

The Kingdom of God and the Challenges of the End Times

Proclaiming the truth in various ways:

We need to learn how to present the biblical truth in different ways on different occasions. The Holy Spirit has granted the Church the ability to do so. Yet, nowadays, we are used to present the biblical truth in a certain set form as though we are unable to think except according to this form and only in this one direction. However, if we enter into a deeper level in understanding the Word of God, we will realise that God Himself presents the truth, through the different books of Scripture, in various ways. The reason behind this is that the human mind is limited in its ability to perceive the divine truths.

For this reason, the first church had certain guidance and counsel in reading the Word of God and this is what we need to understand well as an important introduction to our main topic.

The early church and proclaiming the Word of God:

In the early centuries, the Church pointed out the importance of determining the reader's attitude towards the Word of God before reading it. The reader of God's Word needs to approach it with mental submission and in awe knowing that it is God's special conversation with him. He also needs to approach it knowing that he needs the work of the Holy Spirit who will make the divine truth perceivable to the mind.

The early Church realised quite well what has befallen the human mind due to the fall and how it has been stricken by spiritual darkness that hinders the true understanding of the Word of God which is God's light and God's truth. The understanding of God's light and truth cannot be attained through natural abilities by which we read and understand scientific or general books. These natural mental abilities are truly a gift from God and are quite useful in general and scientific knowledge. However, we need the help of the Holy Spirit in order to be able to receive and perceive the divine knowledge:

'For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding' (Colossians 1:9).

'And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment' (Philippians 1:9).

Divine Knowledge is about the person of God and the spiritual world which is so different from the world we live in. Even if we were present in the heavenly places by faith where Jesus has seated us with Him after His resurrection and ascension, we still need quite a lot of spiritual light to be able to actually and practically perceive this presence in the heavenly realms. Therefore, we greatly need the light of the Spirit in order to enter into this understanding and perception:

"And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures". **Luke 24:45**

Due to this mental limitation in understanding and perceiving divine knowledge, the Holy Spirit resorts to the technique of "presenting the truth in different ways and various forms" in order to gradually open the human mind to the divine light. Hence, the darkness –that has entered into the human mind because of the fall –is cast out and is being replaced by the divine light. Through this divine light we start to view all things in a different way and with a different eye. We can thus see ourselves, others, God, spiritual truths and all things in a different way. This will in turn affect and determine our conduct, behaviour and reactions in the different situations.

On the other hand, if we look upon the Word of God from above through analysis and studies, this will definitely lead us into forming an untrue image about God. This image will ultimately become an idol that stands between us and the true God causing us to definitely stumble in Him. Because of this Jesus has warned us saying: *'...blessed is he who is not offended because of Me'* (Matthew 11:6). This is a new beatitude that could be added to the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount.

The message of the Kingdom: A divine herald:

The ministry of the Lord was to deliver the message of the Kingdom of God: *"...the Kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matthew 4:17). Similarly, the message of the disciples was the message of the Kingdom of God: *"...and say to them, the Kingdom of God has come near to you"* (Luke 10:9).

Here we pause to ask: isn't our message today the message of salvation?!

It is quite remarkable that in the book of Acts, which is known as the book of the ministry of the Apostles of the first Church, there isn't any phrase that shows that the apostles proclaimed the message of salvation but were always proclaiming the message of the Kingdom of God.

Of course the message of salvation is very important. How precious are the souls and how great is their salvation! The message of salvation is actually incorporated in the message of the Kingdom of God. Yet, there must be a reason behind specifying the form of the message that is presented to the Church –as we see in the ministry of Jesus and what He handed on to His disciples and Apostles.

What may help us enter into the depth of this divine purpose, regarding proclaiming the message of the Kingdom of God, is the Greek word used in this respect to refer to the ministry of evangelism and proclamation. There are different words in the Greek language that refer to "*ministry*". The word used for evangelism is a word that signifies "the necessity of standing up" while delivering this message. A teacher may sit down when he teaches, but an evangelist may not; he needs to stand up. This has an important significance.

The first Church realised that evangelism and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God is a divine herald directed to both heaven and earth. So, the evangelist is in the position of a herald, like John the Baptist was. The herald stands up in divine awe and fear, strengthened by heavenly power, and proclaims the truth before heaven and earth.

The following verses may help us understand this matter better:

2 Corinthians 2:17

"For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ".

The heaven, the earth and all creation listen to the message that is presented. Even the angels eagerly listen to the mysteries of salvation and the Kingdom of God as proclaimed by the Church of Christ through the Holy Spirit:

“To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into”. **1 Peter 1:12**

“...to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places”. **Ephesians 3:10**

Angels desire to know more about the mysteries of God. They know that these mysteries were not granted to them, but were granted to the redeemed and that through the redeemed they can perceive these mysteries.

Some scholars even say that Christ’s salvation through His crucifixion has made reconciliation not only between God and Man but has also granted something to the angels. However, we cannot perceive this matter fully because it is not related to us and there isn’t a complete or full revelation about this matter in the bible but only a hint to it in **Colossians 1: 20**: *“...and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross”.*

The angels are, therefore, keen to perceive more and more the mysteries of this reconciliation that has resulted from the act of redemption.

How great it is to realise that as we talk here today about the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, the angels surround us with great joy to hear what we say. Not only this, but even God Himself is present to listen and inspire.

May all be from Him, to Him and for His glory! Amen.

God’s Kingship (reign) and Man’s responsibility:

Why is all this and why is the case as such?

In His reign, God has chosen Man to be His representative on earth to fulfil His divine purposes on earth; exactly as the angels fulfil God's purposes in heaven. So, it would be as it is written that God's will may be fulfilled "*...on earth as it is in heaven*".

However, the fall has hindered the accomplishment and execution of God's plans; plans which we do not fully perceive now due to the darkness that was caused by the fall. Salvation was the solution that lifted up the hindrance of the fall from the way. Thus, God's plans can once more be proclaimed by the redeemed Man who has once more become the representative of God as a king on earth.

The main message, therefore, is the message of the Kingdom of God and not the message of salvation. This is because salvation was not the original plan but was the solution for a problem that has hindered the original plan. The original plan is related to God's reign on earth and fulfilling glorious things in which Man is God's representative. After salvation was completed, Man was restored to his responsibility and his message which is related to God's reign on earth. Thus, Man needs to proclaim the message of the Kingdom of God!

The message of Christ is a Kingdom message, *a Messianic message* because He is the Messiah. It is broader and more inclusive than the message of salvation, though the message of salvation is incorporated in it as explained earlier. We read about the dimensions of this Messianic message in **Isaiah 61:1-3**:

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified."

These were the words that Luke quoted in His gospel in **Luke 4: 18-19**.

As Christ's apostles, from generation to the other, that is, His disciples who believe in Him and who are sent forth in the work of His Kingdom as written in **John 17: 18** and **Romans 1: 5**, we also have a Messianic message.

"As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world". **John 17:18-19**

"Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name". **Romans 1:5**

The message of salvation saves the individuals whereas the Messianic message saves nations and peoples. This is because the Messianic message is a Kingdom herald that is proclaimed by the power of the Holy Spirit to heaven and earth. Its ultimate aim is to restore the earth one more time to submission to the Lord, the Only King! Thus, this makes us enter into the ultimate aim of the Kingdom salvation plan:

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all". **1 Corinthians 15:22-28**

Two Spheres, Two Kingdoms: Confrontation and Opposition:

Because of the fall, the devil has robbed the rule of the world. So, he became –as the bible calls him –the prince of this world:

"I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me" (John 14:30).

