

THE SOURCE, THE UNION, AND THE FRUIT

*Knowing the Life That Is Now Yours,
How You Came to Be In It,
and How It Flows Through You*

*A Second Study from the Scriptures,
the Gospels, the Letters, and the Revelation*

*Written by Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus,
who was once dead and is now alive—
not by his own doing,
but by the grace of God.*

*To the churches everywhere,
and to every soul who has heard the first study
and now asks: “What does this life look like?”*

Before We Begin

Grace and peace to you, beloved.

In my first letter to you, I walked you through the trail—from creation through the Torah, the Wisdom writings, and the Prophets—showing how all of Scripture pointed to one conclusion: that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day, and that we were included in that event.

Many of you have written back to me. And though the words differ, the questions are the same:

“Paul, I believe you. I see the trail. But now what? What is this life? How do I know it is in me? What does it look like when it is flowing? And how do I know when I am slipping back into the old way—sourcing from myself again?”

These are not foolish questions. They are the questions of a child who has been born and is now learning to walk. And I will answer them—not from philosophy, not from speculation, but from the same Scriptures, from the words of our Lord Himself, from the testimony of the apostles, and from the revelation given to John on the island of Patmos.

We will walk through three great truths:

- Part One: The Source — What is this life, and where does it come from?
- Part Two: The Union — How do I become identified with it?
- Part Three: The Fruit — What are the signs that the source is flowing through me?

Let us begin where all life begins—with the Source Himself.

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PART ONE: THE SOURCE

What is this life, and where does it come from?

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I. The Life Was in Him

Before you can understand the life that has been given to you, you must understand where it was before it reached you.

John, who leaned against the Lord's chest and heard His heartbeat, begins his account not with Bethlehem but with eternity:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”
— **John 1:1–4**

In Him was life. Not “He taught about life.” Not “He pointed to life.” In Him was life. The life itself resided in His person. He did not carry a message about life—He was the life.

This is the very thing Moses recorded at the beginning: God breathed, and man became alive. The breath was God's. The life was God's. And now John tells us that this life—the uncreated, self-existing, eternal life of God—was embodied in the Word who became flesh.

The Lord Himself said it plainly:

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
— **John 14:6**

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”
— **John 11:25–26**

“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”
— **John 10:10**

Not instruction about life. Not a system for achieving life. Life itself. The Source in person, walking among us, speaking to us, offering Himself to us.

The first thing you must settle in your heart is this: the life that has been given to you is not a principle, not a moral code, not an improved version of your old self. It is a Person. Christ Himself is your life. Everything else follows from this.

I wrote to the Colossians in exactly these terms:

“When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

— **Colossians 3:4**

Christ who is your life. Not Christ who gave you a life. Not Christ who started your life. Christ who is your life. The distinction is everything. If your life is a thing He gave you, it could run out. If your life is Him, it cannot end—because He cannot end.

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II. The Grain of Wheat — How the Life Was Released

But if the life was in Him—locked inside His person, as it were—how did it reach you? How did the life that belonged to the eternal Son of God become available to sinful, dead, dust-formed creatures like us?

The Lord Himself answered this with one of His most devastating and beautiful metaphors:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

— **John 12:24**

A grain of wheat. Whole, perfect, alive—but alone. It contains life within itself. But that life is contained. Enclosed. Available to no one else.

Unless it falls into the ground and dies.

When it dies—when the outer shell breaks open, when the form it once held is surrendered—then the life that was locked inside is released. And it multiplies. One grain becomes a harvest. One death becomes many lives.

Brothers, do you see what the Lord was telling us about Himself?

He was the grain. The life of God was perfectly contained in Him. But as long as He lived in that single, unbroken human form, the life remained His alone. It could not be shared. It could not be distributed. It could not get inside of you.

The cross was not merely punishment. It was the breaking open of the grain. It was the means by which the divine life—trapped, as it were, in a single vessel—was released into all who would receive it.

The death of Christ was not only substitutionary—taking your punishment. It was generative—releasing His life. The cross is not only where your sin was dealt with. It is where your new life came from. His death cracked the shell. His resurrection distributed the harvest.

This is why I wrote to you:

“For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.”

— **Romans 6:5**

His death opened the way. His resurrection fills you with what was opened.

