sin, pure, immaculate, spotless, clean.

One of the most beautiful character traits of Lord Jesus is righteousness. He loved righteousness and hated iniquity. (He is righteous. 1 John 3:7) The Holy Scriptures call him the King of righteousness. (Hebrews 7:2)

If we are attracted to and wholeheartedly love this character trait of Lord Jesus, which is of perfect beauty, we will hunger and thirst for His righteousness and desire to live righteously as He lived. (Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Matthew 5:6; Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. Matthew 6:33)

Those who are born again and are in the Kingdom of God love righteousness and hate iniquity. Thus we have at hand a simple criterion according to which we can easily check whether we are born again. (If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. 1 John 2:29)

One of the most important things in the Kingdom of God is righteousness/holiness. (For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Romans 14:17; Holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever. Psalms 93:5)

The citizens of God's Kingdom do not cheat, do not use gifts/bribes, do not covet and appropriate the things of others; if in school, they do not use cheating, do

not have stolen/pirated software on their computers, do not appropriate and use things from work that do not belong to them. Example: they don't use the company car and neither any of the company's goods for personal use. (Thou shall not desire any thing that is thy neighbour's. Deuteronomy 5:21)

The Word of the Scripture warns us that he who does not live in righteousness is not born of God. (In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God. John 3:10)

If up to now we are not subject to the dominion ordained by God, if we do not love the commandment of Lord Jesus to give to Caesar what is Caesar's, if we do not delight in it, if we are greedy and do not want to pay our taxes, if we work under the table, if we give bribes in hospitals and other places, if the TV/internet of the world is our food... then we are not attracted to this character trait of Lord Jesus and we don't want to live as He lived. (Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's. Matthew 22:21)

Examine yourself: Are you hungry and thirsty to be righteous in all things? Do you want to live in the righteousness that Lord Jesus lived?

As a conclusion we can easily observe that in these things in which He lived He called us too to live and we can live as He lived. If we live like that, the Holy Spirit will change us from beauty to beauty in the image of the Lord until we reach the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Only if we live as He lived can His character traits be imprinted in us, namely His righteousness, long-suffering, kindness, love, mercy...

## The School of Christ

In order to have the possibility to learn to live as Lord Jesus lived and grow to the measure of the stature of His fullness, God foresaw in His plan the Church, which is the Body of Christ. (But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 1 Corinthians 12:18)

The Holy Scripture describes the Church of Christ as a family, with babes, children and parents, where we live **in a close relationship with one another** and grow to become like the Lord.

He who is born of God is placed in the family and school of Christ, to grow as a disciple until he reaches the stature of a mature man, to the measure of the stature of His fullness. (And he gave some... pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints... till we all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13)

In the Church we learn self-denial, humility, godliness, we learn to be humble, to offer ourselves as slaves to Christ, we learn to live in righteousness as He lived.

It is obligatory to live as He lived because only in this way will His character traits be imprinted in us, namely long-suffering, kindness, gentleness, love... and this can only be done in His school, which is the Church. (He that saith he abideth in him

ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. 1 John 2:6)

At a closer look, we can easily notice that all the things that concern man's salvation, from the new birth until we reach the stature of a mature man, are strikingly similar to the things we also find in this short life on earth

At the coming into this world, we witness the birth of the baby, which is very similar to the new birth in God's Kingdom. (For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. 1 Corinthians 4:15-16)

The natural babe cannot choose which family to grow up in, those from whom he is born will be his family. To grow up, the natural babe is fed mother's milk. All things are absolutely new for the newborn child. He assimilates everything he sees and hears from his parents.

So it is with the born-again, he is in a family with spiritual parents (the Body of Christ which is the Church) who feed him with spiritual milk as a babe. (I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual... but as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat. 1 Corinthians 3:1)

He assimilates everything he sees and hears from his spiritual parents. (As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children... 1 Thessalonians 2:11)

A little later the natural child is enrolled in school and then after a time, graduation... In this world we can't conceive that you can become a doctor without medical school and without teachers.

The same must happen with the spiritual child. You cannot reach the measure of Christ's fullness without being a disciple in His school. (Paul departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. Acts 19:9)

God gives birth to us anew, He gifts us the Holy Spirit to guide us, He puts us in His school where we have spiritual parents and teachers, to bring us up according to the standard of His Kingdom.

