

The UNION

Get Ready to Meet the King!

God Calls His Church to
Truth, Faith and Holiness

Joan H. Richardson

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CHAPTER 19

It's a Miracle!

¹ Now a certain *man* was sick, *named* Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

² (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

³ Therefore his sisters sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

⁴ When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified.

⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

⁶ When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

⁷ Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again.

⁸ His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews thought of late to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?

⁹ Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

¹⁰ But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

¹¹ These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.

¹² Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.

¹³ Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

¹⁴ Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

¹⁵ And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. (John 11:1-15)

There's a wealth of information in this passage, but we will look into the intentions of Christ in the event of His friend's resurrection by His command. The Father would honor Yeshua's beloved friend, Lazarus, chosen to participate in the glorious

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revelation of His Son; therefore, in His love for them, Jesus deliberately delayed His departure to raise him from death, foreknowing that the Father would glorify Him in this family at the apex of His ministry. Yeshua was actually glad He had waited for Lazarus to die, looking forward to this event because He wanted His disciples to witness His authority over death and to believe in Him:

¹⁷ So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. ...

²⁰ Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. ²¹ Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴ Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:17, 20-26 NKJV)

Though He had hoped to find faith in his close friends, they did not yet comprehend the magnitude of His authority. He had gone into Judea for a divine purpose: to glorify His Father, knowing His Father would also glorify Him. Jesus didn't weep for their sorrow, but for their *unbelief*. Listen:

³³ When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the Spirit, and was troubled.

³⁴ And said, Where have ye laid Him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

³⁷ And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

³⁸ Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. (John 11:33-38)

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As we exercise spiritual gifts, we minister to one another's needs. We need a supernatural touch for healing and strength, but if we reject the gifts of God, we deny His healing power. As He loves His own body, He loves the true church and guides us into His compassion. We represent Jesus Christ as He reaches out to a hurting world. His love is effective through us when our faith meets the needs of the oppressed by faith in Him. Have we any idea how great the power of His Spirit is within us?

¹⁶ I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:16-21 NKJV)

When we believe the Word to deliver us from the darkness of our confusion, He leads us into the light of His truth. If we believe Yeshua once died yet lives today, then we believe He washed our sins away and today sets us free to grow in holiness. As we embrace His words, He empowers us to live by them.

The God we worship, seated in heaven, also lives in us. He knows every thought, action, and word; where we go, He goes. He is with us *always, even to the end of the world.*

This is a call to repentance for us who have believed Jesus died and rose again but have hindered the Spirit by our unbelief. It's time to yield ourselves in prayer to receive the gifts of His Spirit, willing to look like fools for Christ, laying down our lives for the truth as the holy apostles and prophets did before us.

¹³ Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem

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us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Titus 2:13-14)

Have we thought He is far off but not near? Have we gotten His Spirit since we believed? He calls us to yield to Him:

Fruit of the Spirit

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.
(Galatians 5:22-26 NKJV)

We say one thing but do another. For instance, we say we believe every word of God is true but deny the faith we profess by disobedience. In fact, we have not believed His words. If we believe God, by faith we press into His Spirit for the truth; then we obey Him, the signature that endorses the reality of our love.

Yeshua calls us to follow Him and means what He says; it does not take mental, verbal, or intellectual acrobatics to explain His words. We must believe the Scriptures, or we're hypocrites; in which case, we are lying, calling God a liar, and we are lying about ourselves because we really haven't believed Him! By the same unbelief, men have perverted the truth to please the carnal nature. But the Spirit yields His fruit by our faith in His truth.

²⁵ "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. (John 12:25-26 NKJV)

Power of the Life

Contrary to the popular teaching, the word translated, "perfect" does not usually mean "mature." Its accurate and common definition is "perfect." The word "blameless" in the next passage is also properly translated "perfect" from the Greek and is the same word used to describe Adam before the fall:

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²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.
(1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 HCSB)

Notice the previous words, “sound and blameless” and “*He ... also will do it.*” The same word is used again here: *But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* (Jas.1:4) Correctly translated, “*perfect,*” its primary meaning is to keep oneself unspotted by the world. The same is true of this familiar phrase: *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* (Mat. 5:48)

The word *holokleros* describes no lack of goodness in the Christian's walk. A similar word is found here: *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* (Jas. 1:17) That “*perfect gift*” is one that has all the necessary qualities. The same word is used here:

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.
(James 1:25)