"...in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

Thus, a continuous confrontation existed between the Kingdom of God and the world and its prince. The Kingdom of God, the sphere of the Kingdom of God i.e. the sphere of the children of God, became in continuous confrontation with the Kingdom of darkness. There became 2 spheres, namely, the world and the Kingdom of God; representing 2 Kingdoms, namely, the Kingdom of darkness i.e. the world as a fallen system –not as God’s original creation –and the Kingdom of light which is God’s Kingdom. The prince of the Kingdom of darkness is Satan and the prince of the Kingdom of light is Jesus:

“...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1:12-13).

The question now is: what is the practical significance and implication of this on us as children of God?

This actually means that by believing in Christ, we are being cut off the sphere of the world to enter into the sphere of the Kingdom of God. Thus, we need to be complete strangers to and estranged from the sphere of the world. However, we quite often try to reconcile between the world and the Kingdom of God. We even use some biblical verses to support this attitude. So, for example, we refer to verses like: *“He has given us everything in abundance to enjoy...”* and similar verses. It is indeed true that we are called to enjoy God’s creation which glorifies Him, yet we always need to be on our guard from the other things in the world which are full of filthiness caused by the plan that the prince of this world has against God’s children. The Holy Spirit quite often warns us of this saying:

‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you’ (2 Corinthians 6:17).

‘...to keep oneself unspotted from the world’ (James 1:27).

‘by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust’ (2 Peter 1:4).

'Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him' (1 John 2:15-16).

We need to be aware of and take heed to a very important issue in this respect. We do not move from the sphere of the world into the sphere of the Kingdom of God like someone who crosses over a bridge. This is not the case at all. We actually die to the world to live in the Kingdom of God. Hence, moving from one sphere to the other means death and resurrection. This has become available to us through the death of Christ and His resurrection:

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

Hence, we live in another new world which is the Kingdom of God.

The bible describes our new image in our new world from 3 different perspectives:

- Our relationship ***with God as children*** of God in Christ.
- Our relationship ***with people as servants*** for the sake of Christ.
- Our relationship ***with the enemy as soldiers*** in a battle to proclaim the victory of Christ.

Through our worship and our relationship with God, we can gradually and increasingly perceive this intimate son-ship relation that we have with the Father in Christ and we can enjoy its privileges since we have become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

'For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together' (Romans 8:15-17).

'But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into

your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ' (Galatians 4:4-7).

As for the people, we are called to **serve them for the sake of Christ** with a humble spirit and self denial realising that we were redeemed from the death of slavery by God's mercy. Hence, we humble ourselves to win others for Christ.

In **2 Corinthians 4:5**, Paul refers to himself as a servant of the people using a Greek word that refers to the lowest grade of slaves:

'For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake' (2 Corinthians 4:5).

We may easily accept to be slaves to God, but we are actually also called to be slaves to people for Christ's sake. Our humbleness, meekness and broken spirit will break the pride of people, their proud ego that is the result of the fall, so that their spirits may be opened to receive the salvation of Christ.

As for the Kingdom of darkness, the other sphere, we are seen as enemies to them. We are, therefore, called to vigil and be always on our guard realising that there is an ongoing battle. However, what encourages us and strengthens our hearts is that the war is the Lord's and Christ has won the victory for us:

'Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it' (Colossians 2:15).

We are required to be steadfast in the battle as soldiers so that the victory of Christ may be manifested and revealed through us and in us. It is our responsibility to be God's representatives on earth; we have a responsibility on earth:

'The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth He has given to the children of men' (Psalm 115:16).

In **2 Timothy 2:3**, Paul tells Timothy:

"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

Also, in **Ephesians 6:10-20** we read about the battle with the enemy and the armour of God that helps us to withstand and be steadfast:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints — and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak”.

In the days of Nehemiah, the prophet, the people were fighting in the battle holding the sword in one hand and at the same time they were building the wall of Jerusalem holding the building materials with the other hand. In this way, they achieved what they desired. Similarly, in the Kingdom of God, we build and fight at the same time.

In **1 Corinthians 3: 9, 10** Paul talks about himself as a “wise master builder”:

“For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.”

This leads us to identify the confrontations of the End Times so that we may be more aware of the kind of war and the needs of building.

Challenges and Confrontations:

According to the Scriptures, we are supposed to be able to discern the features of the time: *'Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?'* (Luke 12:56)

Two prominent features of our current days:

- There is great acceleration in the work of God, that is, a faster move forward in God's work than before.
- At the same time, there are hardships and difficulties in the confrontations, that is, a fiercer battle with the enemy.

We know from the Scriptures that the closer we approach the second coming of Christ, the angrier our enemy becomes because he knows that his time, the time of his judgement, is drawing near:

"Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." **Revelation 12:12**

It is great to be able to discern the situation we are in and understand the scene, but we should not stop at this level. We need to go beyond this to perceive what is more important than that. In fact, grace flows in abundance, but because of the severity of the war, darkness enters into God's people and their leaders causing the Church to appear in increasing weakness and weariness.

From a general prospective, the Church includes: the true children of God, the Christians, and also the unbelievers who attend the church.

What is the solution of this situation?

This situation requires:

- Good evaluation and wise awareness and understanding.
- An open insight and a divine word.

- Being rooted in God’s word and in the fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

If we search the Scriptures to find out God’s mind in situations such as the presence of a state of weakness among God’s people and how this should be dealt with, we will encounter something totally different from all our expectations.

We might think that the solution would be to analyse the causes behind the weakness and then deal with these causes or try to find means and ways of receiving power. However, if we search God’s word, we will find a clear and specific guidance for what the solution is in such a situation. This is clear in the epistle to the Hebrews. The people were in a state of severe spiritual weakness to the extent that some of them started to think of sliding back to their old religion, Judaism. They were also facing difficult circumstances because of persecution; they lost their money and suffered many tribulations. We read this in **Hebrews 10: 32, 33**:

“But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated.”

The writer of the epistle handled this spiritual condition in a very special way. He actually called them to enter into the depth:

*“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.... And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” **Hebrews 6:1, 2, 11, 12***

He entreats them to go on to perfection and leave the past.

Why do we stay on the edge close to the world and get easily attracted to it? Let us enter into the depth of fellowship with God and let us labour a little bit in this to receive the promises. Let us look at the men of faith who received the promises, like Abraham, our father of faith. Let us not forget that Jesus is holding unto the rope, the rope of rescue

and hope and is pulling us with it towards Him from amidst the sea of the world so that we do not drown but be rescued:

“that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”. **Hebrews 6:18-20**

As true children of God, we so much need to enter into the depth so that the Holy Spirit may be poured anew on the Church and the Church may be prepared as a bride awaiting her Bridegroom.

Some practical steps and principles:

1. Entering into the rich inheritance of the End Times
2. The inner and outer Kingdom
3. Faith and mystery
4. Facing the giants

First: The rich inheritance of the End Times:

We have mentioned earlier the need to move on and press forward. But, how can this be done practically?

It is difficult for a weak person to move on and press forward. He obviously needs help. There is a need for a special grace to come to nourish our spirits so that we may move forward and shake ourselves from weakness. But, what is the way to this? How can we receive the grace that will help us?

The bible tells us about rich pouring of the Holy Spirit in the End Times:

‘Ask the Lord for rain in the time of the latter rain. The Lord will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone’ (Zechariah 10:1).

There are rich stores for God's people in Christ's heart which He awaits to release to us. We know that the riches of Christ are unsearchable (Ephesians 3:8). We need more of these riches so that we may be strengthened in our weakness and may press on. These riches will make us see the person of Christ closer and clearer. We will be able to see Him as He truly is: *"fairer than the children of men"* (Psalm 45: 2). It would then be impossible for us to sell Him for 30 pieces of silver; it would be impossible to show infidelity to our Bridegroom and commit adultery by going after the love of the world (James 4:4).

The natural question here would be:

How can these riches be released? Do we need to ask for them so that they would be released? Or, does Jesus release them according to His special plan and economy?