He has gifted us with everything we need to reach the measure for which we were created. (From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part. Ephesians 4:16)

This school of discipleship has only one objective, that the disciple becomes like the Master. We must all follow this school which has as its ultimate goal, obtaining the image of His Son in us. (The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. Luke 6:40)

The Son of God was sent by the heavenly Father to earth to establish the Church which is the Body of Christ. He is the founder of the school of disciples, of the Church which he cares for with love. (I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18; For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. Ephesians 5:29)

Lord Jesus made disciples and sent them out into the whole world, so that they

in turn may make other disciples and enroll in Christ's school whoever wishes to enter that school. (Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Matthew 28:19 -20)

We can take as an example the Lord's disciples, but especially apostle Paul. He devoted his whole life to the service of the Church of Christ. He made disciples whom he taught to present them before God as perfect disciples in Christ. (We warn every man, and teach every man in all wisdom; **that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour**, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. Colossians 1:28-29)

Only in His school can relationships between disciples be adjusted until they reach maturity and complete unity in all things, a unity which will also be found in His eternal Kingdom. (I pray that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. John 17:21)

God puts the members in the Body of Christ in a similar way He put them in the human body; the heart in its place, the pancreas in its place, the fingernail in its place, each with its function. (Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 1 Corinthians 12:18)

God does not put any member to grow out of the body, because separated from the body it can have neither life nor growth. We take for example the kidneys, which cannot have life anywhere outside the body. They are found in the body closely connected to other members from where they receive and give further.

The same is true of the members of Christ's body. Not a single member can grow alone, independent of the body. (Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility... not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Colossians 2:18-19)

Man has to go through many trials and tribulations so that at the end of school he may acquire the character traits of Lord Jesus, in order to be found worthy to dwell with God and with all those who have graduated from this school of discipleship and who have His traits imprinted in their character.

We will take long-suffering as an example. How can we come to have it imprinted in our character?

To begin with we will learn and assimilate the Lord's teaching on non-resistance, then when trials come upon us, we put it into practice by walking in the footsteps of our spiritual fathers who in turn walk in the footsteps of Lord Jesus. (And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Matthew 5:40-41)

Each one of us must go through this school of patience, which has its work perfect, because only in this way can we reach the perfection of our character. (My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. James 1:2-4)

Those who are our parents will oversee how we apply the Lord's teaching in our daily lives. When our rights or what is ours are taken away, we must follow their example and the Lord's and live as He lived.

**Although God's plan** is so clear, yet for most of us the Church, which is the Body of Christ remains a great mystery, for many the church being just the place where believers gather for worship. (This is a great mystery: I speak concerning Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:32)

Through what we see almost everywhere today, we see that Satan has managed to distort the role of the family, the meaning of the Body of Christ. By the false teaching that "**salvation consists only in the forgiveness of sins**" (teaching that stands at the foundation of religious organizations), he has deceived man that there is no need for discipleship nor a school of discipleship.

We can easily notice that discipleship to Christ is non-existent in today's religious organizations and almost no one believes that they have to live as a disciple in order to reach the measure of the stature of his Master.

On the basis of this false teaching, Satan has succeeded in deceiving man that the "Church" boils down just to worship in buildings fitted with preaching halls through which only religious education is given to man.

First of all, he worked at replacing the spiritual **parents/pastors** who are in charge of raising their children, with preachers/leaders in preaching, with ministers devoted only to worship programs, who are charged only with institutionalized education and keeping the flock in scattered form, by no means raising children. (The wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. John 10:12)

In this way, the Church became just a center of religious education, thus losing its purpose, no longer being the place for the growth and perfection of saints where the principalities and powers in heavenly places look on and marvel. (To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Ephesians 3:10-11)

If we look at today's religious organizations, we can easily see how well Satan managed to deceive mankind, all practicing this institutionalized worship system. Beginning with Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Lutherans, to the Post-Reformation movements all follow the same pattern of organisation, with buildings built specifically for worship and preaching.

