

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 51

THE CHURCH IN SARDIS

“And by the angel of the church in *Sardis* write; These things saith *He that hath the seven Spirits of God*, and the seven stars...” (Rev. 3:1).

Throughout the early years of my walk in God I did not know that God has seven spirits! Although I had received the baptism in the Spirit at the age of twelve, read the Bible through at the age of fifteen, and had been in ministry nearly all of my life, I had never seen anything about the seven spirits of God. We all knew that “there is one body, and *one Spirit*, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 4:4). We all thought that when we received the one Spirit, that was the beginning and the finish of it! We spoke in tongues, prophesied, did a few miracles, danced in the Spirit and rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and that was it! This is all we knew God had for us this side of heaven.

The Lord Jesus proclaims that He is the One who has the seven spirits of God. Before the throne are seven lamps of fire burning, which are the seven spirits of God (Rev. 1:4; 4:5). In the midst of the throne is a Lamb, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God (Rev. 5:6). Since this is so, let me ask you. Are there seven spirits

of God? If you say that God has seven spirits, you seem to contradict the truth that there is but one Spirit! If, on the other hand, you say that the Spirit of God is not seven spirits, you are disagreeing with the very words of the Lord Jesus to John! Is the Spirit of God, then, seven or one? If God says there is one Spirit, then there is one Spirit; if God says there are seven spirits, then there are seven spirits. That is the mystery.

Through the Spirit of God in the body of Christ the visible creation is brought into contact with the invisible God. By the living Spirit of God within us God manifests Himself in His perfection of life and love and power. If God *fills all things*, as various scriptures state that He does, then all things are containers of Him. All of creation contains within it the seed of God, the essence of God. But only those who are made in God's image and likeness can contain and express GOD AS A PERSON. A person cannot manifest as a person through anything else than a person. You may appreciate a cat, a bird, a stone, an ocean, or a rainbow for what they are, but you can't fellowship with them. I can fellowship with you, and you with me, because we share the same quality of life.

The heavens and the earth declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. We can view their marvels through the telescope, and stand in awe before their magnificence, but we do not say, "That is God." The greatest wonder of the ages is when we can look at another personality and say, "There is God!" Creation can declare the glory of God, but only personality can declare the person of God. Did not our brother Paul have this in mind when he wrote, "And because ye are *sons*, God hath sent forth the *Spirit of His Son* into your hearts" (Gal. 4:6). Sonship is the criterion for union with the personality of God by the Spirit. For God to manifest His personality through a star, a mountain, or an unregenerated human, would be like me trying to manifest my personality through a tree, a dog, or a horse. There we have different natures! There is no compatibility between these

natures. Therefore God appeared to be on the horns of a dilemma when man, the image of God, the connecting link between the invisible God and the visible creation, fell into sin, darkness, and death. In this state of man's alienation from God in his mind and by wicked works there ceased to be the compatibility between the nature of God and the nature of man. This is why we must be re-generated by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, our spirit quickened by His Spirit, so that we become containers of Him — of the very PERSONALITY OF GOD BY THE SPIRIT. Can you not see the mystery?

We have been made containers of God and God intends to be our only content. Bottles are made to contain liquids of various kinds, cans contain food, tanks are designed to contain water and fuel, electric wires contain electricity. When we look at these we realize that each of these containers is "peculiarly made" to contain a specific substance. Sons of God are "peculiar" containers, for we have been brought forth by our Father to contain a specific substance — the Spirit of God! If we do not know God as our only content, we become a meaningless contradiction. Matters not how much of the wisdom of the world we imbibe, nor to what heights of human recognition or accomplishment we may attain; we are still void and meaningless, since we have been purposely generated by our heavenly Father to **CONTAIN GOD AS OUR SOLE CONTENT**; to reveal HIM as the personality of our life! As it is written, "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that **now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places** might be **KNOWN BY THE CHURCH** the manifold wisdom of God, according to the purpose of the ages which He purposed in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:9-11).

Seven, in the scriptures, is the most sacred number of the Hebrews. This number is used more often than all other numbers, save the number one. It is the number denoting *spiritual*

perfection and completeness. In this connection it is interesting to note that in the title “Holy Spirit” the word “holy” comes from a root meaning “whole.” Hence, the Holy Spirit is the Whole Spirit! The seven spirits of God, seven denoting spiritual perfection and completeness, are likewise a figure of the “Holy” or “Whole” or “Complete” Spirit! When we understand that the number seven conveys the idea of unity and completeness, rather than diversity, then we can with unclouded vision see that the seven spirits of God are the sevenfold, intensified Spirit of the Lord — the absolute FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD!