Let us discover these deep and important mysteries through the revelation in the word of God.

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." **John 16:12**

This is a revelatory verse. Jesus said these words to His disciples few hours before Crucifixion. What do these words mean? It seems that what broke the heart of Jesus at that time, even more than the passions awaiting Him, was the state of His disciples who were not ready or prepared to receive and perceive important things that He wished to tell them.

These things that He wanted to reveal to them but could not because they were not ready, would have made things a lot different. May be their attitude towards the Crucifixion would have been different. May be their understanding of the Crucifixion and Resurrection –which they struggled to understand –would have been different. But what is much more important than all this is that their ministry after the day of Pentecost and their proclamation to the Church of the salvation of Christ and His Kingdom would have started from a higher point than that at which they started their ministry. As a result, everything would have been different throughout the generations; everything would have been at a higher level. This would have reflected on the confrontations which the Church faces in the ministry of the Kingdom of God.

Oh, how much have the Church lost because of the state that the disciples were at before the Crucifixion and their inability to bear what Christ still needed to tell them! Yet, we thank God because we know that He is faithful with those who are faithful. Throughout the generations, whenever there was a prepared soul who longed, aspired and hungered for more spiritual food, this soul was given revelations and glories:

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Matthew 5:6

We know that all what happens in the Kingdom of God happens according to God's rules which usually take us gradually from one stage to the other and from one thought to the other until we are able to perceive and obey.

Apostle Paul started his writings by the epistle to the Thessalonians in which he presented a clear simple truth regarding the End Times and also regarding Love, hope and faith. He then gradually moved higher in the divine revelation and we see a distinct height in the divine revelation in his epistles to the Colossians (in which he talks about the Head) and to the Ephesians (in which he talks about the Body). Through this, we realise the necessity of the gradual moving up in the divine revelation.

Entering into the depth also requires our readiness to receive what is in Christ's heart for the Church these days so that we may be able to be transformed into His image, be steadfast in our confrontations and be ready for His second coming.

Are we ready to receive what is in Christ's heart, or, will Jesus tell us as He told His disciples: "you cannot bear"?!

The stumbling block for God's people is that they cannot enter into their full inheritance, but are quite easily satisfied with the little they get. Woe, because of this spiritual satisfaction!

In **Joshua 13:1**, we read about God's people entering into their inheritance in the Land of Promise. The major battles were completed and they were victorious in these battles; yet, few other battles remained that each tribe had to complete, but they didn't. The result was that strange nations lived amongst them and at times God's people

worshipped the idols of these strange nations who lived among them. This has actually caused them to lose their Land of Promise and be exiled; they went into captivity.

Today, we are in a very similar situation. It is true that our Land of Promise is not visible nor are our battles visible; we do not have visible idols. Yet, in the New Testament, there is usually the unseen parallel to what happened in the Old Testament. Our battles are spiritual battles and our inheritance is also a spiritual inheritance. Therefore, our stumbling block is through unseen idol worship. For example, this can be through going after the lusts of the flesh or the world with its temptations, neglecting our calling to be holy and live in the fear of God:

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” 2 Corinthians 7:1

- **The spirit of the world causes us to lose the spiritual appetite:**

If we are taken in spiritual adultery and forget our calling in Christ, we lose appetite for spiritual matters and we also lose our hunger for the unsearchable riches.

These unsearchable riches of Christ cannot be released unless we hunger for them so that we can receive them and live by them. This does not refer to a mental desire to study the Word of God more nor is it a desire to discover more of the truth; it is a desire to discover the person of Christ more and know Him more: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life...”* (John 14: 6). Therefore, it is not the truth that the mind perceives, but the truth that is revealed to our inner man, to our hearts and spirits:

“whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them... For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:4-6

There is a knowledge that should be revealed to the heart; yet, at the same time there is some kind of darkness which has come on our spirits since the fall. Accepting Jesus Christ as a Saviour starts to cast away this darkness, yet, this casting away of the

darkness needs to be completed. This is completed through knowing the person of Christ more and knowing His glory by revelation.

- **Our Lost Inheritance:**

Not only do we need to have spiritual hunger and appetite so that our rich inheritance would be released, but we also need to restore an old spiritual inheritance which was given to the Church over the centuries, especially in the apostolic age, but the Church has lost a big part of it. This was due to difficult confrontations at times and lack of vigilance at other times.

The question is:

Could we possibly be entrusted on our awaited spiritual inheritance of the End Times after losing our old inheritance and not restoring it?

If a father, for example, gave an inheritance to his son and this son took it and wasted it. Then, he came back to his father to take more. The father gave him more, yet the son wasted it again. What then? Will the son still be entrusted on more?

The heavenly Father looks upon us as one son gathered together in Christ as written in **Ephesians 1: 10**: *“that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth — in Him.”*

The heavenly Father says: “My son is wasting his inheritance. How can I give him more?”

There is also another factor regarding why we cannot receive the new inheritance without restoring the old one. It is not only a matter of how we could be entrusted on more when we have not restored what we lost, but the fact that our new inheritance is linked to the old inheritance. The old riches will enlighten our minds and stir our spirits for desiring more of the knowledge of Christ. So, when these new divine gifts are released, we will be able to receive them or rather we will be awaiting them since we have become well prepared for them through what was restored to us from the old inheritance.

This was the case in the Church in its first centuries and this is the purpose of this message: linking the old with the new and being well prepared to receive more of Christ's riches. Through these riches we will then be able to stand firm and be steadfast before the challenges of the End Times.

These awaited riches comprise 2 important aspects:

A. True revelation about the person of Christ, His love, His faithfulness and His ways

This revelation will certainly change our relationship with the world and how we view everything else. We will become different; we will become true witnesses for Christ even if this meant that we will also be martyrs for Christ!

Nothing will seem difficult or frightening because of the rich grace and the new knowledge which is accompanied by a new relationship with the Person of Christ as was the case in the Church in its early days and in the ages of martyrdom. The love of Christ will be like fire inside us and will truly separate us from the love of the world:

*"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." **Romans 8:35-39***

B. New pouring of the Holy Spirit

Such pouring will restore to the Church the main offices mentioned in **Ephesians 4: 11:** *'And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers'.*

It is true that there are some manifestations of these offices in our present days; yet, they are not in their full power or function. Restoring these offices to their fullness will

bring the Church from the stage of spiritual childhood to the stage of manhood, power and steadfastness:

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:11-13

The main purpose of the Church offices is clear in the above verses and that is: *“the equipping of the saints”* which leads to *“the edifying of the body of Christ”* which in turn leads to *“the unity of the faith”*.

Therefore, there is certainly a possibility of the unity of the faith. Nowadays, we gather together in worship or in ministry on the level of the unity of love where each one keeps his doctrines of faith aside. However, in His second coming, Christ will come to take a bride who has one faith and not a divided bride. This is what these offices can lead to. Through them, the Church is given new revelations of the faith: revelations about the person of Christ and the biblical truths, which will unite the Church and gather her together: *“that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth — in Him.”*

Ephesians 1:10

“that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head —Christ — from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” **Ephesians 4:14-16**

- **The Fullness of the Times:**

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.” **Galatians 4:4**

“that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth — in Him.” **Ephesians 1:10**

The time will come when all will be fulfilled and the form of the Church of Christ will be changed to become ready as a bride for His second coming. The bible calls this time: *“the fullness of ages”* or *“the fullness of the times”*.

In Christ’s first coming to be incarnated, there was a special divine timing that was called *“the fullness of the time”* (Galatians 4:4). Humanity needed to be prepared through a long journey of the work of the Holy Spirit in the days of Moses and the law and the days of the prophets until God’s time came to its fullness. Christ was then incarnated and salvation was proclaimed. This salvation was presented to humanity in different symbolic pictures until humanity became fully prepared for the coming of salvation; and then salvation was proclaimed.