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III. The Vine — The Nature of the Source

Now the Lord gives us the most sustained picture of what this life looks like in practice. And it is not a lecture. It is not a list of rules. It is a vine.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

— **John 15:1–2**

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

— **John 15:4–5**

Apart from me you can do nothing.

Not “apart from me you can do less.” Not “apart from me it will be harder.” Nothing. The branch does not produce its own sap. It does not generate its own growth. It does not decide what fruit to bear. It receives. It abides. It stays connected to the source, and the life of the vine flows through it and produces what the vine’s nature produces.

This is the picture of the Christian life, beloved. Not striving. Not self-improvement. Not trying to generate godly behavior by willpower and determination. Abiding.

Remaining. Staying connected to the Source and allowing His life to produce His fruit through you.

The Psalmist saw this long ago:

“He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”

— *Psalm 1:3*

Planted by streams of water. Not a tree straining to pull water from a desert. A tree positioned at the source, drawing life effortlessly, bearing fruit naturally—because the water is always there.

The life of Christ in you does not operate by effort. It operates by connection. You do not produce this fruit. You receive it—by staying rooted in the One who is your source. Abiding is not passivity. It is the most active form of trust: choosing, moment by moment, to draw from Him instead of from yourself.

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IV. Living Water — The Spirit as the Flow of Life

But how does this life actually reach you, practically? You cannot see Christ with your physical eyes. He has ascended. He sits at the right hand of the Father. How does the life of the vine flow into the branch?

The Lord answered this too:

“On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” This He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive.”

— *John 7:37–39*

The Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the means by which the life of Christ flows into you and through you. He is the living water. He is the sap in the vine. He is the breath that filled the dry bones in Ezekiel’s valley.

The Lord told His disciples:

“It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.”

— *John 16:7*

To your advantage. How could the departure of Christ be an advantage? Because while Christ walked the earth, His life was with them—beside them, among them. But when the Spirit came, His life would be in them. The grain of wheat, once broken, releases its life through the Spirit into every believer.

This is what Ezekiel prophesied:

“And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.”

— **Ezekiel 36:27**

And Joel:

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.”

— **Joel 2:28**

And this is exactly what happened at Pentecost. The Spirit descended. The church was born. And the life of the risen Christ began flowing—not from an external code, not from a temple of stone—but from within the very hearts of ordinary men and women who had believed.

I wrote to the Romans:

“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”

— **Romans 8:9–10**

The Holy Spirit is not a bonus. He is not an upgrade for advanced Christians. He is the very means by which Christ’s life inhabits you. Without the Spirit, there is no connection to the vine. With the Spirit, the Source is literally within you—closer than your own breath.

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V. The Bread and the Water — Receiving, Not Producing

The Lord used two of the most basic human needs—food and water—to describe how this life sustains you.

“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

— **John 6:35**

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”

— John 6:53–56

Many stumbled at these words. They could not hear past the physical imagery. But the Lord was saying something the Torah had been saying all along: you live by receiving, not by producing.

In the wilderness, Israel ate manna—bread they did not bake, from a source they could not see, given fresh every morning. They could not store it. They could not earn it. They could only receive it, daily, from God’s hand.

“And He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”

— Deuteronomy 8:3

Man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. Not by what he produces. By what he receives from God’s mouth. The manna was a daily lesson in dependence. And now Christ says: I am the true manna. I am the bread that came down from heaven. Eat me. Receive me. Let my life sustain you—not once, but continually.

The Christian life is sustained the same way it began: by receiving. You did not produce your salvation. You cannot produce your sanctification. You eat. You drink. You take in the life of Christ—through His word, through His Spirit, through communion with Him—and that life sustains you from within.

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PART TWO: THE UNION

How do I become identified with this life?

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VI. In Christ — The Most Important Phrase

Brothers and sisters, if there is one phrase you must understand—one phrase that unlocks everything I have ever written—it is this: in Christ.

I use it more than any other expression in my letters. And I do not use it as a figure of speech. I use it because it describes an actual reality—the most important reality of your existence.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

— **2 Corinthians 5:17**

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

— **Romans 8:1**

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”

— **Ephesians 1:3**

In Christ. Not “because of Christ” merely. Not “inspired by Christ.” In Him. Located in Him. Contained in Him. Identified with Him so completely that what is true of Him is now true of you.

