

Lifebyte 43

Does Living Water Flow From You?

Living Righteously In The Days of Chastisement



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Dear Friends,

The following statement fits in the “sad but true” category of American life: Studies of marriages in the United States reveal that the *intensity* of a couple’s love and devotion generally flattens out and even deteriorates as the years pass. Maybe your own marriage has lost something from the day you said “I do”.

We realize that for many Christians their relationship neutralizes or deteriorates because they’ve missed God’s understanding of **covenant** — to *live in union* with. This realization is vital since the marriage covenant from our Father’s perspective is so intertwined with the Covenant He offers us through Jesus. [For more on the connection between these two covenants, see our Hebraic Article, *The Gospel of the Covenant Is The Pilgrimage to Salvation*.]

Ever-increasing depth of responsive love for both our Lord and your spouse produces a pattern of fruitful self-giving that *blesses others*—in other words, streams of living water that evidence His loving work in and through you as His vessel.

In this Lifebyte we want to review with you some crucial foundational facets so that through His Spirit your life WILL conduit the living water our Lord Jesus promises those who trust in Him:

He who trusts in Me as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. By this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those trust in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:38,39).

Times of great testing are about to descend on this nation — perhaps on the whole world. Please, don’t take the questions in this Lifebyte too lightly. If the Spirit’s living water isn’t tumbling

forth from you, then consider this: *you don’t belong to Him*. Paul makes this clear as he distinguishes those who are in Christ from those who may be *religious* but are not His: “*If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ*” (Romans 8:9).

• **If you are married, does your covenant union with your wife mirror your covenant union in Jesus? Explain.**

• **Whether you’re single or married, how does your life evidence the living water of the Holy Spirit flowing from you?**

“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5)

Our sin-nature controlled soul prompts us to make **assumptions**. One of the worst assumptions we can make is that we’re OK with God and are headed for the narrow gate based on what *others* have told us about salvation. Rather than assuming we’re accepted in Christ, we need to confirm by HIS parameters as presented in His Word that we are indeed on His path of Life.

Please scrutinize your heart as you respond to the following two questions.

1. Are you keeping the promise of your baptism?

If you believe that infant baptism suf-

fices because you've fulfilled a ritual requirement, then the questions we'll be asking will seem irrelevant to you since *someone else* made vows on your behalf. You need to ask our Lord if this practice is indeed *fulfilling the purpose* for which it was ordained in Scripture.

In contrast, perhaps you were immersed after your conversion, "drowning" your sinful life pattern so that you can live according to the Spirit. Your *intentional identification with Christ* in baptism reflects the meaning of the Greek word which is translated "baptize" — being *soaked* with the quality of that in which you were immersed! In the spiritual realm, that would be your purification from the old way of life so that you might now love and serve the Living God.

Let's review the purposes for which you chose to be immersed to *publicly proclaim* your union with Christ:

You were buried with Jesus through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, you too may live a new life (Romans 6:4).

Immersion into the water is a metaphor for the death that Jesus suffered on your behalf — and your rising up from the water joyously declares His resurrection victory! Your "death" to sin's slavery is for a Kingdom purpose: that your new life will bring glory to your Father. (The waters of baptism correspond also to the deliverance of Noah and his family through the Flood.)

And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:21).

That "pledge of a good conscience" means that you're now *putting into action* your new life in the Spirit. In a sense, your own "resurrection" from the water has obligated you to live your life holy unto your Lord — not through your own frantic effort, but through yielding to the grace in your heart that the Spirit affords you.

• **Have you honestly *died* to this world and its "flood waters" that lead to death? See 1 John 2:15-17. Really, where do your motivation and key interests lie?**

• **What differences, if any, have our description of baptism and its purposes opened to you compared to your previous understanding of baptism? Was any of this explained to you before you were baptized? Would it have changed your perspective of the importance of this identification with Christ's death and resurrection?**

• **How would Jesus evaluate your determination to keep a clear conscience toward God? In fact, do you have a clear conscience now? If you don't know, ask the Holy Spirit to show you what you need to do so that you are fully available to lovingly serve Kingdom purposes.**

• **Have you been immersed as a follower of Jesus? If not, is the Spirit stirring you to follow through in this privilege as His own?**

2. Are you a follower of Jesus, and are you becoming more Christ-like?

As we've shared in previous writings: each of us received our spirit from God at conception, our physical attributes from our parents, and our soul from our parents (see diagram 1). Our soul, that is our mind, will and emotions, brought with it our sin nature.