Similarly, we are now moving towards “another divine timing” of these fullness of times and that is the time of Christ’s second coming. This requires the work of the Holy Spirit through the Church of Christ over several stages and the ministry of God’s true men each in his/her role and calling according to God’s economy and plan.

If one wants to live as a man of God, submitting to God’s will and to the economy of His times, one has to discover his/her place inside the successive linked chain of preparation which is moving towards the fullness of the time of Christ’s second coming so that one’s work would link with what’s before it and what’s after it.

However, we sometimes do not like this manner of doing things. We, especially in the west, do not like to be part of a work or part of a chain. We tend to prefer that each would have his/her own work which he/she starts and ends and has his name linked to it. Each one sees himself in his own work and gains satisfaction through it. So, if one becomes part of an extended work or part of a chain, he feels as if he has lost his entity.

Yet, God alone is the beginning and the end. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega. Each one of us completes his part of the work, but it is Christ who works in us so that we may *“will”*

and “do”: *‘For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure’* (Philippians 2:13).

Christ alone knows what needs to be done according to His united mind with the Father:

“But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working” ...Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.” **John 5:17-20**

One’s self centeredness, however, will not hinder God’s plan that is thus drawn. Yet, this self centeredness may, unfortunately, push one far from the place that is prepared for him in the chain which is moving towards the fullness of the time. Everything will thus happen in its time, but this self centred person will be the one who will be estranged from what’s happening around him. This person, therefore, may not perceive the rich inheritance when it is released because he will be unprepared to receive his portion of it.

Therefore, it is important to perceive the old inheritance and nourish on it so that it may change our way of thinking. As a result, each one can take his right place in the chain of the divine preparation towards the fullness of the time of Christ’s appearance in His Kingdom. This will also make one prepared to receive the rich inheritance and also become able to stand firm in the confrontations.

Everything will then be changed!

Yes, it will be changed!

We shall enter into His glory and His glory will be proclaimed and it will fill all the earth!

Second: The Inner and Outer Kingdom:

According to the understanding of the early Church, God’s Kingdom cannot come with power among us unless it first comes with power in our inner life:

“...For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” **Luke 17:21**

According to its Greek origin, the word “*within you*” used here means: “*inside you and among you*”.

Man is the representative of God, the King, on earth. So, if one does not accept God’s absolute Kingship and reign over his life, how can he reflect it to his generation?!

We usually proclaim Jesus King of our life and pray asking Him to be King of our life; yet, we quiet often do this in a general way without fully understanding the biblical truths related to this matter. Therefore, we need to understand this matter according to the Scriptures:

‘...so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord’ (Romans 5:21).

When one receives the saving grace in his life, this grace comes to his spirit by the Holy Spirit. Yet, some thrones for sin which extend to man’s members still remain. The reign of sin means that sin erects thrones in the members. Apostle Paul uses the words: “the fallen nature”, “the power of the flesh”, and “the ego” to refer to the same issue. All of these words are synonyms that refer to the places of the manifestation of the thrones of sin. So, there are thrones in man’s mind, his hands, his feet, his abdomen, etc. However, when man ‘works out’ his salvation with fear and trembling (Ephesians 2:12), the saving grace which is in his spirit extends to his soul. Grace confronts the thrones of sin and dethrones them replacing them by the thrones of Grace. This means that Grace reigns. When Grace reigns in our inner man, Christ starts to be formed inside the soul and in the different members of the person. So, when Christ reigns in my mind, I have the mind of Christ and when He reigns in my hands and feet, I have His hands and feet and so on. Thus, *‘it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me’ (Galatians 2:20).*

This is a gradual process and it is more like an inner battle of faith between Satan’s Kingdom represented in the fallen nature and God’s Kingdom represented in the Saving Grace.

Because of the fall, some sort of barriers existed between the spirit and the soul. In **Hebrews 4: 12**, it is written that the word of God is a two-edged sword “*piercing even to the division of soul and spirit*”. Describing the word of God as a sharp two-edged sword

that pierces signifies the presence of certain barriers that need to be pierced. This makes the whole thing appear like a battle of faith as mentioned earlier.

Because of this, Paul intercedes in labour pain on behalf of the Galatians:

‘My little children, for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you...’
(Galatians 4:19)

Paul labours in birth so that the Galatians may be transformed into Christ-likeness and so that Christ may be formed in them. He labours in birth also so that the transformation mentioned earlier in the epistle in chapter 2:20: “not I but Christ”, may take place as well. In this way, the Kingship of Christ extends inside the person. Christ is a King. So, when He is formed in us, His Kingdom is proclaimed inside us. We then possess an authority to proclaim His Kingship with power and with authority to those around us. Hence, His Kingdom extends in our generation.

- **The genuine versus the false manifestations of the Kingdom:**

The above truth may help us understand other truths that are sometimes obscure and hence cause confusion to God’s people.

We all know that when the Kingdom of God is proclaimed with power, this is usually manifested through different signs and miracles. So, in the End Times, we await this powerful proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the accompanied manifestations in the form of signs and miracles. Yet, we need to be on our guard because the bible warns us that in the End Times there will also be many fake and deceitful signs [Revelation 13:13, 14 and Matthew 24:24].

Revelation 13:13-14

“He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.”

Matthew 24:24-25

“For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

This may be confusing and may cause fear and perplexity. How then can we distinguish the false from the genuine so that we are not taken in the enemy's traps?

The whole matter depends on the extent of Christ's reign inside us. When His Kingship is proclaimed and manifested inside, the true signs follow because they will be done by Christ who dwells inside us:

‘that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God’ (Ephesians 3: 17-19).

If Christ's Kingship is not manifested in us and if we only proclaim His Kingship by our words and not our lives, this would give an opportunity to the enemy to insinuate and push forward his false and deceitful signs. This would happen due to the spiritual darkness and lack of discernment that result from the absence of Christ's inner Kingship and reign. To the same extent that Christ is proclaimed inside us, the darkness of the fall is cast out of us and we become filled with a divine light. This divine light exposes any plan and economy of the devil, or rather, as soon as the enemy sees the light in God's children, he is frightened and he flees away and does not dare to carry out his false deceitful plans since he knows that they will be exposed.

- **The Transfiguration and the coming of the Kingdom of God with power:**

There is another biblical truth related to the coming of the Kingdom of God with power. Each biblical passage where the coming of the Kingdom of God with power is mentioned, is always followed by the story of Transfiguration (Matthew 16:28 and Matthew 17:1, Mark 9:1, 2 and Luke 9:27, 28).

What does this signify?

This actually signifies that the transfiguration of Jesus releases the coming of the Kingdom of God with power. Yet, how can this happen now?

Christ's transfiguration initially took place in His body, the body of His incarnation. Yet, it can still happen again today in His spiritual body, the Church, that is, in us, His children. When Christ is formed in us, He dwells in our hearts with His glory:

"that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith..." **Ephesians 3:17**

"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them..." **John 17:22**

The Kingdom of God is released with power after that.

Another reference that elaborates this and that may help us understand it better is:

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." **2 Corinthians 3:18**

We are called to see and behold the glory of the Lord in our worship. Steven saw this glory and it was written about him:

"But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." **Acts 7:55**

Therefore, the glory of God is the glory of Jesus which we are granted to see. No one can see the Father as written in **1 Timothy 6: 16**

"...the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see..."

So, we actually see the glory of the Father through the glory of Jesus. This glory comprises the redemptive work of Jesus for us; it comprises the power of the death and resurrection of Christ. As we receive renewed pouring from the power of His death and resurrection, we are transformed into His same image from glory to glory.