An object lesson of this truth is referred to in these words, “And there were seven *lamps of fire* burning before the throne, *which are* the seven spirits of God” (Rev. 4:5). In the Old Testament, the structure of the lampstand (candlestick) in the tabernacle of Moses was quite unique: below was one lampstand, above there were seven branches, and in each branch there was a lamp (Ex. 25:31-37). It was one lampstand, yet it had seven lamps; there were seven lamps, yet it was but one lampstand. Therefore it is correct to say that there is one lampstand, neither is it wrong to say there are seven lamps! Without question, the Lord is one Spirit; but He is also called “the seven spirits,” that is, the sevenfold, intensified Spirit of the Lord!

The fullness of the personality of God, with all its attributes and powers, is THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD. As we have previously noted, the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne of God are the seven spirits of God. The seven horns and the seven eyes of the Lamb upon the throne are the seven spirits of God. John saw One sitting upon the throne, and He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald. A rainbow is *one*, but it has *seven colors*, and the seven colors of that glorious rainbow represent the sevenfold, intensified fullness of the Spirit of God!

When the fullness of these seven spirits of God is realized in the manifest sons of God then shall be fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, saying, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles (nations) shall *come to thy light*, and kings to *the brightness of thy rising*" (Isa. 60:1-3). In that day it shall also come to pass that "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun (the glory of Christ) *shall be sevenfold*, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound" (Isa. 30:26). God's promise is the sending forth of the glory of God's Christ, not in the single light of the man Christ Jesus (Mat. 4:13-16), nor yet in the double portion of the Spirit, the former and latter rain in the first month, but AS THE LIGHT OF SEVEN DAYS CONCENTRATED IN ONE. This sevenfold intensified fullness of the Spirit of God shall be revealed upon the Lord's people whose "wound" has been healed, whose "breach" has been bound up — those who have been fully redeemed within themselves, completely restored to the image and likeness of God!

The church of Jesus Christ will one day move out of the darkness of tradition, bondage, carnality, immaturity, and limitation and move into the bright light of the fullness of the glory of God. The history of the church is a history of darkness and sorrow and bitterness. But, thank God, rays of promise are even now beginning to break forth from the heavens, and there is a small company of apprehended ones that is even now rising up into higher realms of the Spirit to drink in the intoxicating freshness of the morn! To them God is witnessing that He shall bring forth a light that is sevenfold in its intensification, so that there will be nothing hidden from it, and its heat and brightness will consume and destroy everything that opposes. Nothing short of this will lift up this

sin-cursed world out of the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Paul certainly had the realization of such an incomprehensible fullness in mind when he wrote to the Ephesians, "May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory...that you may be filled through all your being unto all the fullness of God — that is, may have the richest measure of the divine, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself" (Eph. 3:16,19, Amplified). What a word! We have no problem believing that the firstborn Son of God is the One who has the seven spirits of God, or the fullness of God by the Spirit (Rev. 3:1). In the days of His flesh this firstborn Son of God said that the Father had given the Spirit to Him *without measure* (Jn. 3:34). And now the Lord is teaching His elect that we also have the fullness of God *in our spirit*, for God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, and he that is joined unto the Lord *is one spirit*.

There is a strange situation in the church at Sardis, the church to whom the Lord revealed Himself as the One who *has the seven spirits of God*. Though the church at Sardis had the reputation of being a *LIVE church*...it did not appear that way to the Lord. "Thou hast a *name* that thou livest, and art *dead*," the Lord said, and even the little life they had was close to death. The question follows — Why would the Lord show Himself to this church, as One full of light, and resplendent with glory? **Because that is what every son of God must see if he is going to spring forth in LIFE!** "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." He shines forth in the darkness, that He might cause the darkness to flee away.

It is not Christ in heaven that we see — it is Christ in the midst of the candlesticks. It is Christ in the midst of each one of us, Christ in our spirit, who shines forth in the glory of God! Until we see the mystery of the Christ within, the One who is closer to us than the air we breathe, the One who is closer to us even than the blood coursing through our

veins, the very Christ within our spirit who *is our life* — until we see that it is **this Christ** who has the seven spirits of God, we cannot arise and shine in the glory of the Father! Oh, yes, the Light has come, the darkness is past, God has lighted our candle, and the true light now shines! Christ is arising, standing up within His called and chosen elect, and He reveals His glory out of our innermost being. From there — from deep within — He addresses all our folly, all our dead works, all our forms of godliness, all our soulish activity, all our carnal perceptions, our natural reasonings, our human understanding, and our fleshly zeal.