Your sin nature-controlled soul both



commanded you and provided your identity for most of your formative years. And, even if you're a follower of Jesus, your sin nature-controlled soul will still do all it can to influence you. Add to this that it's within your soul that demonic strongholds abide. You now come to realize how critical it is for you to nullify your soul's impact.

"My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me"
(John 10:27)

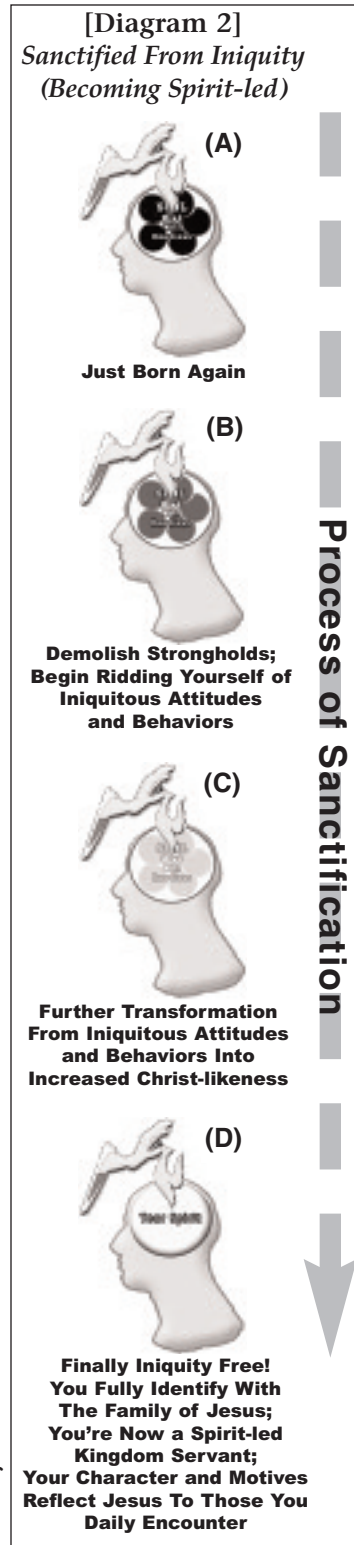
Diagram 2 illustrates the process of sanctification we first presented in **Lifebyte 41. A Turf War For Souls That You Must Win!** Put simply, you can't follow Jesus *without being transformed* into His motivation and character!

This diagram shows the *process of sanctification*.

Through this process you are changed from an iniquity-controlled "dark soul" into a Spirit-led follower of Jesus. (A) Sanctification begins when you embrace our Father's Covenant in Jesus. He seals you with His Holy Spirit, consummating the Covenant. At this point you are born again. You no longer belong to Satan, but that doesn't mean you are free from the strongholds of past generations.

(B) If, before conversion, you haven't demolished the strongholds that have been passed along by your parents, now is the time. Then you begin the sanctification process of evaluating your attitudes and behaviors in light of God's Word, always looking to

Jesus as the standard by which you judge these. *What would Jesus do* becomes far more than a slogan for you. It's the lifeline of your progress into spiritual maturity.



(C) With your strongholds demolished, you continue to be sanctified as your soul loses dominance in guiding you. Your *spirit*, led by the Holy Spirit, controls your attitudes and behaviors.

(D) Your identity with Jesus as your Lord and King becomes entire when you're completely stronghold-free. This is a reality for you if, in earnestness of spirit, you *cooperate* with what our Lord Jesus wants to change in you! It's only as you are *Spirit-led* that the Kingdom of God in *your heart* becomes real for you.

You're not enslaved to your old soul-controlled self anymore. Instead, as you begin to experience *ahav*, devoted sacrificial love as your foundation, you're able to reflect the character and motive of Jesus to others.

