

Foundations of the Spiritual Life (3) Continued

The Correct Vision

B. Correct vision of myself

In this series, we are highlighting three main foundations of the spiritual life; namely: counting the cost; the direction of the heart and having an undivided heart; and having a correct vision of God, of oneself, and of the enemy.

The correct vision of God includes that He is a Trinity. Inasmuch as my vision of God is correct, I will be transformed into His image. We also spoke about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and the infilling of the Spirit which is a continuous process, having manifold channels.

Today, we come to the point about the correct vision of myself.

In order to have a correct vision of myself, I should be able to see my needs as well as my resources; at the same time, I should be able to see my privileges as well as my responsibilities, i.e., using my potentials and talents.

Four main points in order to have a correct vision of oneself:

- The needs
- The enabling resources
- The privileges
- The responsibilities (using my talents and potentials)

Inasmuch as one has good understanding and correct vision of these four main things, he will have a wholesome and mature personality which is able, through the Holy Spirit, to discover the will of God and fulfil it

The major problem faced by anyone walking and living in Christ is that one often lives an interrupted and unwholesome spiritual life which leads to spiritual struggles and conflicts after a while. These struggles can cause one's spiritual life to come to a halt or to stumble and regress.

The reason behind this is that the personality is marred and weak, causing the person to be unable to understand and discover the will of God for his life and obey it. In some cases, the person is able to discover part of God's will but he may fail to obey it; and hence, feel frustrated. In other cases, the person is unable to discover any part of this divine will; and hence, staggers not knowing which direction to take. This is the result of having an immature and distorted personality which is incapable of seeing the needs, the resources, the privileges, and the responsibilities.

When the soul or the personality grows, matures and is able to perceive correctly, it becomes a wholesome soul/personality, as Apostle Paul says in 1Thessalonians 5: 23: *'Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'*. One of the meanings of 'sanctification', in the New Testament, is to be healthy and wholesome. 'Sanctify you', here, means to correct you and make you wholesome in spirit, soul, and body. The spirit needs correction; the soul needs correction; and the body needs correction.

The soul is an important part of the person; it is his personality. When the soul is not correct and is unwholesome, one's personality will be barren, unfruitful, distorted, and weak.

This practically manifests in one's lives in being easily distracted, not able to concentrate or focus, having a lot of fears, not knowing what is right and what is wrong. One is also often confused and perplexed, feeling unable and frustrated, and having extreme fluctuations of being enthusiastic to something at a certain time and losing enthusiasm to the very same thing at other times.

These things happen because the soul or the personality needs a process of sanctification and correction. The Holy Spirit does this process. However, an important principle here is that we cannot just do nothing and wait for God to work in us. But, inasmuch as we willingly desire the sanctification, the Holy Spirit accompanies us; inasmuch as we do the required preparation, grace is granted to us. There is always synergism between these two factors: our will and role and the work of the Holy Spirit.

However, if I give in to laziness and complacency, not doing my wilful part, the Holy Spirit will desire to work in me but will be hindered.

The more I stretch out my hand to God, the more the divine Hand is stretched out for me, works with me, and leads me. I may not know the way; but, if I stretch out my hand, the divine Hand will be stretched over me, leading, guiding, and directing me as I walk; telling me to turn right or left or stop for a while and so on. This truth is highlighted in Isaiah 30: 21: *'Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left'. It is as if someone is speaking to me, guiding me and telling me: 'this is the way; be careful, you took a wrong turn; there is danger ahead of you; the safe way is that one'.*

Inasmuch as I open the rooms of my soul and my heart, grace will come and be poured out, purifying the inner rooms of my soul and correcting the

damaged areas¹. If a window is needed, grace fits a window for me. If a door is needed, grace fits a door and adds bolts to it so that the ideas, sin or the devil do not keep coming in and out destroying me. If there are no doors and these wrong thoughts or sins keep coming in and out, one ends up in ruins, corruption, destruction, and a broken distorted personality. We may appear differently before people; but, if we are honest with ourselves we will see that deep within there is something different from what people see. We may appear as having a strong or pleasant personality while in actual fact we are destroyed. We may be laughing from outside yet weeping from within. We may be nice to someone while deep within we have opposite feelings.