Christ in our spirit steps forth from the Holiest of all within each of us to shine into all the darkness of our outer life, our limitation, fears, and self-effort, causing us to realize and know at last that our inner son, the Christ within, **has** the seven spirits of God! We can now live out of that glorious realm and walk with Him in white — walk with Him *as Light!* This reality is the root and fountainhead of our sonship life of victory, wisdom, power, and glory! This is *why* the Lord Jesus appears in the midst of the church at Sardis revealing Himself as the One having the seven spirits and the seven stars! This is the wonderful *purpose* of Christ's message to the church at Sardis! Though outwardly we may have a name that we live, and are dead, we may turn from all the death of the outer realm of soul and body, of the world and religion, turning to Christ in our spirit, that we might truly **see** the One who has the seven spirits of God! Aren't you glad!

A NAME THAT YOU LIVE, BUT ARE DEAD

“I know thy works, that thou hast a *name that livest, and art dead*” (Rev. 3:1).

It is evident in the letter to the church at Sardis that the world was invading the church. The church became very much like the city around

it. Society should be influenced by the people of God; God has designed that the body of Christ be filled with His power and holiness, to change and transform the world! But the sad truth is that often the church becomes influenced by the world. Amid all the fiery admonitions found in the epistle of James is the counsel that worldliness is the enemy of God (James 4:4). The blessed Holy Spirit warns every saint who cherishes the beautiful hope of sonship to *flee worldliness*. Some have mistakenly thought that meant to *flee the world*, so they hide themselves away in wilderness retreats, remote areas, jungle farms, or mountain monasteries, in physical separation from the world system.

It is not the world we must flee from, but *worldliness*. Our Lord Himself has taught us that we are *in* the world, but not *of* the world, and in the loving embrace of His final earnest prayer for His own He petitioned the heavenly Father, "I pray *not* that Thou shouldst take them *out of the world*, but that Thou shouldst *keep them from the evil*. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (Jn. 17:15-16). How our glad hearts rejoice in the sacred knowledge that "greater is He that is *in you*, than he that is *in the world*." Oh, let us always remember that the people of God are to influence the world, not the other way around. The saddest event of all is when it is not a saint, or a number of saints, that is influenced by the world, but a whole church is captivated by the world and its light goes out. This is indeed the present condition of all the church systems of man!

In the kingdom of God everything moves out of the energy of the Holy Spirit. We must see beyond the vessel and apprehend the Life within. This reminds me of an incident after the end of World War One. The famous desert fighter, Lawrence of Arabia, brought several Arab leaders to Paris to represent their interests at the Versailles Peace Conference. Those sons of the desert were filled with astonishment at the sights of Paris, but nothing intrigued them quite as much as the running water in their hotel rooms. In the desert water was such a

luxury and here in their rooms it seemed to be free and never ending, at the turning of a tap. When it was time to leave Paris, Lawrence found those Arabs removing the faucets, believing that those magic instruments would give them water at will in their native Arabia. Only with great difficulty did he finally convince them that the faucets were no good if detached from the water supply. “No good if detached!” What a word is that! Oh, let us give earnest heed to this tremendous statement! It reveals to us that any outward activity apart from the flow of HIS LIFE is dead and utterly worthless. A faucet without a water connection!

The Holy Spirit says, “You have a *name* — a reputation and recognition by the people — that you are alive.” You mention the church at Sardis and the response is, “Wow — things are happening down there, that church has everything; you walk through the door and your hair stands up on end. They are *alive*; their pastor is a *live wire* bubbling over with zeal and dripping with charisma. They have interesting guest speakers and beautiful special music. They’ve got every kind of program going; why they’ve got a bus ministry, a youth program, a ball team, a senior citizens outreach, a home for unwed mothers, a coffee house ministry, an outreach to addicts and homosexuals. They’ve got a choir that will send chills down your spine; and, man, you walk in the door and they’ll have you *busy doing something* in no time at all!”

Ah, they have a name that they live because they are filled with all kinds of activity, but God sits back in His high and holy place and sadly fills out that church’s death certificate. “Thou art dead!” Instead of operating in the power of the Holy Spirit who *is the life* of the body of Christ, like computerized robots they go through the form of flesh-generated programmed activity that appears to the undiscerning eye to be evidence of life. The name that is lived is being lived before *people*. “Thou hast a name...” among the people. “Thou hast a

name..." among the church systems of man. "Thou hast a name..." at the local Ministerial Association. "Thou hast a name..." on the church page of the newspaper. "Thou hast a name..." before the affluent, the intellectual, and the influential of the community. "Thou hast a name..." at the Kiwanis Club and the Rotary Club. "Thou hast a name..." with the mayor, the city council, the sheriff's department, and social services. Everyone esteems you highly! "But — THOU ART DEAD!"