In her timeless classic, *Hinds Feet On High Places*, Hannah Hurnard amply demonstrates her understanding that sanctification is a *lifelong process of transformation* as we daily choose to align our will with that of the Spirit within us. She pens this apt introduction:

There are no obstacles which our Savior's love cannot overcome. The High Places of victory and union with Christ can be reached by learning to accept, day by day, the actual conditions and tests permitted by God, by laying down of our own will and accepting His.

The lessons of accepting and triumphing over evil, of becoming acquainted with grief and pain, and of finding them transformed into something incomparably precious; these are the lessons of the allegory of this book.

If you believe the Hebraic foundations are being restored by our Father and you want to embrace them in accordance with His plan and purpose for your life, then you'll encounter His hand-picked means of transforming you into the character of His precious Son.

Each chapter of *Hinds Feet* depicts a classroom we all must go through in order to be sanctified by His Spirit.

For instance, like Much-Afraid, if you wholeheartedly pursue a life of loving service in Jesus, you'll encounter the lesson of attack by unbelieving family and friends. They won't understand the "new you" as you emerge from a life of self-gratifying sin to a life of holy desire to please your Lord. The apostle warns that this resistance is inevitable:

They are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you (1 Peter 4:4).

This painful classroom teaches us to not retaliate, but rather to lovingly bless.

We've designed our study guide, **Going To The High Places**, to not only escort you through *Hinds Feet*, but also to help prepare you for the Kingdom motivations and purposes of our King, Jesus. If you haven't journeyed through the book and our study guide, we strongly encourage you to do so, especially with your spouse or close companions in Jesus!

You can't squeeze the Hebraic foundations our Father is restoring to fit into the evil bent of your sin nature-controlled soul. Nor can you attach these relational truths to your prior religious practices. Our Lord Jesus warns of the futility of trying to do this:

No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved (Matthew 9:16,17).

3

Where would you place yourself on the spectrum below?

Deist • • • • • Spirit-dependent / Spirit-led

God once acted but is no longer involved.
The Bible's words and my reasoning ability are
...all the guidance I need for daily living.

The Holy Spirit lives within me by trust in Jesus.
He guides and empowers me so that I may
fulfill the will of God according to His Word.

Following Jesus and practicing religion have nothing in common. Trying to blend these will cause you to be double-minded (see James 1:5-8; 4:8).

The disparity between those who walk in the light of the Spirit's direction and those who use worldly ways and means to guide their lives is vast. Only *through* the Spirit can we grasp that which is *of* the Spirit:

*We have not received the spirit of the world but the **Spirit who is from God**, that we **may understand** what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the **Spirit**, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.*

*The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are **foolishness to him**, and he **cannot understand them**, because they are **spiritually discerned** (1 Corinthians 2:12-14).*

If the Spirit of God does *not* dwell within you, or if you shun His lead because you still rely on your sin-controlled soul, then you will not be transformed as our Lord calls for. Be aware

that many who consider themselves "Christian" are in reality "*Deists*". They believe that God made all things, yet they live as though after Creation He ceased His involvement with humanity. Deists are convinced that God has left it up to man to guide himself by his own reasoning ability.

Those within Christendom who unwittingly live as Deists flow into congregations on Sunday mornings and worship their concept of the God Who has created all things — BUT they are neither dependent on Him **nor** are they led by His Spirit. Their Christianity is tied up in religious services, rituals and observances. Could this describe *you*? Take a look at diagram 3, above.

Seriously consider the image of Jesus that you're presenting to others if there is no evidence of His Spirit at work in you. Are you nullifying His words by calling yourself His follower yet living as though you've **received no Spirit**?

*"Whoever trusts in Me as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who **trusted in Him** were later **to receive**... (John 7:38,39a).*

4

We Must Be Transformed From Adam Into Jesus

• "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive..." • "So it is written: 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:22,45). • "I baptize you with water, but [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8).

Adam — a living being > > > > > > > > Jesus — a life-giving Spirit-baptizer

Sinned against God, bringing forth death.
Passed along a desire to sin to all generations of mankind.