Remember Noah’s ark? Everyone inside was saved. Everyone outside perished. The ark was the vessel of God’s provision, and your position determined your destiny. In or out. That was it.

Christ is the ark. And you are in Him.

This means:

- His death counts as your death
- His burial counts as your burial
- His resurrection counts as your resurrection
- His righteousness counts as your righteousness

- His acceptance before the Father counts as your acceptance

I did not invent this language. The Lord Himself used it:

“In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”

— *John 14:20*

You in me, and I in you. This is mutual indwelling. This is union. Not mere association. Not mere agreement. Union—like sap in a branch, like breath in a body, like blood in a vein.

Your identity is no longer self-sourced. You are not defined by your history, your failures, your achievements, or your effort. You are defined by your location—and your location is in Christ. Everything God sees when He looks at Christ, He sees when He looks at you. This is not wishful thinking. This is the judicial reality of the gospel.

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VII. Baptism — Going Down and Coming Up

How did you enter this union? Not by self-improvement. Not by moral progress. By death.

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

— *Romans 6:3–4*

Baptism is not merely a ritual. It is a participation. When you went under the water, you were declaring: I am going into His death. The old self—the self-sourcing, Adam-derived, law-breaking self—goes under. It is buried. Done.

And when you came up out of the water, you were declaring: I am rising in His life. A new self. Not the old self improved—a new creation entirely.

The Lord Himself submitted to baptism at the Jordan. And when He came up out of the water:

“And when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well

pleased.”

— *Matthew 3:16–17*

The heavens opened. The Spirit descended. The Father spoke. This is my beloved Son. And now, in Christ, the Father says the same over you. You are in the Beloved. The Father’s pleasure in the Son rests on you—not because of your performance, but because of your position.

I wrote to the Ephesians:

“He has blessed us in the Beloved... to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved.”

— *Ephesians 1:6*

Baptism is the visible enactment of an invisible reality: your old life has ended, and a new life has begun. You did not transition. You died and were reborn. The waters of baptism are a grave and a womb—the end of one existence and the beginning of another.

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VIII. Co-Crucified, Co-Buried, Co-Raised

I must press this further, because some of you are still living as if the old self is merely wounded. It is not wounded. It is dead.

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

— *Galatians 2:20*

Co-crucified. Not “Christ was crucified, and I admire that.” I was crucified with Him. His cross is my cross. His death is my death. In the reckoning of God, the person I used to be—the one who sourced life from himself, who tried to produce righteousness, who covered himself with fig leaves of self-effort—that person was nailed to the cross with Jesus and died there.

“We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.”

— *Romans 6:6–7*

And co-raised:

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things

that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

— *Colossians 3:1–3*

Your life is hidden with Christ in God. What a phrase. Hidden—not visible to the world, not dependent on circumstances, not threatened by external forces. Hidden in the safest place in the universe: in Christ, in God.

The Lord spoke of this hiddenness in His prayer:

“I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one... The glory that You have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and You in me, that they may become perfectly one.”

— *John 17:15, 22–23*

You are not merely forgiven. You are not merely pardoned. You have been co-crucified, co-buried, and co-raised. The old has actually ended. The new has actually begun. And now you live—not by your own resources, but by the life of the One who loved you and gave Himself for you.

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IX. The New Creation — Not Renovation, but Resurrection

Many of you are still trying to improve the old. Stop. The old cannot be improved. It can only be replaced.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

— *2 Corinthians 5:17*

New creation. Not old creation repaired. Not old creation upgraded. New. The Greek word is *kainos*—new in kind, not merely new in time. Something that did not exist before now exists. You are not a better version of your former self. You are a different species altogether.

This is what the Lord said to Nicodemus:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God... That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, “You must be born again.””

— *John 3:3, 6–7*

Born again. Born from above. Born of the Spirit. This is not a metaphor for turning over a new leaf. This is a genuine birth—a new origin, a new source, a new life that comes not from your parents, not from your culture, not from your effort, but from God’s Spirit.

John confirms this in his letter:

“Everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.”