Thus, the one who wishes to live in a practical way the discipleship life, which implies an infant (child) – parent relationship, will find himself in the ridiculous situation of finding no spiritual parent. This is because today in most congregations there is a complete lack of spiritual parents, as Paul was for Timothy, Titus and Onesimus, these being replaced by preaching pastors, committee members, youth leaders... (Thou therefore, my son, be strong. 2 Timothy 2:1)

The spiritual parents are those who are appointed/empowered by the Holy Spirit to provide both the upbringing and care of children. (Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you

overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Acts 20:28)

In order to be able to do this, children must obey them in all things. (Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. 1 Peter 5:5)

Obedience is described to us in the Scripture as being a complete obedience without turning to the right or to the left. (Thou shalt do according the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. Deuteronomy 17:11)

This is the only way to reach our perfection, only if we obey our elders in all things. (Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account. Hebrews 13:17; He gave some... pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints. Ephesians 4:11, 12)

It is good to understand the difference between education and growing up under parental authority. Through preaching, we only receive teaching, not parental nurture.

We can see how big the difference is when we look at an orphan child and a child who has parents. Both receive an education. But for the child who has parents, in addition to education they will be there to build his character, to encourage him in the good things and correct him in what he does wrong. On the other hand for an orphan child, if he does wrong things, there will be no one at his side to correct him.

We must understand well that we will not be able to grow to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ if we do not have spiritual parents. In the epistles of Paul to Timothy, Titus and Philemon, the Holy Scripture gives us apostle Paul as an example of a spiritual parent.

Even though Timothy and Titus were of a high spiritual stature, apostle Paul still counseled and commanded them how to proceed in their spiritual lives. (For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 1 Corinthians 4:15 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy... 1 Timothy 1:18)

We advise the reader not to wish to find himself in an institutionalized gathering that only practices worship and preaching, to be lonely, like an orphan child, and thus avoid the Body of Christ that is fitly joined together and compacted.

Let us flee from the assembly that does not practice care and submission; which does not have spiritual parents. There is the work of Satan with which he deceived the religious world; there is not the Body of Christ.

Let us desire to be in a body where the whole Word of Christ can be fulfilled, where each member gives its part to reach the stature for which we were created, so that Christ's image may be imprinted in us.

## The work of thwarting God's plan

Throughout all history Satan has used all sorts of tricks to prevent man from understanding what purpose God has for him. Where he could not deceive man with indulgences or almsgiving, he came with the **faith in the sacrifice at the cross**, he emphasized its role in order for salvation to be limited to the forgiveness of sins.

On the basis of the same doubt that he slipped into Eve's mind with the question: "Hath God indeed said so?" using the fact that there is no man without sin, he worked and slipped doubt into man's mind by making him believe that it is not possible to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

He slipped doubt into the hearts of most deceiving them that the Lord's commandment "be ye perfect" cannot be fulfilled. (Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Matthew 5:48)

He has worked in such a way so that man may not understand God's purpose, so that he may not begin the discipleship life in the school of Christ.

It would be good for each of us to ask ourselves: Does this doctrine of "salvation that resumes only to the **forgiveness of sins**" have a Biblical basis?

In order to lead us into error, Satan has only used part of the Scriptural truth, bringing man just part of the Gospel, the same way he used two thousand years ago, when he tempted the Son of God in the wilderness. He thus brings us part of God's truth which he gives us as being the only truth, leading man into believing that salvation boils down to the forgiveness of sins.

Satan was careful to remove from God's plan the work of growing and perfecting the saints, deceiving man that for salvation the perfection of character is not necessary.

He thus entrusted people that even if they lead a holy and pure life, perfection is not possible (sin cannot be overcome). He deceived them that even they pursue sanctification, this will perhaps assure them a reward but it will not qualify them for the Kingdom because man can only be saved by grace through faith without works. (Ephesians 2:8)

By this false teaching he abolished discipleship and the importance of the school of Christ (of His teachings), deceiving man that these are not part of the salvation plan. Thus he brought man in the situation of no longer giving importance to the commandments of Christ and the sanctifying work of the Spirit. (...through sanctification of the Spirit. 1 Peter 1:2)

Thus, in these 2000 years, he has fooled entire generations that perfection is not possible, offering mankind the teaching that salvation consists just in the forgiveness of sins.

We can see how well he has succeeded. Most of those who bear the name of Christians stop at the salvation without great costs, at the "doctrine of the forgiveness of sins". This is visible when we look at those who think they are "born again" and who have a bankrupt life of faith.