You may here ask: *'does this mean we should tell people in their faces how we feel about them if we do not like them?'*

When the soul is corrected and sanctified, it will have honesty with sincere love. I will be able to be frank with people without hurting them because the truth which I say is accompanied with love. However, if my personality is distorted and not corrected and I try to say the truth to someone, it will come out like sharp hurting arrows. We should neither be fake and untruthful nor be sharp and injurious. If we say things in an outwardly nice way while we feel differently, the listener will receive what is really in our soul.

When the Holy Spirit corrects my soul, pouring in it love and truth, I will be able to talk to others with purity, clarity, transparency and truth. The soul will be pure and transparent and I will not say what I do not mean or contrary to how I feel. If I have something to tell to someone, he will not be

¹ Paul speaks about "building" the inner life (1 Corinthians 3: 9, 10).

hurt but will be happy because I offered him truth mingled with love; it is healing, illuminating, and comfortable.

Before the correction and sanctification of the soul, when I desired to be frank and truthful, this was mingled with soulish inclinations and motivations that were hurting to others. In other instances, it was as if I lived a double personality, saying contrary to what is inside me or acting in certain situations contrary to my real personality. This is due to the inner struggles and the distorted soul or personality which the Holy Spirit have not yet worked in it the words written in 1Thessalonians 5: 23: *'Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be reserves blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'*. It is important and crucial to allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify the soul.

The sanctification of the body is an advanced stage. We read examples of it in the life of the saints. The Holy Spirit sanctified their bodies to the extent that some of them shone; some were elevated above the ground; some were carried in the spirit from place to place; some ate once a week; and some fasted 40 days on water only. They fasted and ate little without falling ill; on the contrary, they conquered illnesses. On the other hand, when we eat, food may sometimes upset our stomach and we may fall ill. This is because the body is not yet sanctified.

When the Holy Spirit finishes His work in the soul, He starts to sanctify the body and even illnesses cannot conquer the body². The natural needs like food and sleep become no longer necessary or essential. The natural features change; illness and decay disappear. St Macarius, the Great, used

² St. Macarius, the Alexandrian, lived about 100 years without having any illness despite his vigorous ascetic life.

to sleep for 2 hours a day leaning on a wall and this was sufficient rest for him.

These are truly advanced levels but it is the work of the Holy Spirit in whoever understands and wants. These graces are not only for some and not for others. They are meant for every person desiring to obey Christ to the end and give his heart to Christ without division.

In order to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, I need to understand and then obey. If I do not understand, I will not know what to do. It is written: *'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge'* (Hosea 4: 6). It is also written: *'And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding'* (Jeremiah 3: 15). After I understand, it will be my choice to obey. I may wish to obey but I may not know what to do; or, I may know what to do but I do not wish to obey. Therefore, both the understanding and the obedience are necessary.

We can sum up the main points we discussed as follows:

- **The soul is marred by the corruption of the fallen nature; there are manifestations of this inner distortion.**

When the soul is distorted, I behave as if I have a double personality and as if my soul has no doors. Any sin can go in and corrupt or destroy; any thoughts from the devil can come in and do as they please. As a result, I may sometimes get angry or have unclean thoughts and feel unable to control my soul. I am unable to say no to sin and to the devil, unable to prevent them from entering my inner house.

In Matthew 12: 43 – 45, Jesus speaks about the soul likening it to a house. If the devil enters this house and finds it empty, he brings with him other devils and they dwell in that house of the soul. If he finds this house, the

soul, adorned, occupied by the Holy Spirit and filled with grace, he cannot come near it.

Each one needs to be honest with himself and ask oneself if his house has doors. Some will find that their house has no doors and so anything can freely go in and out: sin, evil thoughts, and the devil.

Some will realise that their house has no windows. This means that it has no specific direction and is carried by the wind. As a result, they may have partialism in the relationships. One day, they are enthusiastic to a certain view point and the next day to another. One day, they are involved with a certain group of people and the next day with another. This is because the windows of the house of this person are open and so the wind comes in carrying him to a certain direction. The next day the wind comes from another direction and carries the person in the opposite direction. Therefore, in Ephesians 4: 14, Apostle Paul writes about the child in the spirit saying: *'that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine'*.

If we have windows³ which we shut, the winds of the enemy that come to the land of our soul will not be able to get through and carry us about. In other words, if we have windows, we will not be swayed to and fro by a certain doctrine or by an idea from a friend making us side with this friend and then an opposite idea from another friend makes us side with the second one and be hostile to the first. What kind of heart would this be, a heart that has partiality and sectarianism, siding with people at times and rejecting them and siding with others after that⁴!