— **1 John 3:9**

God’s seed abides in him. The life of God—His DNA, if you will—has been implanted in you. And that seed, that nature, does not sin. It cannot sin. It is God’s own life.

Now, you may say, “But Paul, I still sin.” And I will address that. But first you must understand the foundation: there is a new you. The truest thing about you is not your struggle. The truest thing about you is your birth—your new birth. And the life born in you is incorruptible.

Peter wrote of this:

“You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.”

— **1 Peter 1:23**

You are not a sinner trying to become a saint. You are a new creation learning to live from the new source. The old self is dead. The new self is alive. The challenge of the Christian life is not to produce godliness but to live consistently from the new life that is already in you.

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X. Adoption — The Full Rights of Sons and Daughters

But union with Christ means more than new life. It means new identity. New family. New standing.

“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “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 fellow heirs with Christ.”

— **Romans 8:15–17**

You are not a servant in God's house. You are a child. Not merely a child—an heir. Not merely an heir—a fellow heir with Christ. Everything that belongs to the Son belongs to you. His inheritance is your inheritance. His standing is your standing. His Father is your Father.

The Lord taught His disciples to pray:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.”

— *Matthew 6:9*

Our Father. Not “the distant deity.” Not “the terrifying judge.” Father. And the Spirit within you confirms this reality—when you pray, when you worship, when you cry out in the dark, the Spirit Himself rises up within you and says, “Abba.” Daddy. Papa. The most intimate form of address a child can use.

“And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”

— *Galatians 4:6–7*

Your union with Christ has changed your identity at the deepest level. You are a child of God—not by achievement, not by merit, but by birth and adoption. The Spirit in you is the proof. The cry of “Abba” in your heart is the evidence. You belong.

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PART THREE: THE FRUIT

What are the signs that the Source is flowing through me?

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XI. The Fruit of the Spirit — Evidence of the Source

Now we come to the question burning in many of your hearts: “How do I know? How do I know the life is real? How do I know it is flowing?”

The answer is fruit. Not effort. Fruit.

A tree does not strain to produce apples. An apple tree produces apples because it is an apple tree. The fruit is the natural, inevitable expression of the nature of the tree. And a tree planted by water produces more fruit than one in a desert—not because it tries harder, but because it is better supplied.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

— *Galatians 5:22–23*

Notice: I did not say “the works of the believer.” I said the fruit of the Spirit. This fruit is not something you manufacture. It is something the Spirit produces in you as you abide in Christ. It is His fruit, flowing through your branch.

And notice what is on the list. Not impressive spiritual gifts. Not dramatic miracles. Not great achievements that the world would celebrate. Love. Joy. Peace. Patience. Kindness. These are the quiet, steady, unmistakable signs that a different life—a life not of this world—is operating in a person.

The Lord said it simply:

“By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.”

— *Matthew 7:16–17*

The evidence of the Source flowing through you is not a feeling you manufacture or a performance you sustain. It is fruit—the natural, recognizable product of a life connected to Christ through the Spirit. If the fruit is appearing, the Source is flowing. If the fruit is absent, the question is not “How do I try harder?” but “Where have I disconnected from the vine?”

XII. Love — The First and Greatest Sign

Of all the fruit, love is first. Not because it is one virtue among many, but because it is the nature of the Source Himself.

“God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”

— **1 John 4:16**

God is love. Not “God has love.” God is love. It is His nature, His essence, the substance of His being. And when His life flows through you, the first and most unmistakable evidence is love—not a sentimental feeling, but an active, sacrificial, other-directed reality.

The Lord gave the clearest definition:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

— **John 13:34–35**

Just as I have loved you. The standard is not human love—which gives when it feels like it, which loves those who love back, which keeps a ledger. The standard is His love—which gives when it costs everything, which loves those who have nothing to offer in return, which pours out without measuring.

And what does His love look like? He told us:

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

— **John 15:13**

I described it to the Corinthians:

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

— **1 Corinthians 13:4–8**

Brothers, when you find yourself patient with someone who has exhausted your natural patience—that is not you. That is the Source. When you find yourself genuinely rejoicing in another person’s success instead of envying it—that is not your natural

instinct. That is Christ's life in you. When you absorb an insult without retaliating and find, to your own surprise, that you feel compassion instead of rage—that is the unmistakable mark of a life that is not your own.