The carnal Christians in the church at Sardis had a *name* that they lived, yet in fact they were dead. They were dead, but still they assumed the *appearance* of life! Human nature does not want to face the ugliness of death. We have invented a new vocabulary to discuss death. The people of previous centuries talked quite frankly about death. They spoke of the body as a corpse. Today we call the corpse "the deceased," or the "loved one." He is not dead. People do not die, they "pass on" and make their great "transition." The deceased is not in a coffin, he is in a "slumber room." He was probably reading a book when he went to sleep! Morticians, with lipstick and rouge, are busily engaged in transforming the dead into perennial members of a horizontal cocktail party. "He looks so natural, doesn't he?" Every effort is made to "dress up" death so that it *appears as life!* And spiritually, that is what the believers in Sardis were doing. They were dwelling in a realm of death, the death of the carnal mind, but with their religiosity they had painted themselves up and made a name for themselves that they lived!

I am sure that all who read these lines know what a taxidermist is. A taxidermist is a person who stuffs dead animals and makes them look like they did when they were alive. No doubt we have all been to museums where they have displayed stuffed foxes, elephants, or buffalo. We have been in someone's home and have seen their fishing or hunting trophies — a fish or a deer head mounted on the wall. When you look at these they look exactly as they did when they were

alive. You almost expect to see them move at any moment! The scales are all in the right order, the fins and tail look so very powerful, the eyes are open. The deer appears so graceful and majestic with startling innocence in his eyes, standing at attention. There is only one problem — he is *not* alive! There is no life on the inside. No matter how good he looks, the fact is he is *dead!* Multitudes of the Lord's people are like these animals. I'm not talking about dead people who are stuffed like mummies. And I'm not talking about the people out in the world who are dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from the life of God in their minds, and therefore dead to truth, dead to reality, dead to God. Oh, no! It is to the saints in the church at Sardis that the Lord speaks when He says, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

You see, my beloved, it relates to **works** — for the Lord prefaces His remark in this way: "I know thy **works**, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Works are the expression of life — movement, activity, performance, accomplishment. These saints are *busy, active, involved, working, doing great things* for God! But their works do not originate out of life, they are neither ordained nor energized by the Spirit, but stem rather from a realm of death — the unquickened soul, the Adamic mind, the natural man, carnal understanding and human zeal. By all these wonderful works done in the name of Christ, and accomplished *for God*, these have a *name* that they live, that the very life of God is manifested out of them. Yet they are dead! Their works are dead works!

This is a realm in which every son of God must overcome in order to reign with Christ! Now, do not misunderstand me! Living people have works, too! Their works are born of the living word of God, the living will of God, and accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit! Some kingdom people will not witness to anyone, some people will not do any good works to bless others, some who call themselves sons of God hibernate in their own little sonship kingdom with no expression of the life of Christ to anyone. Others release their children to go out in the world and live like the devil with the notion that if GOD is calling them He will somehow reach out and touch them by His sovereign power. There is no *reign* of wisdom, responsibility, righteousness, or power through the lives of these folks. But if our sonship is

worth a hill of beans there will be an expression, a ministration of the Spirit of wisdom, counsel, grace, salvation, deliverance, glory and power flowing out from us!

To know the difference between these two realms of works is what determines an OVERCOMER! It is right here, in connection with this *spiritual condition* revealed in the church at Sardis, that we are called upon to overcome. As I have mentioned repeatedly in recent writings, in Christ's messages to the seven churches it is not so much "cigarettes and whiskey and wild, wild women" that we are called upon to overcome, although those realms, too, *will* be overcome, but the emphasis in the letters to the seven churches concerns the spiritual conditions within the church realm. Those who are called to sonship have every one, without exception, heard the voice of the Lord calling them to totally forsake and utterly abandon the dead religious works of the old order church systems in order to serve the LIVING GOD! It means to act and serve and minister spontaneously out of the living power of the Christ in our spirit, not out of the carnal programs and promotions of the religious systems of man.

Hear, oh man of God, and give earnest heed, ye sons of God! "For if...the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: *how much more* shall the blood (life) of Christ...PURGE YOUR CONSCIENCE FROM **DEAD WORKS TO SERVE THE LIVING GOD**" (Heb. 9:13-14). He who writes these lines testifies to those who read them that no one can serve "the *living* God" with "*deadworks*." Dead works are the fruit of the flesh seeking to serve God and they have no spiritual life in them, no life from the *living God*. Some think that "dead" means "sinful" works. These certainly would be dead weight upon the conscience. Yet here "dead works" are not gross sins or evil of the flesh, but the good of the flesh attempting to serve God through outward, empty, meaningless religious observances, self-invented works whereby men think to please God.