³ The windows are the thoughts and senses.

⁴ Galatians 1: 10

This would be a house with no windows or with open windows where the cunning enemy⁵, the devil, sends in corrupt and poisoned winds from various directions. They direct the winds to the area of relationships at times making one side with some and reject others and then reject the ones he had earlier sided with. They can then direct the winds to the area of ideologies; so, one gets enthusiastic to a certain idea and then rejects it to be enthusiastic to a different one. One can get enthusiastic about spiritual matters and feel that they are of great importance and then swings in the opposite direction viewing them as extreme attitudes and so he focuses on matters in the world like outer appearance or status. This means that this person has no defined direction. He is not able to discern the precious from the vile and is not able to discern the important priorities. This person is not able to see that the spiritual matters are not part of life but they are the lead of one's life because Jesus is the only One who leads the soul to green pastures and still waters (Psalm 23: 2). This person is not able to set his priorities right and know that things cannot all be done at the same time⁶ and that there are things that are important at a particular time and other things will come later; God created the world in six days; one cannot do everything at one time.

This is the effect of the fall on the soul when the windows of this inner house are missing or one of its walls has fallen. This makes one feel as though his personality has no specific features and as if he has no defined direction; hence, people and circumstances often define him.

One may face certain circumstances that define and shape his personality in a certain way. After a while, he feels that he does not like this form and

⁵ 2 Corinthians 2: 11

⁶ Ecclesiastes 3: 1

he want to change it; and so his personality takes a different form and shape. People close to him would probably notice that he keeps turning from one form to another.

However, when we come to Him, who alone can sanctify us, He shows us the divine shape or form that we were created upon. Each one of us has been created on an eternal divine image. God alone can correct my current image which is distorted, restoring it to the correct eternal image that I was created on. This is the true meaning of the correction and sanctification of the soul.

- **There is a real need for sanctification and there are manifestations and examples of this sanctification**

We discussed examples of the manifestation of the sanctification of the body in the life of the early fathers. Similarly, there are also examples and manifestations of the sanctification of the soul.

- *The sanctified soul becomes filled with peace and her conflicts disappear. This is an important sign of sanctification.*

Clarity comes to the mind. Instead of the confusion and the mixing up, thinking of many things at the same time and wanting to do everything at the same time, light comes to my mind, making my steps clear and helping me discern the priorities and the things I need to focus on at a particular time. I will know when to do what; what to focus on at that moment and what to postpone for later so that I do not entangle myself with too many things at the same time and fail to do any of them.

However, this prioritisation cannot be done only intellectually⁷ because I can think of a certain order today and few days later I may change my mind about the order of my priorities. It is like making a schedule and changing it on and on until I finally decide I will have no schedule. As a result, I will be moving aimlessly and at random.

When the Holy Spirit sanctifies and corrects the soul, I will experience illumination coming to my mind and peace overwhelming my soul. The light that comes to my mind helps me define my priorities. Previously, many matters came to my mind at the same time; but, after the sanctification, I learned to push them aside and wait for the right time of each matter. Every matter has its appropriate time. One should set his priorities and not allow less important things to encroach and confuse these priorities. Certain things need to wait to be done in their right time and order. Initially, I can write down these priorities until they are established within me and I no longer get confused.

- *Another sign of sanctification and correction of the soul is that the emotions will be cleansed and freed.*

Before this correction and sanctification, one would have like a *sticky* layer on the emotions causing one to either be attracted to people or repel from them, living according to the human passions; and so, the passions dominate his life.

There is a difference between passions and lusts/desires as highlighted in Galatians 5: 24: *'And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires'*.

⁷ Proverbs 3: 5, 6

The passions are the attractions and repulsions. If the emotions are not cleansed and sanctified, one's life would be a very tiring combination of attractions and repulsions; and both deprive one of his peace.

When the soul is sanctified, one's dealings with others will be wholesome and characterised by freedom. When he deals with people on a close level, there will be love and comfort; and when he deals from afar, there will be peace and acceptance.

The bible speaks about '*the glorious liberty of the children of God*' (Romans 8: 21). This means that when this liberty is complete, it is full of glory. If I try to describe the kind of freedom that the Holy Spirit works in the emotions and in the soul, it will be very difficult to describe because the glory cannot be described, it can only be seen, beheld, lived, and tasted.