Love is the primary evidence. If the Source is flowing, love will be present. Not perfectly—you are still learning to abide. But genuinely. Recognizably. In ways that surprise even you. When you love in a way you know you could not have produced on your own, you have your evidence: Christ lives in you.

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XIII. Joy and Peace — Independent of Circumstances

The second sign is a joy and a peace that make no sense to the natural mind.

I wrote to the Philippians from a prison cell:

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.”
— **Philippians 4:4**

I was in chains. My future was uncertain. I might be executed. And yet I wrote “rejoice”—not as a command to pretend, but as a description of what was actually happening inside me. The circumstances were terrible. But the Source was flowing. And the Source produces joy regardless of the container it flows through.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
— **Philippians 4:7**

Surpasses all understanding. Meaning: it will not make sense. You will not be able to explain it to yourself or to others. The world says peace comes from safety, comfort, and control. This peace comes from none of those things. It comes from the Source. And when the Source flows, peace is present—even in a prison cell, even in a shipwreck, even facing death.

The Lord promised this:

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”
— **John 14:27**

My peace. Not the absence of trouble. His peace—the peace that belongs to the One who said to the storm, “Be still.” That peace now lives inside you.

And James, the Lord's brother, confirms this:

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.”

— James 1:2–3

When you experience joy that has no external explanation—when peace holds you steady in a situation that should undo you—you are witnessing the fruit of the Spirit. These are not emotions you generate. They are realities the Source produces. They are evidence that a life beyond your own is operating within you.

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XIV. Transformation of Character — Becoming What You Were Not

The longer the Source flows, the more your character changes. Not by your effort to change it, but by the steady pressure of a life that is not your own shaping you from within.

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

— 2 Corinthians 3:18

Transformed—the Greek word is metamorphoo, from which we get “metamorphosis.” A caterpillar does not improve itself into a butterfly. It is transformed. The old form gives way to an entirely new one. Not by willpower. By the life working within it.

Peter, who knew firsthand the journey from impulsive fisherman to steady shepherd, wrote:

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature.”

— 2 Peter 1:3–4

Partakers of the divine nature. You are not merely imitating God. You are sharing in His nature. The life of God is in you, and as you abide in it, your character begins to reflect His—not as a copy reflects an original, but as a branch reflects the vine. Because it is the same life.

The Lord spoke of this process:

“Every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

— John 15:2

The Father prunes. This is not punishment. It is cultivation. He removes what hinders the flow—self-reliance, pride, fear, old patterns of self-sourcing—so that the life can flow more freely and produce more abundantly.

Character change is not the goal you strive toward. It is the natural result of a life connected to the Source. You do not become patient by trying to be patient. You become patient because the Spirit of patience dwells in you. You do not become kind by gritting your teeth. You become kind because kindness is the nature of the One who lives inside you.

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XV. The Witness of the Spirit — An Inner Knowing

There is a sign that is harder to explain but impossible to deny once you have experienced it: the inner witness of the Spirit.

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

— Romans 8:16

Something within you knows. Not because someone told you. Not because you read it in a scroll. Something in the deep place of your being—beneath thought, beneath emotion—resonates with the truth. You hear the gospel, and something inside says, “Yes.” You read the Scriptures, and something inside comes alive. You pray, and even in the silence, there is a knowing: you are not alone. You are heard. You are held.

John wrote of this:

“But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge... The anointing that you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in Him.”

— 1 John 2:20, 27

The anointing teaches you. The Spirit within you is not silent. He illuminates the Scriptures. He convicts you of sin—not with condemnation, but with the sorrow of a

child who has grieved a good father. He guides you into truth. He prompts you toward love. He whispers, “This is the way, walk in it.”

The Lord promised this:

“When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

— *John 16:13–14*

If you have an inner sense—often quiet, often easily drowned out by the noise of the world and the clamor of the old nature—that Christ is real, that God is your Father, that you are loved, that what you are reading in these Scriptures is true... that is the Spirit. That knowing is itself evidence of the Source. Dead men do not know they are alive. But you do. The Spirit tells you.

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XVI. Power in Weakness — The Paradox of the Flow

Here is where many of you are confused. You expect that the life of Christ in you should make you feel powerful, impressive, invincible. But that is not how this life works. In fact, it often works in the opposite direction.