The early Church believed in the literal meaning of this; they took it as a real and actual thing not as metaphoric words. They believed it, lived it and taught it. As God's people are continually being transformed from glory to glory, the Kingdom of God is being

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manifested with power in them and amongst them. In this way, the Kingdom of God may come with power in our generation and in our days.

Third: Faith and Mystery:

One of the well-known expressions in the early Church is: *"the mystical life"*.

What do we mean by *"mystical life"*?

This word is sometimes criticised or is received with some kind of reservation due to the misconception of the word. Yet, let us see what the scriptures say regarding this important word:

"The secret things belong to the Lord our God..." **Deuteronomy 29:29**

Does the words of this verse mean that the secrets are hidden and that they belong to God alone and we are not to know them?! No, this is not what is meant here.

Let us then search the Scriptures more to understand better.

"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began, but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith."

Romans 16:25-26

The mysteries and secrets are revealed and are made manifest to God's people at a certain time and for a certain purpose.

"But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God...Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God." **1 Corinthians 2:9, 10, 12**

We were given the Holy Spirit to reveal to us all what has been prepared for us even the deep things of God!

We might think that what is written in the above verses –regarding what eye has not seen or ear heard –refer to things in the life to come. However, if this was the case, this verse would not have been immediately followed by the verse that reads: *“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.”* In the life to come, there will be no need for this revelation because everything will then be clear and manifest as written in **1 Corinthians 13: 12**: *“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.”*

Therefore, all these glorious things mentioned in **1 Corinthians 2: 9** are granted to us now so that we may discover them and gradually enter into their mystery and depth through the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of revelation.

In **Ephesians 1: 17 -19** we read that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of revelation:

“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.”

It is also quite remarkable that it is written that the Holy Spirit reveals to us *“even the deep things of God”*. This signifies that the glorious mystical things are about what is in the depth of God, the heart of God. This leads us to true change and transformation to be in harmony with God’s heart. The other different pictures that our minds form about the image of change that we want to be transformed to does not succeed because they are man-made and are not according to God’s mind and heart. Life wells out of the heart, so, if our hearts are changed, our whole life will definitely change: *‘Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life’* (Proverbs 4:23).

- **The Light of the mind versus the Light of the spirit:**

In receiving the knowledge of the truth, we usually focus on the mind. We tend to believe that when we obey the truth in the knowledge which our mind receives, we are changed. Though this is correct, this knowledge only affects and changes the outer conduct and behaviour. The reason behind that is that we are completely unaware of

the inner things that have occurred deep inside us as a result of the darkness and corruption of the fall.

According to the Early Fathers, there are 2 dimensions in understanding the Word of God. One is the direct dimension which is the direct interpretation of the Word and its application. This is good, yet it only changes the outer conduct. The other dimension is the deep dimension that comes through a divine revelation that reveals the depth of the word of God which is the depth of God's mind. It then becomes a food for the spirit and changes the inner man; it changes our inner life and everything inside us.

In the Old and New Testaments, the Holy Spirit is described as *"the spirit of wisdom and understanding"* (Isaiah 11: 2) and as *"the spirit of wisdom and revelation"* (Ephesians 1:17). It is therefore clear that we need the Holy Spirit to reveal to us a knowledge which is higher than our mental abilities and intellectual perception. This revelation is so essential to our life; otherwise, we would not have been granted this special ability through the Holy Spirit.

When this revelation comes to us, it is accompanied by the coming of God's life into our hearts and our spirits. Since this life is the life of God Himself, the divine and eternal life, it casts away the death that has come inside us because of the fall renewing us from inside:

"...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." **John 10:10**

This life sends a divine light to the mind which also casts away the darkness of the fall from the mind:

"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." **John 1:4**

We notice that, according to Apostle John, life comes first then light.

- **Two Levels of Light:**

It is therefore clear that there are 2 levels of light. The first level is the level of the natural intellectual light, that is, the natural abilities of the human mind. This is a special divine gift which distinguishes Man from the rest of creation making Man the crown of

creation. However, it is considered a limited light in terms of its ability to perceive divine matters. The reason behind this is that divine matters are superior and are far beyond the limitations of the human mind.

If Man was able to perceive divine matters by the natural human mind, divine perception and understanding would thus differ from one person to the other depending on each one's level of intelligence and educational background. There are well educated people with rich intellectual talents and abilities and there are also people with limited education and limited intellectual abilities. If divine matters were to be perceived by the natural human abilities of the mind, the perception of these divine matters would differ from one person to the other. Who would then be responsible for this difference in perception and understanding?! Would man be responsible for that or would it be God who has granted each person a certain portion of understanding and intellectual gifts?!

The understanding of spiritual matters is far beyond the abilities of the human mind. This understanding actually comes through revelation which does not depend on any mental abilities.

Throughout the centuries, people stopped at the level of the intellectual understanding with its limitations. This has caused them to view the Scriptures differently depending on the difference in the intellectual perception. This has in turn led to many divisions in the Church. However, this was not the case in the first Church. In the first Church they depended on divine revelation. This has led them to have one mind and one vision.

- **“In Your Light we see light” (Psalm 36: 9)**

There is a difference between the light of the human mind and the light coming from the divine revelation.

The light of the human mind is derived from the personal intellectual abilities. These abilities are no doubt a gift from God. God is the source of this light as well. However this light is limited. Besides, much of this gift and abilities have been lost because of the darkness of the fall that has entered in it. Because of this, we read in Luke 24:25 that the disciples needed the Lord to open their minds to divine matters after His resurrection.

The light of divine revelation, on the other hand, comes –as a divine gift –as a result of worship and fellowship with God.

We need to use the limited light of our minds –which is granted to us by God –in a spirit of prayer, to understand as much as we can of the spiritual matters. Yet, we need to come before the Lord in divine fear and complete awareness that we are in need of more understanding to be able to grasp spiritual matters. As we pray and wait before the Lord in prayer, we are granted the other level of light which is the light of the divine revelation. In **Psalm 36: 9**, the Psalmist says: “*In Your light we see light*”. As much as we obey the light which is given to us, we find that it increases and fills us causing us to enter into deeper mysteries in the Word of God, in the knowledge of God and the awaited heavenly riches!

Not only does the natural human light of the mind limit our biblical knowledge, but it also limits our knowledge of God. Therefore, each one forms his own image of God according to his own mind. This is indeed a very serious issue. It simply means that we limit God and make Him small in order to be able to fit Him in our minds. It also means that each person will have an image of God which is different from the others based on each one’s mental and intellectual perception. This leads us to have an untrue image of God and causes divisions to increase. Besides, this untrue image of God that we form for ourselves becomes an idol that stands in the way between us and the true God. As a result, we become more estranged from God and hence estranged from ourselves since we are created on God’s image.

Therefore, there is a great need to receive “the divine light”. This light not only nourishes our spirits through revelation¹, but it also enlightens our minds with God’s supreme light. This divine light extends inside our spirits, fills our whole being and transforms us into “*creatures of light*” who still temporarily dwell on earth to complete an assigned responsibility. Therefore, in the early writings, we quite often read this expression about the redeemed: “*earthly angels*”.

¹ Revelation is a spiritual food because the Word of God which was given to us as food (Jeremiah 15: 16) is the source of this revelation.

This process is actually the process of continual renewal of mind referred to in **Romans 12: 2**: *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

As a result, we can grow in true revelatory divine knowledge according to God’s mind. Hence we can all have one understanding of the Word of God and this is what shall unite us as Christ’s Church in the one faith and bring us to “the unity of faith” as written in **Ephesians 4:13**: *“till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”*

In such a way, we will be prepared as an undivided bride who awaits her Bridegroom and who has *His mind and His image!*

Based on this, we realise that the Church needs something else in addition to what she has known after the Reformation. After the Reformation, the Church talked about faith. The emphasis was on believing and obeying the Word of God which one perceives and understands.