They recognize that they do not have victory over sin, that they do not have the



fruit of the Spirit, and yet they are convinced that they will partake of salvation by the Lord's mercy because they believed in the sacrifice at the cross.

## The large religious organizations - Satan's Empire

On the basis of this "false doctrine", which entrusts man that salvation is limited only to the forgiveness of sins, Satan has worked in collaboration with his servants to create a large religious empire.

He has laid the foundation of the large religious organizations which transmitted this teaching and ensnared the ignorant multitudes in their trap.

He took advantage of man's predisposition to obtain that which he desires without it costing him, knowing that he will easily give up the offer that costs him more. So he came with an offer that costs you little; you pay indulgences, give alms or believe in the sacrifice at the cross (that Lord Jesus paid for you) and you get **your ticket to heaven**.

Thus for most people Satan's offer is much more appealing than God's offer which costs you the crucifixion of your fleshly nature and the renunciation of the world. (Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life. Matthew 7:14)

In accordance to man's predisposition, most people are influenced by the cheap offer, the "doctrine of the forgiveness of sins" that allows going on the broad way, this also being confirmed by the Holy Scripture. (For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Matthew 7:13)

Whoever wants to look more attentively will be able to observe that Satan, like a great merchant, has created a great religious empire with which to keep people in darkness, so that man may not know the truth regarding God's plan.

Thus, he has positioned for himself in each country, religious organizations (similar to supermarket chains) to offer cheap tickets to heaven, and managed to catch in this trap billions of people.

Man, owing to ignorance, is thus caught in the net of these religious movements and by belonging to one of them, most often without a personal decision, but because he was born that way (Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Jehovah's witness...), remains in Satan's subordination all his life.

If we look at all these big religious organizations from our days, which were created hundreds of years ago, we can easily see that this great project that Satan has been working on has succeeded. None of them have in their doctrine this perfection plan of God, and man because of not knowing the Scriptures remains all his life on the broad way to hell.

To see how great this work of erring of Satan is, we will take a brief look at this religious empire spread all over.

The first great world organization initiated by Satan was Catholicism (today

there are approximately 1.3 billion people) which indoctrinated multitudes of people for entire generations with the teaching that sin cannot be overcome, he deceived them that the goal of God is only the forgiveness of sins and that you can obtain this forgiveness of sins by the payment of indulgences.

By restricting access to the Holy Scripture, which could only be read in Latin, which was known only to priests, Catholicism kept people in darkness for centuries.

We can also note that Eastern Orthodoxy (worldwide there are about 280 million) has indoctrinated for hundreds of years with the same teaching, which says that to have eternal life you only need to have the forgiveness of sins and these can be obtained after death through the prayers made for the dead, alms...

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, access to the Holy Scripture was also restricted to the common man, it being available only in the Slavonic language, for hundreds of years.

For about fifteen centuries, Satan has managed to hide the Scriptures from the eyes of men and offered the ticket to get into God's Heaven without too high costs, requiring only rituals, by paying indulgences, alms...

## The incomplete Gospel - A work of erring!

Following the thread of history, we see that with the advent of printing, the Holy Scripture became available in the languages of many nations. By researching it, people began to open their eyes, forcing Satan to find other ways to deceive man.

Satan was forced to make use of the Word of the Scripture, which he placed in such a way as to continue to secure cheap tickets to heaven. He brought to man an incomplete Gospel by which he succeeded to deceive, besides the Eastern Orthodox and Catholics, other multitudes of people. This is how new teachings came about, all based on the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins.

We must note that Satan had as main objective the establishment of as many religious movements as possible, with teachings as varied as possible, to secure as cheap tickets to heaven as possible and thus catch as many people in his net as possible.

The so-called reformation of Luther from the XVI century was a first great offer, by which he entrusted the ignorant man that he can obtain salvation "only by mentally believing in the Lord's sacrifice". Therefore man no longer needs the payment of indulgences, of alms, because someone else paid the price for him, this being Lord Jesus.

Man was deceived that salvation consists only in the forgiveness of sins, which is obtained freely by believing in the sacrifice at the cross, without the payment of indulgences, with no need for works of faith.

As for God's plan of bringing us to the stature of the fullness of Christ, to perfection... it has been passed over in silence.

Then, with the passage of time, man got to know the Holy Scripture more and

more and could no longer be deceived as easily, so Satan added other offers with "increasingly diversified biblical teachings" on the basis of which many other religious organizations were formed.