“But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

— *2 Corinthians 12:9–10*

My power is made perfect in weakness. This is the great paradox. The Source does not eliminate your weakness. He flows through it. The clay pot is not replaced with a golden vessel. The treasure is placed in the clay pot precisely so that it is obvious the power belongs to God and not to you.

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our

bodies.”

— 2 Corinthians 4:7-10

Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested. The death and the life are both present. The weakness and the power coexist. And the life becomes most visible precisely when the circumstances make it impossible that it could come from you.

The Lord Himself demonstrated this:

“For He was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but in dealing with you we will live with Him by the power of God.”

— 2 Corinthians 13:4

If you find yourself in a season of weakness, difficulty, or insufficiency—and yet something sustains you, something enables you to endure, to love, to hope, to stand—that is the Source flowing. The very fact that you cannot explain your own resilience is the proof that the life is not your own. Christ’s power is made perfect in your weakness. Do not despise the clay pot. Marvel at the treasure inside it.

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XVII. Freedom from the Power of Sin — Not Sinlessness, but a New Master

Some of you are troubled because you still sin. Let me speak to this directly.

The new birth does not make you incapable of sin in this present body. But it changes your relationship to sin entirely. You are no longer enslaved.

“For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

— Romans 6:14

Sin will have no dominion. Not “sin will never appear.” Dominion. It will not rule you. It will not define you. It will not own you. Before Christ, you were a slave—sin was your master, and you could not say no even when you wanted to. Now you are free. You can say no. The chain is broken.

But freedom requires walking in the Spirit:

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”

— *Galatians 5:16–17*

There is a real conflict. The flesh—the old pattern of self-sourcing—has not been removed from your body, though it has been dethroned. It still whispers. It still pulls. But the Spirit within you is greater. And when you yield to the Spirit, the flesh has no power.

John, the elder, wrote with great tenderness on this:

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

— *1 John 2:1–2*

If anyone does sin—not “when everyone sins constantly.” There is an expectation that the new life produces a new pattern. But there is also provision for failure. An advocate. Not a condemner. Christ at the Father’s right hand, speaking on your behalf.

The sign of the Source flowing is not that you never stumble. It is that sin no longer defines you. You fall, but you do not stay down. You grieve over sin—not with the despair of a slave, but with the sorrow of a child who knows better. And you find that sin’s power over you is diminishing—not because you are trying harder, but because the life within you is growing stronger.

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XVIII. Love for the Brothers and Sisters — The Unmistakable Mark

John gives us perhaps the simplest and most direct test:

“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.”

— *1 John 3:14*

Passed out of death into life. And the proof? We love the brothers. Not merely tolerate. Not merely associate with. Love. The same self-giving, sacrificial, other-directed love that flows from the Source now flows toward the other members of the body.

The Lord said this would be the distinguishing mark of His people—not their doctrine, not their miracles, not their moral perfection, but their love for one another.

And this love is practical, not sentimental:

“But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

— **1 John 3:17–18**

Do you find yourself drawn to the people of God? Do you find that your heart opens toward those who share this life? Do you find yourself willing to sacrifice comfort, resources, even reputation for the sake of a brother or sister? That impulse did not come from you. It came from the Source. It is the life of Christ recognizing itself in another vessel.

Love for the brothers and sisters is not merely a nice addition to the Christian life. It is the definitive evidence that you have passed from death to life. Where this love is present, the Source is flowing. Where it is absent, something has obstructed the vine.

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XIX. Perseverance Under Trial — The Endurance That Cannot Be Explained

The Lord told His disciples plainly:

“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

— **John 16:33**

He did not promise ease. He promised tribulation. And then He promised something greater: He has overcome. And because you are in Him, His overcoming is yours.

James understood this:

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him.”

— **James 1:12**

And Peter, who himself was broken by trial and rebuilt by grace:

“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

— **1 Peter 1:6–7**

Brothers, I myself have been beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, imprisoned, betrayed, left for dead. And I am still here. Not because I am strong. Because the life within me is indestructible. The treasure in the clay pot cannot be destroyed even when the pot is cracked.