In his epistles, Paul uses another word in addition to the word “faith”. This word does not contradict faith, but it actually complements it and that is the word “mystery” or “mysterion” in the Greek language. It is quite remarkable that all the great foundations of the faith, according to Paul, are “mysteries”. Below are some references to illustrate this:

- Christ is a mystery:

Ephesians 3:4: *“by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.”*

Colossians 1:26, 27: *“the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

Colossians 2:2: *“that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ.”*

Colossians 4:3: *“meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains.”*

- The Church is a mystery:

Ephesians 3:4, 6, 9: *“by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ...that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel... and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ.”*

Ephesians 5:31, 32: *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”*

- The Gospel is a mystery:

Ephesians 6:19: *“and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.”*

- Faith is a mystery:

1 Timothy 3:9: *“holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.”*

- Transgression is a mystery:

2 Thessalonians 2:7: *“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.”*

Christ Himself has said that **all Kingdom matters are “mysteries”!** In Matthew 13: 11, He told His disciples: *“...it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven...”*

It is clear from the above references that all major and essential issues of faith are mysteries: Christ, the Church, faith, the gospel and all Kingdom matters. What else is left
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to be said? How can we then say anything against the “mystical life”?! Aren’t we clearly called to live this mystical life in order to perceive the mysteries and riches that are granted to us? Aren’t we called to enter into its grace, revelation and the abundance of life stored for us?!

- **What is meant by “mystical life” and how can we live it?**

There is a certain divine feature deposited in the children of God which allows them to receive the supreme matters which are beyond their mental understanding by faith in their spirits. Even if God’s children were only able to perceive the preliminary truths in these supreme spiritual matters, they shall continue to seek more of their depth and mystery.

We perceive the supreme spiritual matters through this divine feature and then they are gradually revealed to our minds as divine revelations that nourish our spirits, enlighten our being and edify the Church of Christ.

Every divine truth revealed in the Word of God has a primary, direct and simple meaning which we perceive by our minds. However, there is also a deeper and greater meaning and dimension in the Word of God than just the simple and direct meaning.

The Word of God is an Incarnation of the Person of God. It is the Logos, the Word, the Son. This requires that we receive it by faith in our spirits, without necessarily understanding it, until the light of the truth is revealed and manifested in different measures that gradually open the mind, broaden it and broaden its understanding and perception through the economy of the Holy Spirit until it can receive the truth. This light continues to extend with its act of salvation inside the soul. This process actually requires us to learn to nourish on the Word of God.

How can we feed on the Word of God and be nourished by it?

In the early Church the way to do this was through what was known as the “Hagig”. According to the Greek language, the word “Hagig” means “murmuring”. This is translated into English as “meditate”. This word is actually taken from various parts of the Scriptures:

Joshua 1:8: *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night..."*

The same word was also extensively used in Psalm 119 in verses 15, 97, 99, 148 and other verses:

Psalm 119:15 *"I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways"*

Psalm 119:97, 99 *"Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day...I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation."*

Psalm 119:148 *"My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word."*

The word "murmuring" or "meditate in" practically means: the repetition of the biblical verses in a worshipping spirit, in stillness and in prayer, so that one may be immersed in the Word and it becomes implanted deep in him. It then starts to open up inside him with its mystery and the grace stored in it. Hence, it releases its mystical work. The mystical work is the divine act stored in it. The stored divine act is the particular truth that the Word of God proclaims and talks about in the particular passage that we meditate in.

The early Church gave great importance to the different acts of salvation, namely, the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, the pouring of the Holy Spirit and Christ's second coming. They thus set apart certain seasons for these acts of salvation. These seasons were considered salvation seasons. In each salvation season, they used to "murmur" or "meditate in" the truth related to each particular act of salvation: the incarnation, the resurrection and so on. They did this through repeating in a spirit of worship the biblical verses and passages related to each particular act of salvation. They talked about the verses, preached them when they gathered together and they repeated them in their prayers. The mysteries that are stored and deposited in the biblical verses were thus opened up and were revealed to their minds. They were revealed as a truth that comprises a divine authority which enables the person to walk in that truth.

This actually leads to true inner change that changes the inner man and a true outer change that changes the conduct. Hence, we become Christ-like as a result of Christ's formation inside us: *'My little children, for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you'* (Galatians 4: 19).

This happens when we deeply enter into the acts of salvation through continuous "murmuring" and "meditating in" these acts of salvation year after the other each in its season.

These are not all the results of mystical life. The above also leads to the opening of the spiritual insight:

"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." **1 John 5:20**

This spiritual insight helps us to have a true and correct prophetic vision. It is well known that both in the Old and New Testaments God's people were called to acquire a prophetic vision:

"Then Moses said to him, "Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29)

'However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come' (John 16:13).

Through this spiritual insight we can also understand and look at the things that happen around us with a prophetic eye. In other words, the events will speak to us or rather God will speak to us through the events. We thus become in a continuous conversation with God, our Father, as was the case with Adam before the fall. This conversation will be in the language of the spirit; a language which we need to learn and progress in, exactly like with any other language that one learns. We can then be easily led by God's mind in the different situations of our life and in making decisions in our daily life. We will be assured by God's grace that they will be completely in accordance to God's mind because of the opening of the insight, the prophetic vision and learning the language of

the spirit through which we can perceive God's daily and continual talk to us and are led by it (John 14: 26, John 16: 13-14, Psalm 32: 8).

- **Spiritual Disciplines:**

The Early Church had a clear understanding about the mystical life, the need to chew on the Word of God regularly, and to journey from one season of salvation to the other year after year for the purpose of working out the acts of salvation in the inner man. Actually, this is the practical meaning of: *"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling":*

'Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure' (Philippians 2: 12, 13).

Because of this clear understanding that the Early Church had regarding these matters, the Church taught the congregation the necessity of spiritual disciplines. This was quite obvious for everyone and was taken for granted by everyone.

In the early chapters of the book of Acts and also in other books of the Scripture, we notice the frequent use of the word "continually" or "continue", that is, to do something regularly without stopping. The believers of the early Church regularly followed some spiritual practices like praying, teaching the Word of God, having fellowship and breaking the bread:

'These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers' (Acts 1:14).

'And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers' (Acts 2:42).

'So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart' (Acts 2:46).

'...but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word' (Acts 6:4).

The same word was also repeated in other books of the Scripture:

'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints' (Ephesians 6:18).

'Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving' (Colossians 4:2).

Because some spiritual disciplines were practised in a fleshly way and in absence of a true understanding of the spiritual purpose behind them, they were considered by some people as legalistic practices that one should be cautious of. Yet, there is actually a huge difference between legalistic practices and spiritual disciplines.

Legalistic practices are mainly directed to God where the doer thinks that in so doing he pleases God, gains favour in His sight and can thus receive more grace. It appears as though the person who does these practices offers them to God in return for grace. However, in true fact grace is free. Therefore, this is a wrong belief and practice.

Spiritual disciplines, on the other hand, are directed towards the inner soul. The purpose behind them is to broaden the soul and allow it to be purified so that it may be prepared to receive the free grace and grow in it as written in **John 1: 16**: *"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace."*

Though Apostle Paul was the apostle who spoke about the free grace, he still entreats us to labour in the spirit and be diligent in order to fulfil the above mentioned purpose.

Below are some references in this respect from the teaching of Apostle Paul and Apostle Peter:

'Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified' (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

'No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not

crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops' (2 Timothy 2:4-6).

In the above verses we read about 3 different pictures: the soldier, the farmer, and the athlete; all are linked to the idea of being diligent and labouring in the spirit.

Entering the rest also requires diligence: *'There remains therefore a rest for the people of God...Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience' (Hebrew 4:9, 11).*

From the teaching of Apostle Peter we also read:

'But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge' (2 Peter 1:5).

'Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble' (2 Peter 1:10).

We are partakers of the divine nature through grace; yet, we still need to be diligent.

- **The book of the Psalms for daily worship:**

One of the most well-known spiritual disciplines in the early Church is using the book of the Psalms in the daily worship. The early Church was convinced that the book of Psalms is a prayer book that was given to God's people in both the Old and New Testaments to be used in daily worship. They believed that it is full of various benefits that each believer needs daily.

In Acts 3: 1 and Acts 10: 9, there is a reference to the use of the book of Psalms in worship in the first Church.

'Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour' (Acts 3:1).

'The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour' (Acts 10:9).

The first Church derived this worship from the worship of the temple where the book of Psalms was read and prayed. It was divided into parts and was spread over the different hours of the day, namely; the first hour, the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth hour and so on as was known at that time.

It is known from some historical documents that Jesus kept these prayers and worship. Had Jesus Himself not practised this worship, the disciples would not have practised it!

The early Church used to sing the Psalms while standing in spontaneous melodies without meditating on the verses unless the Holy Spirit stirs the heart to a particular verse or verses. They did so because actually the purpose of praying the Psalms is to worship the kind of worship which nourishes one's spirit with the Word of God through bypassing the mind and allowing the Word to become a true food for the spirit and to complete its work inside us. The Psalms were, therefore, considered the "heavenly manna" for the spirit, exactly like the manna on which the Old Israel fed every day in the journey of estrangement according to God's plan for them. The early Church also used to bow down in prostration at the end of each Psalm to give glory to God. There is a complete biblical teaching about prostration.

In using the book of Psalms in worship, the early Church was convinced that this kind of worship helps in achieving 3 great benefits for the inner Man. These benefits are as follows:

a. Washes off the mind:

The human mind is exposed to various thoughts from the world, the enemy and fleshly wisdom. We need to be filled with God's mind and His wisdom to be able to live by faith and according to the divine promises. The Psalms, being the direct Word of God by which we worship, were considered like a daily shower for the mind that washes off all the dirt that comes to it.

b. Girds the waist:

Man's soul became weak and wobbly like a jelly because of the fall. Because of this, we can be encouraged for some time, yet, after a short while we find ourselves frustrated and disappointed due to some bad news or thoughts. The Word of God, the book of

Psalms, when used in worship, girds the soul and strengthens it. It actually girds the waist as if with a belt causing one to be more vigilant and diligent in obeying God and in walking with Him. In both the Old and New Testaments, we read the commandment about having to gird our waist.

'And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover' (Exodus 12:11).

'Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning' (Luke 12:35).

c. Tears the veil of the fall:

Praying the Psalms was considered by the early Church a preparation for prayer and not the prayer itself. As we get prepared for prayer through the washing off of the mind, girding the soul and having our thoughts lifted up –since the Word of God lifts our thoughts up whereas using our own words may constrain us in earthly matters –we become ready for the true and actual entrance into the presence of God and standing before Him. His image and His glory are thus imprinted on us and likewise we change from glory to glory.

In this respect, the early fathers talked about 2 kinds of prayers and these are:

- Praying the Psalms as an introduction and preparation for prayer.
- Praying with unveiled face as mentioned in 2 Corinthians 3: 18: *'But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.'*

We may have prayed many times, but have not experienced being transformed from glory to glory as the above verse proclaims. The reason behind this is the presence of “a veil” that surrounds the inner man and hides or covers the glory of God. This veil is the result of the fall.

According to the early fathers, praying the Psalms tears off the veil allowing us to behold the Lord with unveiled face and thus allowing His glory to come upon us.

“And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one.” John 17:22

The glory of God is the glory of Jesus that bears and carries inside it the power of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. Through this power of salvation, we are transformed and de-skinned from “the old man” to live by the power of “the new man”.

Praying with an unveiled face or praying free prayers –as we call them today, were also considered prophetic prayers in which we are led by divine thoughts and where we are inspired by words from the Holy Spirit (after sufficient preparation) and receive inspired prophetic thoughts.

These prophetic prayers thus become so effective and they transform God’s people and those around them. They can actually transform nations and peoples and change the face of history.

They are prayers that influence and affect the heavens (the power of darkness) and the earth (the power of the enemy) so that everything would be prepared for the coming of the Kingdom of God with power.

We so much need to learn these matters so that our spirits may be strengthened and we may have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2: 16) and so that our prayers may result in renewed pouring of the Holy Spirit. Many churches around us would thus be visited with divine visitations of grace. God’s people will be renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church will be prepared as a bride who eagerly awaits her Bridegroom and will be ready for the marriage of the Lamb.

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” Revelation 19:7-8

Fourth: Facing the Giants:

In the End Times, God’s people need to direct their faces to the Land of Promise. This needs to happen in the spirit in a way similar to what happened with the old Israel. After a long journey in the wilderness, the old Israel entered the Land of Promise

through a series of confrontations and battles. Similarly, we walk in a spiritual wilderness characterised by lots of fluctuations between walking in the spirit and walking in the flesh. When our spiritual wilderness comes to an end i.e. when we become steadfast in our walk in the spirit (1 John 2: 6), we will then be on the borders of our spiritual Land of Promise. In the Land of Promise there is continual steadfastness, rest in Christ, fellowship of glory, the fulfilment of the promises and glorifying God.

In our personal spiritual life, we have probably experienced the difficulty of reaching this state of steadfastness and continual walking in the Spirit. Most of us have experienced a very painful and fine stage where one feels that he is about to breakthrough and be released from this fluctuating life and from the life according to the flesh to live a life according to the Spirit and walk in the spirit. However, one unfortunately slips back to the old ways. As a result, this experience of being released and of living according to the Spirit seems to us almost impossible or at least farfetched.

The reason behind this difficulty is that this breakthrough comprises different facets. It is a breakthrough from recurring sins, from the power of the flesh and from the ego. It is also a breakthrough from cultural influences which leave their imprints on every individual resulting in the transformation of the whole personality to become a Kingdom personality. So, the person no more has a British personality or an Egyptian personality or such and such a personality; but a Kingdom personality.

In **Philippians 3: 20**, Apostle Paul talks about this:

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Hence, we truly become ambassadors for the Kingdom of God as written in **2 Corinthians 5: 20**: *“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.”*

It might be easy to repeat or pray the above words as theoretical matters only but not as actual matters. However, the early Church understood all these matters differently. They viewed them as actual things and not metaphoric ones. They believed that reaching this stage of having a Kingdom personality, being a heavenly citizen, and being

an ambassador for Christ depends on the degree of inner change towards Christ-likeness.

- **Facing the Giants: its parallel in the Old Testament:**

We need to understand the reason behind the difficulty referred to above.

Why does it seem almost impossible to enter such a distinct spiritual state of being released from all what belongs to the old Adam and enter into our new spiritual inheritance in the new Adam?

In order to be able to understand abstract reasons in our spiritual life, we need to look at parallel tangible situations in the Old Testament. This was in fact one of the teachings of the early fathers. When it becomes difficult for God's people of the New Testament to discern spiritual matters because of the spiritual darkness and being slow in faith and in understanding, they need to search for a parallel situation in the Old Testament to be able to understand. In the Old Testament, spiritual matters were presented to the people in a personified and clear way as they were considered children in the spirit who are unable to discern spiritual matters due to the absence of the fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

The parallel situation in the Old Testament to our issue was in the days of Joshua when the Israelites were able to see the Land of Promise, yet they needed to make the walls of Jericho fall and they needed to confront the peoples of the land in several battles before being able to enter the Land of Promise. The bible describes the peoples that the Israelites had to confront as "*the giants*". We read this in **Numbers 13: 32, 33**:

"And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

The Old Israel entered into many battles with the giants and God gave them victory in various great and glorious ways. Refer to Joshua 6 – 12.