These global organizations, having "distinctive teachings" from one another, have not altered Satan's initial project with which he deceived the world. We can easily notice this if we study their confessions of faith. The majority remained at the "doctrine of the forgiveness of sins". God's plan in which it is foreseen for all of us to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ is well hidden so that man may not find the way to perfection.

**Whoever will attentively analyze** will easily observe that the large religious movements spread all over the world do not have as goal the perfection of man's character.

The "more particular" teachings that differentiate an organization from another are not even by far related with God's plan which has as aim reaching the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Satan has done everything possible and has managed to well hide the true plan of God which has as objective the perfection of man. Because of these "so many confessional teachings" that are brought to us, most of us remain in a major confusion concerning salvation.

Thus, Satan, through the multitude of "religious supermarkets" spread all over the world, which have salvation "**on offer**" by faith in the sacrifice at the cross, has achieved his great goal, thus keeping man in the "doctrine of the forgiveness of sins".

Let us ask ourselves sincerely: Is this God's plan? To pay indulgences or bring alms or to keep a day? Is this God's purpose? Does He want us to utter a few words in another language, to walk after miracles, or to utter the name of Yehovah and to study the end times?

Whoever has his eyes open will see that these teachings are actually meant to keep us away from the true calling, which is to live a life of discipleship in order to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

## The bankruptcy of the incomplete Gospel

Today we can see crowds of people saying that they were "born again" decades ago and to whom it doesn't even cross their minds that they need to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

This grave deception, which will cost them their lives, happens because God's salvation plan for them was limited only to a form of godliness and forgiveness of sins.

They allowed themselves to be deceived by Satan that the life of a "born again" Christian is characterized by falling, repenting, confessing and again falling into the same sin or sins and that is how it will be until the moment of death. And this happens because we are taught that it is not possible for sin to be overcome and in the end we will be attributed the righteousness of Lord Jesus.

Many pray to God to overcome a particular sin or numerous sins (slander, anger,

idle words...), and the second or third day, they find that they are again overcome by them. Because in their Christian life they do not have victory over sin (anger, greed...), they cannot believe that it would be possible to live a life similar to that of Lord Jesus, which would lead them to the perfection of their character.

Thus they came to the conclusion that this is the true life of the "born again" Christian who will eventually reach heaven, but not on the basis of what he lived on earth, but on the basis of the perfect life of the Savior which is passed on to his account.

This is the **statute of the religious man**, who preached, taught, spoke in tongues, prophesied, performed miracles, kept a day, but did not believe that God required him to live **a life of complete obedience** and transformation in the image of the Lord.

However, at the end of life he will have a great surprise. (**Many will say** to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? **And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you:** depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Matthew 7:22-23)

We see the major bankruptcy in multitudes of Christians who believe they are "born again", but when they are on their deathbed, on the last hundreds of meters, they run to the only option offered by Satan, to the Lord's mercy for the "forgiveness of sins". We see many who are tormented by the thought that they have not lived in peace with their fellow men, with their brothers in faith, and seek them out to ask forgiveness from them.

The bankruptcy of this incomplete Gospel, which is limited only to forgiveness of sins, forces them to search their minds for sins which have still remained in their lives, to ask the Lord's forgiveness for them, hoping in His grace and mercy. This happens because they have not believed, nor worked to reach the stature of the fullness of Christ.

However, we must remind them that the "**atonement doctrine**" offered by Satan, "of the salvation that consists only in the forgiveness of sins" carries with it the fear of punishment, for the Scriptures require us to be victorious over sin. (Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for **I have not found thy works perfect** before God. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life. Revelation 3:2)

Whoever has not worked to reach the stature of the fullness of Christ will have this fear until he closes his eyes. Whoever will accept this deceitful offer cannot have full confidence in the day of judgment.

Only when we reach the measure of the stature of Christ will we have His love, which is perfect, and only this love drives away fear and will give us full confidence in the day of judgment. (Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. 1 John 4:17-18)

If the religious organization or congregation (group) in which we find ourselves in does not put into practice God's plan, if it does not make disciples and does not

place them in the school of Christ, with the purpose of raising them to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Lord Jesus, but reduces itself only to obtaining salvation through faith in the sacrifice on the cross, this organization **is not of God**; it is not the Body of Christ.