The bible also speaks about the glorious joy⁸. We have a lot of sadness, but there is a kind of joy that is full of glory.

The true and genuine work of the Holy Spirit in the soul and emotions leads to freedom, freeing one from the attractions and repulsions and from the conflicts and struggles.

Before the sanctification, one can easily feel tense and uncomfortable if he senses that someone does not consider his feelings, does not accept him, or takes advantage of him. The attractions become slavery and the tension and repulsion make one lose his peace. Thus, one becomes like a dummy, losing his humanity and personality.

If we desire to live a wholesome life in Christ, this process of correction and sanctification should take place in our soul. If this does not happen, our life will be full of struggles and conflicts; it will be superficial, weak and frail.

⁸ 1Peter 1: 8b

We are the ones who will suffer as a result of this. We will not know what to do; we will be unsuccessful in our life and not able to live a life in Christ.

- *Another sign of sanctification is getting rid of the paralysis and being able to obey the commandment with pleasure.*

We often do not like the idea of obeying the commandment because of our experiences of failure. We know that we should love our enemies and turn the other cheek and so on; yet we feel that these commandments are difficult to follow and we consider them advanced levels.

However, when the Holy Spirit sanctifies and corrects the soul, He grants us ability; we receive a certain enabling in our will. The Holy Spirit puts a girdle of power on our waist, a belt on the waist to strengthen us.

We have natural inclination to laziness and being lax and we often suffer from a constant feeling of tiredness. This is not physical tiredness because the physical tiredness can be resolved by few hours of sleep, but it is rather a deep inner tiredness in one's soul; this cannot be resolved by sleep or leisure.

When the Holy Spirit comes to correct our souls in His amazing way, He girds our waist with truth⁹, straightening and strengthening our lax and floppy waist. We often fluctuate between self-pity to caring-less. This is because the waist of our soul is loose; it flings forward pitying oneself and flings backwards caring less. When the Holy Spirit works in us and corrects us, He puts on our waist a belt/girdle¹⁰ of power. As a result, we feel that our waist is strengthened and straightened and does not bend forward or backward.

⁹ Ephesians 6: 14

¹⁰ Luke 12: 35

Consequently, if someone says a hurting word and I feel my soul starting to swing forward pitying itself, I find myself girded and able to put this situation behind my back and not get hurt, knowing that I have higher sublime and divine purposes and that my dignity cannot be scratched by a word because God bestows on my great honour. When I find myself inclined to laziness, the girdle on my waist strengthens me to get up and do my role, knowing that when I take one step, He takes ten; and when I do a little bit, He multiplies it.

There is great sweetness in God's blessings that come to us as divine gifts which transform us deep within and change our outward circumstances. They restore a person to be a true human and not a dummy.

Now we move on to seeing my needs, resources, privileges and responsibilities.

- **Needs**

The soul needs to be *free, healed and sanctified*.

Freedom and healing are the passive aspects while sanctification is the active process.

Some experiences in the past, or maybe recent ones, may have caused wounds or injuries in the soul. These injurious experiences may be words that some people have said or certain circumstances and suffering that I have been through.

Recurring sins which continue for a period of time may also give a chance to the devil to dominate certain areas in the soul; and hence, these areas become paralysed. This has its impact on the soul and requires a process of sanctification.

In addition to this, there are needs that should be met during childhood and as one grows up. These needs may not have been fulfilled. For example, a child needs to feel safe and secure, to be loved, appreciated, and accepted. If the parents were unable to practically satisfy these needs, this child grows up with a soul that is needy and discontented. This soul would; therefore, need healing, freedom, and fulfilment.

These are the passive areas in relation to the needs of the soul. Yet, there is another important aspect.

Not only does the soul need to be healed of her wounds, freed from her bonds and her needs fulfilled and satisfied; but the soul should also be transformed into the image of Christ.

The human nature with its habits and characteristics should change in accordance to the biblical picture. For example, sleeping or eating habits, or any other unsuitable things that we get used to and that become habits in our life, should change into correct Kingdom habits. One should measure his life against the standards of the Kingdom of God outlined in the bible. This is because we no longer belong to the earthly family that brought us up according to certain habits neither do we belong to our friends who may have encouraged us into certain habits; but, we belong to the Kingdom of God. Therefore, we should adjust to new habits and manners that comply with the Kingdom image.