When you endure what should break you—and something inside you holds—that is the Source. When suffering comes and you find, underneath the pain, a bedrock that does not move—that is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Perseverance under trial is not mere stubbornness or human grit. It is the life of the risen Christ refusing to be extinguished in you. It is the evidence that the One who conquered death now lives inside you—and what conquered death is not threatened by your circumstances.

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XX. A Hunger for God — The Thirst That Proves the Spring

Here is a sign that many overlook, but it may be the most tender and personal of all: the very fact that you hunger for God is evidence that His life is in you.

Dead men do not hunger. Dead men do not thirst. If you find within yourself a longing for God—a desire to know Him more, to be nearer to Him, to understand His word, to sit in His presence—that desire is itself the fruit of the Spirit. It did not come from your flesh. Your flesh wants comfort, approval, and control. But something in you wants God. That something is the new life.

“As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”

— **Psalm 42:1–2**

“O God, You are my God; earnestly I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh faints for You, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”

— **Psalm 63:1**

The Lord Himself said:

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

— Matthew 5:6

He calls them blessed—not those who have arrived, but those who hunger. The hunger itself is blessed. It is evidence of life. A corpse does not hunger. A stillborn does not thirst. If you ache for God, you are alive.

Your desire for God is not a sign of something you lack. It is a sign of Someone you contain. The spring within you creates the thirst. The life within you reaches for its source. Do not be discouraged by the longing. Be encouraged. The longing is proof that the Source is flowing—and it is pulling you deeper in.

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XXI. Confession and Conviction — The Pain That Proves the Healing

There is one more sign I must mention, because some of you mistake it for the absence of life when it is actually the presence of it: conviction of sin.

When the Spirit dwells within you, He does not ignore your sin. He exposes it. But He exposes it the way a surgeon exposes a wound—not to condemn, but to heal.

“And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”

— John 16:8

The Spirit convicts. And conviction feels painful. It is painful. But here is the difference between conviction and condemnation:

Condemnation says: “You are worthless. You will never change. God is disgusted with you.” It drives you away from God, into hiding, into shame, into more self-effort.

Conviction says: “This is not who you are anymore. Come back to the Father. There is grace here.” It draws you toward God, into the light, into confession, into freedom.

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

— Romans 8:1

No condemnation. But conviction—yes. And the very fact that you feel convicted, that sin grieves you, that you cannot be comfortable in it the way you once were—that is evidence of the new life. The old self did not care. The new self weeps.

John explains:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

— 1 John 1:9

If sin bothers you—if it disturbs your peace, if you cannot simply ignore it and move on, if something inside you aches when you have failed—that ache is the Spirit. It is not punishment. It is the pain of a living thing recognizing what is foreign to its nature. A dead man is not bothered by anything. But you are bothered. You are alive.

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PART FOUR: THE CONSUMMATION

Where this trail ends—the final picture.

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XXII. The Revelation — The End of the Trail

Our brother John, exiled on the island of Patmos, was given a vision of where all of this leads. And it is breathtaking.

He saw what we are walking toward—the completion of everything the Torah began, everything the Prophets announced, everything the Lord promised, and everything the Spirit is now working in us.

The Tree of Life Restored

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

— Revelation 22:1–2

The river of the water of life. The living water that Jesus promised the woman at the well. The rivers He said would flow from the hearts of believers. Now flowing in its fullest expression—from the throne of God and of the Lamb, through the center of the city.

And the tree of life. Do you remember? In the garden, man was barred from the tree of life after the fall. Cherubim with flaming swords guarded the way. Access was denied. The veil was hung. The barrier stood.

Now the tree is in the middle of the city. No cherubim. No flaming sword. No veil. The way is open. The barrier is gone. What the fall removed, the Lamb has restored.

The entire story of Scripture—from the garden to the city—is the story of lost access being restored. And it was restored not by human effort but by the blood of the Lamb. What Adam forfeited, Christ recovered. And what Christ recovered, He gives to you.

No More Separation

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.””

— Revelation 21:3–4

The dwelling place of God is with man. The Tabernacle was always about this—God’s desire to dwell among His people. But the veil stood between. The law of sin and death stood between. The corruption of man’s nature stood between.

Now: no more death. No more tears. No more pain. No more separation. God with man, face to face, forever. This is what the Sabbath always pointed to—the ultimate rest, the final ceasing of all striving, the eternal entering into what God has done.