We must run away from such an organization that promotes Satan's project with which he has deceived the world.

The Church is the Body of Christ and was designed by God not to call people to religious programs, but for the growth and perfection of saints; that is its purpose. (He gave some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints... till we all come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13)

Lord Jesus warns us to search the Holy Scripture so that we do not err from God's truth regarding His plan, a plan which foresees the perfection of our character. (**Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.** Matthew 5:48)

In order not to let ourselves be deceived by Satan, we must understand that we are called not only to be forgiven of sins, but to grow as disciples until we reach the perfection required by the statute of being a brother of Lord Jesus.

## Drawn more by the beauty of darkness

We have at our disposal two offers: the beauty of Christ's character and of the Kingdom of God, which involves the crucifixion of the fleshly nature, and the beauty of the kingdom of darkness, with the one moment pleasures of sin.

Most people, when they are shown **how the true Jesus lived**, or better said, when they are shown the beauty of the traits of His heart, they are not attracted by these "modest traits" and reject them as something to be despised, they are not interested in imprinting in their character this modest and humiliating, to be disdained character. (But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:14)

Most people remain only at a form of godliness, only to what the Lord did for them at the cross. Lord Jesus calls all people to live as He lived, but people despise the traits of His heart and no one pays attention to them. It is easier to choose the one moment pleasures of sin and to believe what is preached to you today, that they are fully forgiven at the cross.

Let us not deceive ourselves, for great will be our disappointment on the day of judgment, the day of God's wrath. (For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Romans 1:18)

If, for example, we live in the sin of anger, if anger is for us still a way of life after decades of "repentance", let us understand that we have not been full of admiration towards one of the most beautiful traits of His heart, namely towards the

meeekness and long-suffering of Lord Jesus.

The new birth is the beginning of the work of perfection in patience. If we do not love wholeheartedly, with all our might this character trait of Lord Jesus, God's perfection work has not begun; we have not yet been received as disciples in the school where the patience that Christ had is taught.

All things must be made new, old things must disappear. (Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17)

Also, if our life is still unchanged in terms of righteousness, if we do not admire and love this beautiful character trait of Lord Jesus, if we do not hunger and thirst to live in righteousness as He lived, God's perfection work has not begun.

The Word of Scripture speaks to us very clearly, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." (1 John 3:9-10)

If we disregard the authorities that are from God, if we speak evil, of both the rulers and others... if we live in the lusts of the fleshly nature, it means that we are still in the old state, in which sin is a way of life, not yet being born of God.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. (Romans 13:1)

## Personal research

It is good to examine ourselves each in the light of the Word and ask ourselves what type of new birth we had. Are we drawn by the beauty of Lord Jesus' traits? Are we consciously working to change ourselves into the image of Christ? Are the fruits of the Spirit's work seen in our lives?

Do we seek the Kingdom of righteousness, of peace and of love as a treasure? Do we find ourselves among those who have forsaken the things of this world?

We ask you to be honest with yourself, to check yourself in what situation you are right now. Your eternity will depend on it!

Check yourself: Are you in love with the beauty of Christ's character? Do you want to have it too? Have you made a real covenant of discipleship, of complete obedience to Christ? Do you live in righteousness and your goal is to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ? Are you obedient to the authorities ordained by God? Do you avoid paying taxes, do you love the things of the world?

The Church is the Body of Christ, it is the school that has in it only disciples of Christ.

It was designed by God for the growth and perfection of the saints, that is its purpose. (He gave some... pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, till we all come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13)

If you find yourself in an organization that does have as a purpose real discipleship to become like Christ, look for a pure congregation where the brethren care for one another have as purpose the growth and perfection of saints, so that you may grow healthily towards perfection, to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ! (Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 2 Timothy 2:22)

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If the first man was deceived by Satan and his sin passed upon all that followed, it does not mean that God's plan was flawed. All things happened as foreseen in his eternal plan, which God has carefully laid down to the smallest details.

God begins this work of restoring Christ's image in man at the moment of the new birth and has all the power to bring us to the height of Christ's fullness. (I am confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6)

God's plan is not limited to a cheap salvation, which lies only in repentance (**putting off the old man**) and the forgiveness of sins, but foresees **the restoration of God's image** in us (**putting on the new man**) and bringing us to the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13)