The bible presents to us a clear example of how to live on earth in accordance to the Kingdom standard through the Person of Christ who was incarnated in a human form, taking our flesh and living with this flesh on earth in a certain manner.

Jesus was meek and lowly in heart¹¹. Therefore, I should not say that I am used to getting angry if someone upsets me. If this is the case, I should change this habit by praying, repenting, and moving step by step until the Holy Spirit sanctifies my soul, changing the habits that I acquired from my family, friends, and circumstances; and instilling in me new habits and new nature.

I need to look inside myself to find the negative hindering habits which I have acquired. I should then learn the new Kingdom customs that I need to be changed to. The image that I should put before me is the example of Christ, how He lived on earth. I should also look at examples of men and women of God, the saints, who followed in His footsteps and were able to apply the example of Christ to their life. I should keep these examples before me; the bible refers to them as *the great cloud of witnesses that surround us* (Hebrews 12: 1). We need to look intently at this cloud to observe the various examples. As we do so, the Holy Spirit who is working in us this necessary transformation will portray in our minds the correct image which we should be transformed to.

The more I listen and respond to the Holy Spirit, the more He quickens my heart and draws my attention to situations where I had acted in a certain way while I was supposed to act otherwise. The Holy Spirit acts like a mirror that shows me how I had acted and how I should have acted.

I need to learn to come before the Lord quietening myself and revising my actions. In these moments of reflection and revision, the Holy Spirit draws before me a picture, highlighting to me how I behaved in certain situations and as if saying: *'do you think this is the picture of the children of God; is it a reflection of the Kingdom of God?'* I would then realise that what I did was

¹¹ Matthew 11: 29

wrong. The Holy Spirit then tells me: *'do not stop at the point of thinking that you were wrong or that you are bad because this does not glorify God; focus on the other picture of the Kingdom which you need to acquire'*.

The Holy Spirit then portrays in my mind and my heart the correct behaviour in a certain situation so that I may know it, remind myself of it, ask for it in my prayers, and train myself to act according to it.

Through this process, I will be transformed from one image to another, from glory to glory, from one level to another, and from one step to another; I will acquire grace after grace¹², power after power¹³, until Christ is formed in me, as Apostle Paul says in Galatians 4: 19.

It is a process of inner shaping and transformation where the weak areas of the soul get strengthened; the distorted areas are corrected; the corrupted proud areas become humble; and the areas that have the form of this world are changed¹⁴.

The soul is the vessel where grace is poured. Therefore, the more this vessel is wholesome, not marred, restricted, wounded, or crushed, the more it will be filled with grace; it will broaden and will be able to perceive the full will of God.

My soul is also a mirror of myself. If half of this mirror is broken or blurred, I will only perceive a small part of the will of God; what I can see will be half of what is granted to me. God has prepared for me much more than that but I will be unable to see it because half of my mirror is blurred, damaged or

¹² John 1: 16

¹³ Psalm 84: 7

¹⁴ Romans 12: 2

broken; and so, I can only see through the other undamaged half. Therefore, the sanctification of the soul is an important process.

- ◆ **Enabling Resources**

After perceiving my needs, I should also perceive my enabling resources.

We have understood that the soul needs to be freed, healed, satisfied, transformed and reshaped.

There are, in fact, four major needs:

- Satisfaction of the needs that were not fulfilled or met in one's childhood;
- Freedom from the bonds and dominion of the devil;
- Healing from the wounds and injuries caused by people or circumstances;
- Reshaping of the habits and conduct.

How can this be achieved?

It is through the ***enabling resources***, which are granted to me.

My resources are: The Bible and The Church.

- The Bible

I should read the bible and pray with what I read. The book of Psalms is a prayer book. The epistles of Paul explain what Christ has done for us; they also explain the meaning of taking off the old and putting on the new man.

I should start to read the bible with understanding and desire to apply it. For example, I understand that the epistle to the Philippians is about joy; what are the practical steps to acquire this joy? The epistle to the

Thessalonians talks about the Second coming of Christ; how can I correctly await His coming? It also talks about faith, hope and love; how can this be manifested in me? The epistle to the Ephesians is about the Church, the body of Christ; what is my understanding of the Church? Colossians is about Christ, the Head; do I truly see Christ as the Head of His Church? One gospel talks about the Kingdom of God; another gospel talks about the incarnated Christ. The book of Acts shows us how the Church lived in power.