The Bride

“Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”

— Revelation 19:7–8

The church—you, beloved—is the Bride. And the fine linen she wears is not self-produced. It was granted her. Given. Provided. Just as God provided garments of skin for Adam and Eve. Just as God provided the lamb for Abraham. Just as God provided the blood on the doorposts.

The Bride is clothed in righteousness, but it is a righteousness that was given, not earned. The pattern that began in Genesis 3:21 reaches its fullest expression here: God covers His people with what they could never produce themselves.

The Alpha and the Omega

“And He who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also He said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.””

— Revelation 21:5–6

I am making all things new. Not all new things—all things new. The creation is not discarded. It is renewed. Transformed. Made what it was always intended to be. The body of death becomes a body of glory. The groaning creation becomes a singing creation. The partial knowledge becomes full knowledge.

And to the thirsty: the water of life, without payment. Free. Grace. The same word that began the trail—Noah found grace—ends the trail. Grace at the beginning. Grace at the end. Grace all the way through.

“The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.”

— Revelation 22:17

The last invitation of Scripture is the same as the first principle of Scripture: come and receive. Not produce. Not earn. Not achieve. Come. Drink. Take. The water of life, without price. From the first page to the last, the testimony is one: life is a gift from God, received by those who will simply come.

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XXIII. Now Then, Beloved — How Shall We Live?

You have the Source: Christ Himself, the life of God, dwelling in you by the Spirit.

You have the Union: you are in Him, and He is in you. Co-crucified, co-raised, hidden with Christ in God. Your identity is settled. Your standing is secure.

You have the Fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, endurance, conviction, hunger for God—the unmistakable evidence that a life not your own is flowing through you.

So how shall you live?

Simply. By abiding.

Not by striving to produce what only the Source can produce. Not by returning to the old way of self-effort, which the Torah exposed and the cross ended. Not by measuring yourself against a standard and despairing when you fall short.

But by remaining connected. By staying close. By feeding on His word, by walking in His Spirit, by gathering with His people, by returning to Him every time you wander—and you will wander—and finding that He has not moved.

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.”

— John 15:4

Abide. Remain. Stay. That is the whole of the Christian life. Not a hundred complicated disciplines. One thing: stay connected to the Source. Everything else flows from there.

I wrote to the Thessalonians:

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.”

— 1 Thessalonians 5:16–19

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not shut down the flow. Do not return to self-sourcing. The Spirit is in you, producing His fruit, transforming your character, bearing witness with your spirit, interceding with groanings too deep for words. Your job is not to do His work. Your job is to not resist it.

The whole of the Christian life is this:

Christ is the Source.

You are the vessel.

The Spirit is the flow.

Faith is the abiding.

And the fruit is the evidence.

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A Final Word

Beloved, I have lived this life longer than most of you. I have seen the inside of more prisons than homes. I have been beaten, abandoned, misunderstood, and left for dead. And I can tell you, with the full weight of a life poured out in service of this gospel:

He is faithful.

The Source does not run dry. The vine does not wither. The Spirit does not leave. The love does not fail.

There have been nights when I felt nothing—no joy, no peace, no sense of His presence. And in those nights, the life was still there. Because this life does not depend on your feelings. It depends on His faithfulness. And He is faithful even when we are faithless, for He cannot deny Himself.

“He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

— *Philippians 1:6*

He began it. He will complete it. Not you. Him.

And on that day—when the trumpet sounds, when the dead are raised, when we see Him face to face—we will finally understand the full depth of what has been in us all along. The partial will give way to the complete. The seed will become the harvest. The treasure in the clay pot will shine without the clay.

“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”

— *1 Corinthians 13:12*

Until that day, beloved: abide. Rest in the finished work. Draw from the living water. Let the fruit grow in its season. Trust the Gardener. And know—know deep in the place where the Spirit witnesses with your spirit—that you are loved with an everlasting love, held by an unbreakable hand, and filled with an indestructible life.

“So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

— *1 Corinthians 13:13*

**For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.
To Him be glory forever. Amen.**

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.*

*Paul,
a bond-servant of Christ Jesus,
to the churches everywhere—
past, present, and to come.*