Dead works are produced out of a polluted conscience. The polluted conscience dictates that this or that must be done to appease God, to please God, or to serve God. But they spring not from a spirit that is alive, and able to produce life; they are dead works brought forth out of the death of the carnal mind. They spring not from the fount of all life, and therefore are dead and obnoxious to God. It is the *conscience* that must be cleansed from dead works! The polluted conscience will feel better, it will feel justified and spiritual, after performing dead works; but it is a false reading, for a polluted conscience is as faulty and dangerous spiritually as a malfunctioning altimeter would be for an airplane pilot! It is the blood of Jesus that *purges the conscience from dead works*. Can you not see the mystery?

The blood of Jesus is the *life* of Jesus! “Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have no life in you.” It is the power of Christ’s life within that purges the conscience from dead works, so that we may serve the LIVING GOD! A conscience fully cleansed by the blood of Christ is freed from that inner gnawing demand to participate in the activities of the carnal church systems of man. Those who are called to the kingdom in this hour live in the dispensation of the Spirit — the spirit of sonship which has been sent into our hearts. It is the dispensation of the inner life, in which we are brought into the inner sanctuary, the secret place of the Most High; and the inner sanctuary is found within us, in that secret inner place where none but God’s Spirit can search out. In that hidden depth is the house God has prepared for Himself; there, in the mind of Christ in the new man of the spirit, God reveals, in a way that sense and reason cannot apprehend, the works of the living God by which the kingdom of God shall be brought forth in the earth. It is indeed wonderful!

The words of this beautiful passage of scripture cast a ray of eternal hope across the gloomy pages of human tradition and ritualistic

religion with its static creeds, outward ordinances, empty ceremonies, and carnal methods and programs that for centuries have blinded men's minds and made their feet to stumble and lose their way so that they have become lost to the glorious and eternal reality of *the life of God in the spirit*. Oh that men might know that it is the Holy Spirit alone who makes men alive, and it is the Holy Spirit alone who must lead us into all truth and bring to fruition the purposes of God in our lives. Oh that men might know that we are the servants of THE LIVING GOD! Our spirits have been quickened by His Spirit that we might live His life. The works done by God's called and chosen elect are works that spring out of His life within! That is how we serve the living God. No man can know the fullness of His presence nor the greatness of His power until his conscience has completely and forever been cleansed from dead works.

How vain have been our strivings about externals and our insistence upon little technicalities which we in ignorance deemed so very important! How often my own heart has been saddened as I have listened to brethren wasting their time contending over baptisms, communion, foot washing, sacred names, meats and drinks, holy days, sabbaths, fleshly Israel, dress codes, long hair, short hair, women preachers, so-called New Testament church orders, and petty doctrines of every kind, and when they were through with all their pietistic wrangling, they had accomplished nothing but to prove that they knew everything about the *dead letter* of the word and absolutely nothing about the LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT!

When I consider the vastness of God's great plan and the awesome majesty of His wonderful purpose of the ages, my soul grows weary with the petty quibblings of earth-bound, tradition-ridden men who are never able to deliver themselves from the externals of religion, and as a result are not able to see the ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF HIS INDWELLING LIFE. Men do not need any external ordinances,

ceremonies, or regulations of any kind. THEY NEED THE INDWELLING CHRIST! They do not need to know doctrine. They need to KNOW HIM as their INDWELLING LIFE AND LAW.

When I know God as **LIFE**, then I will discover the **LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE**. That is the only law for a son of God! Then, when the SPIRIT OF LIFE WITHIN leads me to eat, I will eat. When the LIFE prompts me to drink, I will drink. When the LIFE anoints me to fast, I will fast. When the LIFE quickens me to sing, I will sing. When the LIFE commands me to speak, I will speak. When the LIFE orders me to be silent, I will be silent. When the LIFE stirs me to go, I will go. When the LIFE tells me to stay, I will stay. When the LIFE directs me to work, I will work. When the LIFE guides me to rest, I will rest. When the LIFE impresses me to wait, I will wait. When the LIFE draws me aside to a season of separation, I will turn aside. When the LIFE speaks that I should go here or there, I will go. When the LIFE urges me to give, I will give. You see, my beloved, with Christ there are no regulations, no rules, nothing to do by rote, only the indwelling commandment of HIS LIFE. In this kingdom of the Spirit today it is not a matter of law, or ordinances, or traditions, or observances, or regulations, but wholly a matter of the indwelling Christ. Each of God's elect is learning the new way of the kingdom, living by the *law of the spirit of life* in Christ Jesus!