The breakthrough and release is, therefore, difficult because there are unseen arrogant powers of the giants specialised in hindering the breakthrough of God's people in order to keep God's people under their submission. They do so because this breakthrough of God's people implies that God's people will become free and the power of the giants will be defeated. Due to this resistance from these powers and the type of attack they direct to us, we quite often feel some kind of humiliation, confusion, disappointment and complete paralysis in such battles where the breakthrough seems completely unattainable. This causes us to feel that we want to surrender and give up the whole thing. Wasn't this also the attitude of the Old Israel as clear in Numbers 13? However, this attitude has made God angry because He cannot be glorified nor can His purposes be fulfilled when we are in the wilderness away from our Lands of Promise. Each one has his own spiritual Land of Promise where his breakthrough is and where one enters into the fullness of God's will for him as a foretaste of one's heavenly place in God's home in which he shall enter in eternity.

The above mentioned reasons are what cause us to tarry for long and become almost imprisoned in the stage of spiritual fluctuation. It becomes as though we move in a very small and limited area. We move upward a little bit and we realise that we are about to breakthrough then we slip back and we keep repeating this cycle over and over again. This causes great disappointment and subsequently leads to more tarrying. In fact, all this is part of the activity and economy of these evil gigantic powers that are specialised in hindering God's people from entering their Land of Promise.

Let us remember though that in the old days God's people first crossed Jericho and the walls fell, then the battles started and were concluded with victory and the Israelites entered their Land of Promise. Each tribe, however, had to complete other small battles to possess the full land, to take the full portion. This highlights the difference between entering into God's will and entering into the fullness of God's will.

Similarly, we also need to pass through the stage of the falling off the walls first. We referred earlier to the presence of a separation which is like a wall between the soul and the spirit. When this wall falls, the saving grace extends from the spirit to the soul. This means that the inner kingdom extends. [Refer here to point two about the inner and the

outer kingdom]. After this, however, there should be a confrontation with the powers of darkness i.e. the giants who hinder the complete and full possession of the land.

This leads us to look at some of the features of this battle and of the giants.

- **Characteristics of the giants:**

Looking at the well-known biblical example of this power of the giants in the Old Testament, we may perceive their characteristics. This power was presented in the Old Testament in Goliath who confronted the Israelites during the days of King Saul. Goliath kept humiliating the Israelites until David defeated him and thus the Israelites won the victory.

Reading the story of Goliath in 1Samuel 17, we notice the detailed description of the weapons. There must be a divine purpose behind this detailed description in the bible. In fact, these weapons reveal the personality of whom they belong to. Hence, they reveal the features of this power of the giants and its aim. The aim of this power is not to fight and use its weapons, but rather to disseminate horror, panic and fright in God's people and to scoff at, disgrace and humiliate God's people until they give in and surrender in the battle.

It is important to note here that the purpose of these powers is not only to gain victory, but to make God's people submit to them in disgrace and humiliation. They actually want to take God's place and make people submit to them as slaves. They want to tell God's people: "we are your gods; you are our slaves".

In order to learn how we can win in this battle and fierce confrontation, we need to see how David won in his battle with Goliath.

"And the Philistine said, 'I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together' (1 Samuel 17:10).

"Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the

Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands' (1 Samuel 17:45-47).

The Key to win in such battles is not to merely practice faith or proclaim certain words and promises. The key is to understand and unveil the enemy's cunning strategy and nullify it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The enemy's strategy in such battles is based on great arrogance and self confidence. The counter strategy of the Holy Spirit would thus be complete meekness and humbleness. This was exemplified in how David went to the battle with simple weapons and smooth stones. This reveals David's simplicity and that he is neither dependent on himself nor on his weapons. It actually shows that he completely trusts God and His greatness and the He alone is Mighty and Great.

"In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge." **Proverbs 14:26**

Knowing the specific feature of each opposing power, we can break it by using the counter weapons. In his various battles, Joshua had different war strategies with every sector. He used the strategy that was suitable for the specific power that was confronting him. We read about these different strategies that Joshua used in **Joshua 6, 9, and 10**. He faced different powers, those of the north, the south, the entrance, and so on. With each of these different powers, he used the strategy which suited each of them according to the specific features of each power.

Thus, we now need to look at some examples of the different powers of the giants that face God's people these days. I believe there are 3 important powers and these are:

- Against Faith
- Against Love
- Against Chastity

- **Examples of the giants of today and how to confront them:**

- **Against Faith:**

We need to understand some biblical principles about faith and how to apply them. We can sum them up in the following points:

- Faith has measures

"...God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." **Romans 12:3**

"I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" **Luke 7:9**

We need to know the measure of faith that we have and ask for a new measure that is necessary for our confrontations.

- Faith has 2 wings

The 2 wings of faith are trust and surrender. We can neither perceive everything nor see everything, so we are in need of these 2 wings of faith.

Let us thus trust, not by the power of the flesh which stumbles when it does not get what it wants, but in surrender that God will choose for us what is best because He sees all things and He sees the things which we cannot see.

- Faith can perish

If it was not possible for faith to perish, Jesus wouldn't have prayed for Peter that his faith may not perish.

And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." **Luke 22:31-32**

Let us therefore be cautious and not have a false sense of security because it is written:

"...Do not be haughty, but fear." **Romans 11:20**

➤ Faith is tested

Our faith may be tested so that it would become stronger and steadfast and then it would become a "proved faith". In the End Times, we need a special kind of faith which is strong and sound. We need an "enduring faith".

"...Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." **Revelation 13:10**

"Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." **Revelation 14:12**

We should always remember that the Holy Spirit helps us in our battles of faith. The Holy Spirit is called the "*spirit of faith*" as we read in 2 Corinthians 4: 13. Let us, therefore, always seek His help.

- **Against Love:**

Each commandment, when followed and applied, leads to a blessing. However, the commandment of love, when followed and applied, it leads to both a blessing and power. Therefore, the enemy is usually so scared of this commandment. So, he diligently and continually tries to make this commandment broken in the life of the children of God.

- Let us remember that we are called to walk the second mile of love:

'And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two' (Matthew 5:41).

- Let us also remember that: "*Love never fails*" (1 Corinthians 13:8).

- Let us preserve the brotherly love with all our strength:

'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth' (1 John 3:14-18).

- Let us remember that the enemy makes up trivial things that can spoil and hinder the brotherly love. So, let us not give him this opportunity.

- Divine Love starts fervent and then becomes lukewarm:

“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.” **Revelation 2:4**

However, the early fathers draw our attention to the fact that the first love can be restored in a new way. For this to happen, we need to repent and be humble.

- **Against Chastity:**

There is a strong current in our present time that desires to steal away chastity from the children of God.

According to early writings and liturgies, chastity is the main characteristic of God’s children and it is their capital. If they lose it, they become spiritually bankrupt.

- Let us thus preserve our chastity!

- Let us be vigilant!

- Let us give sin its appropriate label instead of finding excuses for ourselves that will cause us to lose our chastity, our capital!

- As God’s people, we are called “saints”, so, let us preserve holiness and let us perfect it!

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” **2 Corinthians 7:1**

This could be done through crucifying the lusts of the flesh and fleeing away from the lusts of the world.

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” **Galatians 6:14**

“by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” **2 Peter 1:4**

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

When I see my faith failing,

When I see my love weakening,

When I see my chastity tempted,

I shall turn fully to God

Asking for His Mercy!

How great is the divine revelation about God’s mercy. In **Ephesians 2:4**, it is written: *‘But God, who is rich in mercy...’*

The early Church loved so much the prayer of: *“Lord have mercy”*. They repeated this prayer many times in their liturgies.

When I see those around me saying:

I live by Faith

I find myself desiring to say:

I live by Mercy!

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