Sinless Savior and Lord offers eternal life.
Immerses His followers into His Spirit to flow as rivers of living water upon a dark and dying world.

5

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Our Lord promises that if we trust in Him within the parameters the Older Testament calls for, streams of living water will flow *from* us because of the Holy Spirit's presence and work *in and through* us. Our daily lives need to evidence this as a reality; otherwise, we make Jesus out to have lied.

That cannot be! His words ARE true, so if we AREN'T experiencing the living water of the Spirit flowing out from us, what is that telling us? Are we under the influence of the "old man" — Adam — or the Life-giver, Jesus?

Please turn back to the previous page to **Diagram 4**. This depicts the transformation we must go through if we're to be changed from Adam's sway to that of the Spirit of Christ. To be *born again* is to be *born of the Spirit*.

• **At what point on Diagram 3 would you place yourself in the process of your being sanctified — set apart as holy for our God's purposes and loving service? What is hindering you from pressing onward?**

• **Who in your life is trying to lure you back into your "old you"? How are you responding to their dismay or snide treatment? How would *Jesus* respond to them?**

• **Examine your life intently. Is there any evidence that you could be mistaken for a Deist, someone who recognizes God's reality but has no daily interaction through His Spirit and no loving zeal to serve Him as Lord? Ask those close to you for their input.**

"In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the Author of their salvation perfect through suffering"
(Hebrews 2:10)

"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

In Part 4 of *The Gospel Of The Covenant Is The Pilgrimage To Salvation, The Seal Of Consummation — The Holy Spirit*, we discuss how needful suffering is *from our Father's perspective* in your ongoing transformation into the character of Jesus.

In fact, suffering is the Spirit's primary way of changing you so that you'll learn to lovingly trust our Lord and walk in fruitfulness that brings God glory. Our sonship as co-heirs with our Lord Jesus is a path of suffering *with purpose* — that we might be glorified with Him:

*For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to bring you back again into fear; on the contrary, you received the **Spirit**, who makes us sons and by whose power we cry out 'Abba!' (that is, 'Dear Father!'). The Spirit Himself bears witness with our own spirits that we are children of God; and if we are children, then we are also heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Messiah — **provided we are suffering with Him** in order also to be glorified with Him (Romans 8:15-17, JNT).*

No one in their flesh enjoys suffering. But when you accept our Father's Covenant in Jesus, suffering is part of our Father's refining plan for you. Jesus suffered. Should our Father treat His children any differently by withholding that which helps to conform us to His Son's image? (See Hebrews 2:10, above.)

You might ask, why should we suffer? Wasn't the suffering of Jesus enough? Our Father explains why suffering is an essential component in our pilgrimage:

We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us (Romans 5:3-5).

Hope is the lifeline that keeps us focused on the narrow gate and a heavenly welcome. While Satan offers us pleasure then despair, our Father offers us suffering then hope — the confidence of *His love for us*. Yet in His faithfulness and merciful grace, His indwelling Spirit strengthens and encourages and comforts us *in the midst* of this process.

It would be so simple if we could just bask in our Father's care here on earth and then be zapped up into heaven before any trials come our way. However, that notion just doesn't fly scripturally, nor does it bring honor to the Father Who sustains our brothers and sisters in persecuted lands during harsh torture and the loss of all things for the sake of Christ.

Peter didn't tell anguishing followers of Jesus to pray that their trials be snatched away from them. On the contrary, he comforted them with these words:

Rejoice in this [assurance of deliverance on the Last Day], even though for a little while you may have to experience grief in various trials. Even gold is tested for genuineness by fire. The purpose of these trials is so that your trust's genuineness which is far more valuable than perishable gold, is judged worthy of praise, glory and honor at the revealing of Jesus the Messiah (1 Peter 1:6,7, JNT).

The trials and testing of our faith are the fires of suffering that mature our self-denial response. Our own desires and will are consumed as dross. The commands of our Master to *deny self-will* and *put to death* our own goals and purposes are the pathway which He extends to us:

Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it (Mark 8:34,35).