As long as the Christ within directs by His law of Life you are safe — for Christ today is the present, instant, up-to-date, indwelling LAWGIVER. Aren't you glad! The words of Moses the prophet are fulfilled in the sons of God today: "The Lord thy God will raise up a prophet *from the midst of thee*, of thy brethren, LIKE UNTO ME; UNTO HIM SHALL YE HEARKEN" (Deut. 18:15). Christ is today's real Moses, and we are His followers. God has raised up Christ! A greater than Moses is here! Christ is today's real Lawgiver, not Christ in the Bible, not Christ in heaven, but Christ *in the midst of us*. "The Lord thy God shall raise up a prophet *from the midst of thee*." This prophet is within us and we are

learning to do all things in His presence, at His word, and by His life. There are no regulations today, just the real Moses, Christ in our spirit with His glorious Law of Life. There are no external rules, observances, traditions, ordinances, or ceremonies — just the indwelling life. As long as I am following my Lawgiver today, as long as I am *one spirit with my Christ*, whatever I do as a product of His indwelling life is both the will and the work of the Father. Whether it is building furniture in a shop in Nazareth or feeding a multitude by the sea, it matters not; for a son of God lives only and always by the indwelling life, a state of being. In this kingdom of the Spirit there are not secular things and spiritual things. There is only the will of God by the Spirit!

This is a great and surprising revelation to many. Some will tell you that life is in keeping the commandments, another that life is in using the correct form of the sacred name, another that life is in keeping the sabbath, another that life is in attending meetings, another that life is in taking communion, another that life is in winning souls, or in water baptism, or speaking in tongues. But life is none of these things! It is more than all. Life is not to have an experience, or do this, or that, or the other — life is *the living power of Christ within!* Plus nothing! Can you grasp the power of that, my beloved? The works of a son of God are the works dictated by the law of Christ within whether that be working or waiting, or winning or losing, or suffering or recovering, or living or dying. We feel helpless beside a truth so great and eternal! In union with Christ His will is done as naturally as breathing. If you are struggling to know His will, and laboring to do His works, then sit at His feet like a little child and learn the simple truth that God's will may be done as much by hewing stones, or sweeping floors, as by preaching or prophesying or doing miracles. God's will is THE LIVING OUT OF HIS LIFE! Seek not a dream, or vision, or great revelation of what you should do. Start where you are...LET HIM LIVE THROUGH YOU right there...His will shall begin to be done in you today!

Oh, yes! For Jesus, the firstborn Son, the will of God began in the mundane things of His everyday life in the dusty mountain village of Nazareth, the place of no good thing. It was there, for thirty years, that He *learned* to live by the Law of the Spirit of the Life of the Father within. As that life grew in Him the day came in the fullness of time when the Life led Him to Cana of Galilee. The Life led Him to the Jordan. The Life led Him into the wilderness. The Life brought Him out of the wilderness in the power of the Spirit. The Son of God was manifested! Yet, the truth of the matter is that He was every bit as much the Son of God while He fashioned a plowshare with His rough hands, and spoke mercy and comfort to His sorrowing neighbor, as when He laid His hands of power upon the blind and deaf, held the winds in His fist, and commanded the waves with the voice of omnipotence.

Did you ever stop to think that when Jesus Christ, the firstborn Son of God, came into this world HE WAS THE ONLY LIVING MAN IN A WORLD OF DEAD PEOPLE? The whole world lay in the hands of the wicked one and death reigned over all the earth realm! No wonder the scripture says that flesh is a stench in the nostrils of God, because spiritual death sends forth its reek and stench. How the soul of Jesus must have recoiled at the state of death that was rampant over the earth! We, too, the walking dead, walked according to the course of *this world*, we are told. When Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, came into this world to reveal the Life of God, He came outside the existing religious systems. He spoke the words of God and did the works of God and manifested the nature of God. What an appalling shock to the established religious order to have this strange man, speaking as one with authority, suddenly appear in their midst not as a Pharisee, a Sadducee, or a priest of the order of Aaron, but in the power of the Spirit of God!

Sunday after Sunday thousands of ministers stand in their pulpits to preach dead sermons while untold millions of church members sing

the same songs, repeat the same prayers, go through the same motions, observing lifeless forms, meaningless rituals, and empty ceremonies. I tell you frankly that that is the way to spiritual stagnation and perpetual immaturity, but it is not the path to sonship and the fullness of God, or life in the Spirit. Oh! There is no death anywhere more horrible than that to be found in *dead religion*. It is the land of the living dead, a land filled with zombies, having the outward appearance of being alive, and yet dead. There are but two kinds of people: the dead and the alive. If you have not been made alive by His transforming power, you are still dead no matter how rosy your religious cheeks may appear. If you have been made alive may I tell you that, as assuredly as Lazarus knew that he had been raised from the tomb, so also you know that you have been quickened by God, made alive, and you walk in newness of life as a son of God in the land of the living.