As I read the bible, I start to understand and perceive the correct pictures, correct notions, and the correct steps that would drive my life towards spiritual growth and transformation into the image of Christ.

- The Church

The other resource given to me is the Church, which is the practical application. The bible is like the lectures, the Church life and worship is like the practical workshops.

The writings of the early fathers show us how they understood the word of God and how they applied it in their lives. These are the practical steps found in the Church.

If I fail to link the two together; namely, the bible and the application of it, I will not be able to move forward.

I can read the bible and understand some parts and do not understand others. I can read the biography of a saint and get so touched by it but then I forget about it thinking that it is quite impossible for me to be changed into a similar image. The biography of a saint is not a story to be touched by and that's it. In Hebrews 13: 7, we read: '*Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith*' (ESV). This means that I should desire to

imitate them, to look at their life as an example that I desire to move towards, not just to be touched by it and then forget it. When I am touched by the life of a saint or a man of God, I should not stop at this level but I should think how to imitate him. The bible helps me find the steps. This saint lived these verses of the bible; they are the steps written in his biography; he lived these biblical passages; he is the practical application of this epistle; he is the practical steps of these verses. I then start to link both.

For example, during our university course, if we only attend the lectures without the practical workshops or experiments in the laboratory, we may fail to understand many topics; and vice versa. We may understand some theoretical information but fail to apply them. Similarly, it is important to link the bible and the Church life. The bible shows us the principles and the signs to follow in the path while the Church shows us practical examples of people who lived according to these principles and reached their goal.

The liturgical life of the Church is a channel of grace. The sacraments of the Church are channels of grace; each sacrament transfers to us a certain grace and help. The prayers of the Church, the praises, the liturgies, the Psalms, the ministers who are examples in it, the doctrines, and the faith that is passed on, are all various channels.

The Church life is the channel of grace that helps me receive the transforming power; and the examples of the saints who truly lived in accordance to the word of God.

To sum up, I have needs; yet, I have resources. My needs are: to be healed, to be free, to be fulfilled, and to be reshaped. My resources are: the bible and the Church life. The principles and steps are in the bible. The application, the practical examples, and the channels of grace are in the Church.

- **Privileges**

God does not only ask us to do things like following Him and being vigilant on our sanctification; but, He has also granted us great privileges.

He took what is ours and gave us what is His. This is the meaning of incarnation. When Jesus became Man, He did things that became ours; He gave them to us; what He did in the flesh became ours.

Therefore, if I am in Christ, and Christ has ascended to the heavens, this means I have also ascended in Him. It is written: *'raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus'* (Ephesians 2: 6). My place is not on earth; my place is in Christ. The enemies are under my feet. But, I first need to see correctly and have a correct vision. I need to see that I am in Christ.

Also, I need to view the body as holy and sanctified, not as lusts that tempt me. When Christ took our flesh, He sanctified the body; this holiness became ours. I need to have a correct vision and not view the flesh with fear or as a temptation; but rather accept it and understand that it has been sanctified. This is the work of Christ who took on our flesh and became man. When He took the human flesh, He knew no sin; and so, the flesh became sanctified. This is another privilege that has been granted to us in Christ; but, we need to have the correct vision.

If I fail to see the privileges and believe them, they will not take place in my life. But, if I see them, understand them, and faith is stirred in me, I will witness the results of these privileges in my life. If I understand the meaning of *made us sit together in the heavenly places* and my faith is stirred. I will be able to say:

I am in Christ and the devils are under my feet¹⁵.

I am in Christ and the world is beneath me; I am above the world and it cannot overcome me¹⁶.

I am in Christ; and the Father loves me; I am His.

I am in Christ and Christ is in me¹⁷; and the heavenly Father is my Father exactly as He is the Father of the Son¹⁸.

These privileges are the blessings of redemption, as the bible calls them: 'has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ' (Ephesians 1: 3).

These manifold blessings reach us through Christ's redemptive work: His incarnation (including His birth, baptism in the Jordan, the temptation in the wilderness), His Crucifixion, His Resurrection, His Ascension, and the sending forth of the Holy Spirit.

The whole redemptive plan of Christ has blessings that are granted to us. Incarnation granted us these blessings. The Cross conquered sin, death, and the devil. Resurrection lifted us up.