As we were writing this Lifebyte the illustration at the end of this lesson was sent to us. It sadly illustrates what happens to those who try to *avoid* the suffering God has ordained. (Look at it right now, viewing it vertically by columns.)

In our 30 years of following Jesus we've encountered so many who have misinterpreted and abandoned the classrooms of suffering God has ordained to both prepare them for future service and to help them become more like Jesus.

Scripture offers us examples of faithful men who embraced their suffering because they knew from Whose hand it had come to prepare them for a greater call. Joseph endured both slavery and prison. David was forced to flee to avoid certain death at the hands of both King



Saul and his own son Absalom. If these faithful men had failed their trials, they would not have been prepared for the call God had planned for them.

Your trials and sufferings are our loving Father's means of preparing you for fruitful service to bring Him praise. Jesus warns that this preparation season is painful: *"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit"* (John 15:2).

His pruning requires that you deny yourself and pick up your cross so that your life is HIS to use as He purposes. Study **diagram 5**, above. As so many have found who have picked up their cross to follow Jesus, *you never carry your cross alone.*

- **How do you view suffering as an instrument of refinement in our Lord's hands?**

- **What character transformation have you undergone as a result of a personal season of trial or suffering?**

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- **How often do you pray for our suffering family in Jesus who are being persecuted around the world? When did you last share of your own means with organizations that help to meet their needs and bring them comfort and encouragement?**
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"If someone is serving Me, let him follow Me; wherever I am, My servant will be there too. My Father will honor anyone who serves Me" (John 12:26; JNT)

No matter what "gospel" you embraced, think seriously about what will occur at the Judgment Throne as you review Matthew 25:32-46.

All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left (vs.32,33).

The righteous sheep will be welcomed with joy. But the self-serving goats? Note our Lord's criteria for the rejection that brings everlasting fire:

For I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or

in prison, and did not minister to You?’

Then He will answer them, saying, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’

Love isn’t a feel-good emotion you well up out of your own efforts. You need the *love the Holy Spirit gives* to reach out to those who are in need or who feel unlovable. The *agape* love of God **responds** as Jesus did during His sojourn on earth.

Those filled with and empowered by His Spirit are *Jesus in the flesh* to take action in response to the needs around them as the Spirit of God reveals to them. And isn’t the sacrificial love our Father gives the testimony of your faith? *“For in Christ Jesus... what matters is trusting faithfulness expressing itself through love”* (Galatians 5:6).

Viable witness that you are a follower of Jesus is that which you do personally on behalf of others who cannot pay you back. You’ll be welcomed in heaven by our Lord because you’ve obeyed the Spirit in *lovingly meeting the need* of those He’s quickened in your pathway. And this encompasses far more than just giving money!

The blessing of our Father comes as we prayerfully commit each day’s plans and purposes around how He might choose to use us. That may be through spontaneous encounters or through intentional outreach to be His hands, feet and heart.

Again, *motive* is key. Who is it you’re *really* serving as you lovingly befriend those in need? Yourself as you feel good about your “Christian” service? Or, the Lord Who receives praise as you offer yourself in His Name?

When was the last time you followed

in His steps to receive the blessing promised for those who serve in love?

Then Jesus said to His host, ‘When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid’.

But when you give a feast [a lavish outpouring of yourself, not just scraps of charity!] invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:12-14).

We challenged a friend and his son-in-law who were looking for some “bonding” time to seek from our Lord some means in which they could be poured out *together* on behalf of the “least of these” in their community — maybe regularly serving together at a soup kitchen or befriending some fatherless boys together or meeting a prisoner regularly to disciple him — or whatever service the Spirit might reveal.

Another homeschooling family volunteers each week to spend an hour together at a senior assisted living center getting to know individuals as people and sharing interest and the gift of touch with those who are lonely and feeling forgotten.

Do *you* have the heart of Jesus to put His love into action as you make yourself available for HIS glory and praise? Will *your family* join you to bless those in need with a renewed sense of dignity and worth as made in His image?

Remember this:

**You will never truly know
what *agape* love is
until you reach out personally
to someone who feels unlovable.**