You will understand a great mystery when you understand that the *soul is instinctively religious*. The human soul, apart from union with the spirit, loves to appear and act spiritual just as a little girl loves to play house with her dolls and toys and pretend she is mothering her babies and keeping the house. The glorious Christ within, who has the seven spirits of God, is none other than the Word of God Himself. He arises out of our spirit, entering into mind and heart to take away the defilement and death of the outer life. He stands up in our inner sanctuary to remove, not the iniquities which separate between God and the sinner, but some *dead thing* by which the people of God are defiled.

Sadly the great apostle wrote to young Timothy about those “having a *form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*” (II Tim. 3:5). Then he added, “From such turn away.” The “form of godliness without power” is an abomination, but the FORM OF GODLINESS WITH POWER is a mighty thing! Not a form of religion, but the FORM OF GODLINESS or God-like-ness. Without a form you have no power. The

“image” and “likeness” of God is a form! If you have some gunpowder, it may be a pound weight, and scatter it in a plate and set fire to it, there is no power to it: but ram it into a cannon, put a bullet there, and you had better stand out of the way of the power, for it is very real! The sons of God are being prepared, pressed, and formed in the processings of the Father, not as power dispersed, but as power concentrated. Through His faithful dealing with us His nature, glory, and power are being built into us, intensified within us, formed in our lives for the hour of unveiling. He cannot dwell “loosely” within us, only casually experienced. Through the unique experiences He brings into our lives His life is being meticulously **pressed** into every facet of our being until **HIS FORM** becomes all that is seen in every circumstance and situation.

Forms without power are forms without Christ. Forms without power are a curse. All forms of prayer and praise and religious activity which have no power in them are abominations. The church that has a form without a power ought to have been buried long ago, and all who are in contact with them are defiled by death. Under the law it was defilement to touch a dead thing! Power goes into form; form does not always contain power. Empty forms are dead carcasses that defile; living forms embody and express all the power of the indwelling life. The only form that does contain power is the FORM OF CHRIST as He is formed as truth and reality in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. All forms which are not His living form in us are dead forms and men are defiled thereby.

There is only *one form* in the whole universe to be desired, and it is the one created by God Himself. Millenniums ago the great king Nebuchadnezzar gazed in transfixed wonder upon this form and cried out in astonishment, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the **form** of the fourth is like **the Son of God**” (Dan. 3:24-25). Ah, there is the form! Paul, by the wisdom given him,

penned these words of truth, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the **form of God**, thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Phil. 2:5-6). Think diligently of what the apostle has told us in speaking thus: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until CHRIST BE F-O-R-M-E-D in you" (Gal. 4:19).

The church in Sardis has a name that it lives, but is dead. The church of today is like an autumn leaf, dry and dead but retaining its form and structure. Death has come to man on all levels through the eating of the fruit of the tree of the *knowledge of good and evil*. This tree is the tree of death! This tree of death stands in stark contrast to the tree of life! The tree of life is Christ, for "in Him was life, and the life was the light of men." "When Christ who is *our life* shall appear..." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, *hath the life of the ages*." The life given men by the tree of life is a higher kind of life than the masses of men upon earth know today. It is divine life, incorruptible life, eternal life, God life, the life of the Spirit. The tree of life in Eden was nothing else than the life of God in man's spirit made available to man simply for the taking.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on the other hand, is not life, but death. The truth of this can be seen in the very ingredients of the fall! When Adam sinned, of which tree did he eat? Why, the tree of the knowledge of *good and evil*. Hear this! The elements of that tree were not only the element of evil; they were the elements producing a knowledge of *both good and evil*! The tree ministered to man a *knowledge of good* as truly as it ministered to him a *knowledge of evil*. Thus, the fall of man introduced him into a realm of duality, of admixture: good and evil. The fallen man is both good and evil! How prone we have been to declare the unregenerated man **only evil**! It is true that the element of evil in some men predominates, but it is also true that the element of good in other men predominates. The good in

man has not been corrupted to the point of non-existence. It is for this reason that the philosophers and psychologists have discovered that within man are some “illustrious virtues” and “innate goodness” and have reached the mistaken conclusion that the nature of man is good. They have merely discovered that within fallen man there is still the principle of good which naturally causes us to want to do good.

The problem is that when man came into the knowledge of good and evil he did not come into a better condition. Man came to know “good and evil” but he didn’t come to KNOW GOD! He now possesses a knowledge of the good and of the evil, but he does not possess the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! Man passed into the knowing of good and evil but he did not BECOME HOLY! He merely added evil to his good producing a mixture of the two, but in so doing he forfeited THE LIFE AND GLORY AVAILABLE TO HIM IN THE TREE OF LIFE! He chose good and evil — but missed **Life!**