To illustrate: if there is a serpent and I am afraid of it. My older brother kills it and tells me that it is now dead. Yet, I am still afraid to even look at it while it is dead. My brother would then hold my hand and tell me to tread on it while he holds my hand. Similarly, on **the Cross**, Christ put to death sin and death; by death He trampled on death. Then, in **the Resurrection**, He told me that it is not enough to put to death all these things, but He will

¹⁵ Ephesians 1: 20 – 23

¹⁶ John 16: 33

¹⁷ John 17: 21

¹⁸ 1 John 3: 1, 2

lift me above them. It is written: *'If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God'* (Colossians 3: 1).

The Ascension is the rest. He ascended and made me sit with Him. It is not enough to be resurrected, but also to dwell in the rest¹⁹, to be filled with peace instead of the many fears I have. Our fallen human nature is full of fear: we are afraid of ourselves (our lusts and inner troubles), our parents (some love us and some do not), our friends (some are faithful others backbite), the devil, the future, and everything. We are even afraid of the spiritual life because we fail to walk as we should; and so, we get frustrated and sometimes despair.

In the Ascension, Christ sat in the heavenly places and made us sit with Him. Christ knew that one of man's problems is fear which continually chases us and surrounds us. Therefore, He did not leave us in this fear. He finished the work of redemption and He knew that we will not be able to enjoy His complete work unless we are seated up with Him.

There we will be filled with comfort, rest, and trust in the fulfilling and tender Fatherhood that surrounds us and embraces us, in the divine love that compels us (2Corinthians 5: 14), in the rich grace that comes after us, and in our weakness His power is made perfect because His grace is sufficient for us (2Corinthians 12: 9).

He surrounds us with heavenly help of the angels whom He sends to serve us. It is written that they are *'ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation'* (Hebrews 1: 14). We also have the saints who are the cloud of witnesses that overshadows us (Hebrews 12:

¹⁹ Hebrews 4: 9 – 11

1). Also, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. We have the Church, the sacraments and other channels of grace.

He granted us much. We need to listen, understand, receive and live according to the privileges granted to us..

To sum up, the privileges are the blessings of redemption that have been granted to us through Christ who became man. He was incarnated, crucified, risen, ascended and sat in the heavenly places, and sent to us the Holy Spirit.

- **Responsibilities (my potentials and talents put into action)**

If we have been given such great privileges that make us free and lifted up in Him, we should realise that we have responsibilities.

We have responsibilities towards the church and the world we live in.

I should be a living active member in the Church, faithfully using the talents that God has granted me. I should use them for my spiritual growth and for the spiritual growth of my brothers and sisters. I should use them so that my church may carry out her message fully.

Each person is granted certain talents and gifts²⁰. The more I recognise them and use them, the more there will be spiritual energy which will be added to my church. As a result, my church would be full with manifold spiritual gifts and energies which are used to fulfil the needs of others.

There are gifts and talents which I can use in my church, for the sake of my church. But, there are also other gifts and talents which I can use in the world, for the sake of the world. The circle of the world can be my

²⁰ Ephesians 2: 10

colleagues or neighbours or any other circles that I may come across in the world. What I do in my church is different from what I do in the world.

In my church, people love Jesus, worship Him and serve Him. We are similar but not exactly the same. We are similar in our faith, but we are not given the same talents. Therefore, if my brother is cast down, I may be able to encourage him. Another day, I may be cast down or suffering from any kind of weakness and my brother encourages me. A third brother can help me and help my brother in a different matter that neither me nor that brother can help each other with. This is the meaning of edifying one another, as we read in 1Thessalonians 5: 11: *'comfort each other and edify one another'*. We should *'stir up love and good works...exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching'* (Hebrews 10: 24, 25). We should remind one other of the nearness of His Second Coming so that we may watch and be awake.

With people outside the church, we will have a different message. We will tell them about the One who loves them and died for their sake to save them. We will tell them that one may be spiritual lost, like the Prodigal son, but can be found. We should be for them as light and salt²¹; lighting the steps so that they may find the way and adding salt to life so that it can get rid of its corruption and loss of purpose. Instead of being with no life and no purpose, they may walk in the way, the truth, and the life²².

These are my responsibilities.

Finally, having a correct vision of myself means to be able to see my needs, resources, privileges and responsibilities.

²¹ Matthew 5: 13, 14

²² John 14: 6