The knowledge of good and evil concerns itself only with *external behavior*, judging all things on the basis of whether they are “good” or “evil.” Man, as long as he walks in this consciousness of the fall, the knowledge of good and evil, can understand and judge only within this framework: is a thing good or is it evil? He then presumes that if a thing is “good” it must be acceptable and godly. Nothing could be farther from the truth! If “good” was acceptable with God then man could surely be justified by “the works of the law.” The law is *good!* But the “good” of man is the good of the creature — not the good of the Creator! It is the good of the *soul*, but not the good of the *Spirit!*

In the garden of Eden we have two revelations from two kinds of trees. First, *life* is the nature of God, whereas *good* is the nature of man. Second, life is good, but not all good is life! The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil show us that on the highest level *life* and *good* are definitely different; life is neither good nor evil. *Life, good, and evil* ARE THREE DIFFERENT AND INDEPENDENT

THINGS. The good of God can only be experienced through participation in the life of God. Evil mingled with good produced death. And even before man fell, all of his good, of itself, could not give him *life*. There was no life in good, just as there was no life in evil. Only the *tree of life* possessed the power of life! If man had been partaking of the tree of life he could not have fallen. Can we not see by this that “good” and “life” are things which pertain to two different worlds!

Just as evil is something other than life, so also is good something other than life. Just as evil is not life, so also good is not life. Evil and good, though different in nature, are really of the same world for they come from the same tree. Neither one contains life or is life! Thus in the scriptures, good and evil are not two trees, but one tree. Life is in another tree, being something of another realm, from another world, pertaining to another kingdom. This is how it is that a man, by his own determination and effort, can improve considerably in his character and actions and yet still be entirely VOID OF THE LIFE OF GOD! He can be upright, honest, truthful, caring, compassionate, influential for good in the world and yet have no more *spiritual understanding or life* than a dog or cat. This is because his goodness is completely apart from life! It is of his own good human effort, and not a product of indwelling life.

All who dwell in THE SARDIS CONDITION are those who suppose that good is life! Oh, how “good” religion is! How “good” are their doctrines, their rules, their morality, their standards, their causes, their programs, their ordinances, their organizations, their charities, their rituals, their forms, their works! How it all soothes the human conscience, giving the illusion that the living Christ is being served! They have a name before men that they live, but they are dead. Only the power of Christ in our spirit is the light of men and the light of the world, and all who follow Him will not walk in darkness, but *have the light of life*.

How I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory that for the called and chosen elect of the Lord who have been *born of the Spirit*, there is no longer merely the two realities of good and evil; there is now within our being the very LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS! He who is in union with the tree of life has the power to offer that to others of which they can eat and live. Amid all who surround him he becomes a tree of life, of which they can taste and be refreshed. He is in his circle a center of life and of blessing, and that simply because he abides in Christ who is the life.

The sons are of that company which has discovered a realm of life, reality, and glory that transcends all the good of man. This dimension of life is the kingdom realm of God! This is where the difference lies between the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. The tree of knowledge (doctrines, rules, commandments) can only impart to men a knowledge of good and evil. The power of Christ in the manifest sons of God shall reveal to all creation the power of incorruptible life! Creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God!

God has through the years given us a foretaste of how the kingdom of God works in the lives of men by the power of life. In fellowships we have been associated with a number of people were brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Some of these dear ones had deep problems and powerful habits in their lives. Some, for instance, were smokers. Knowing that such habits and bondages are a hindrance in the lives of those who would truly be *overcomers* in the Lord, we could have told these people, "You must stop smoking. You can't be a member of this fellowship as long as you smoke. You can't function in our meetings until you get deliverance. You can neither teach, prophesy, or assume any role of ministry until you become an

example to others. Smoking is a sin and will destroy your spiritual life. Forget about the high calling of God until you get delivered!”

We could have counseled these dear ones thus, but we would have only been offering them some fruit off the tree of the knowledge of good and evil! So instead, we offered them fruit from the tree of LIFE! Rather than condemning them for their habit, we *blessed them and encouraged them in the Lord*. We received them. We loved them unconditionally. We got them into the word of God. We ministered the life of the Spirit to them. We shared the truths of sonship and the high calling of God with them. We unveiled the mysteries of the kingdom unto them. We withheld no good thing from them. And guess what happened! To my knowledge, within a very short time every one of them was delivered from their cigarettes!

Their deliverance, therefore, was the **product of life**, a working of the growth of divine life in them. Death became “swallowed up” of life! The Son of God came that men might have life. He did not come to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. The sons of God are arising for the very same purpose, in the very same ministry — LIFE! The world is condemned already. The last thing creation needs is some preacher out on a street corner screaming about sin and death and hell. Cursed fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil! The whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Deliverance is arising! God is purging a people from dead works, and raising up sons of God in this new kingdom Day who serve the **LIVING GOD!** A flood of Life, Light, and Love is about to break forth upon the nations! It is indeed wonderful!