The perfect law of liberty is the law of love, the royal law of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit perfectly empowers us to obey His moral laws. The word translated “*perfect*” is similar to the one used in Hebrews 9:11: By His blood, He entered *by a greater and more perfect tabernacle*. Where it's clearly implied, these words may be translated as “*mature,*” but most often, “*perfect*” is the choice. Perfection is our goal if we hope to be made pure by Jesus who takes away our sins. The progressive “*pressing on*” is to full age, but gaining that for which He apprehended us means to become as He is, not anything less:

¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

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¹⁵ All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained. (Philippians 3:13-16 NIV)

By seeking to satisfy the lusts of our flesh, we have no idea that we don't have to live that way. Our professed faith is dead if we don't include it each day by our words and actions. (See Jas. 2:26) For this reason, many who profess faith remain in bondage to sin, which will lead them into hypocrisy and its judgment. But God sees the heart that desires Him, wanting His kingdom and righteousness above this world. Are we moving forward or sliding backward?

2 And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Ephesians 2:1-3 NKJV)

We are not without hope when we believe in Jesus to set us free, but as long as we expect to sin, we won't be free. We are only free by believing that Jesus empowers us to resist sin. If we stumble or if we fall, we confess our sin, are cleansed of it, and get out of it and go on.

Though many practice sin while confessing His holy name and saying, "It's okay, no one is perfect." or, "We're just sinners saved by grace," but it's not okay. Messiah didn't save us from sin for us to be sinners saved by grace. His blood washed us to be holy, saints—new creatures, sanctified, honorable, chosen! Any other teaching is a deception of the devil.

This is why even the greatest teachers of the Word have constant problems with impure thoughts: they resist the fear of God that purges us—body, soul, and spirit. *The fear of the Lord is clean. (Ps. 19:9a)*

⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider

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them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

(Philippians 3:8-9 NIV)

The objective is to press on to perfection, not to quit before the finish line. Paul said he had not yet been made perfect, but it was his goal, and we must keep that objective close to us, not trusting our own power. Our strength is weak to do the will of God. He has called us to win a spiritual war, not to fail in our strength. Therefore, He equips us for victory by His Holy Spirit.

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; ⁸ in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Timothy 4:6-8 NASB)

When Paul said, *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*, and when he said, *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me* (Php. 1:21; also Gal. 2:20a), he was not living in defeat but was overcoming in the victory of the Messiah who appeared in him by His Spirit. (Paul was telling the truth!)

We who have been rescued from sin, death, and hell must not sin as though we're not transformed into new creatures. The Word of life changes us, and the Spirit's power frees us. Though the flesh competes against the Spirit; as our faith perseveres, the Spirit gains the victories until the end of our race when we cross that finish line, and Christ is fully formed in us.

Leaning on Love

This is the dilemma: Love is paramount in the Messianic experience, and it is our greatest challenge. What is love?

² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³ as His divine power has

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given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

⁵ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸ For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For he who lacks these things is short-sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:2-11 NKJV)

⁹ *Let love be* without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. ¹⁰ *Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³ distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. (Romans 12:9-13 NKJV)

The Word of God speaks of His compassion. We obey the commands of our King in the war of light against darkness as we pattern our steps after the Lord Jesus:

⁸ Finally, *all of you be* of one mind, having compassion for one another: love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:8-9 NKJV)

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³⁷ Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:37-40)

13 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ² And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

⁴ Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endure all things.

⁸ Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰ But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. (1 Corinthians 13:1-10 NKJV)

Though wearied, Yeshua continued to serve and love others. He called His disciples to account when they were at fault; still, His love was undying for them. He exhorted them, not by flattery but by raising the bar. Studying Him, we find our final glory is our love for one another, only ours by His Spirit.

¹² Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:12-13 NIV)

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⁷ Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

⁸ He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

⁹ In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. ¹⁰ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

(1 John 4:7-11)

Some of us will walk with Him like Enoch; others will fight battles like Joshua; some will be meek as Moses; others, faithful like Esther. Together we will endure with thanksgiving, praying like Paul, praising like David, and working miracles like Peter; someone will have the Spirit of Elijah, like John the baptizer.

We live each day by faith in the power of Jesus' life in us. That power is the working of His Sovereign Spirit who changes us, conforming us to the Son of God. We long for His appearing within us as well as in the skies.

¹⁷ Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their thoughts. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. ¹⁹ They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more.

²⁰ But that is not how you learned about the Messiah, ²¹ assuming you heard about Him and were taught by Him, because the truth is in Jesus. ²² You took off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires; ²³ you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds; ²⁴ you put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth. (Ephesians 4:17-24 HCSB)

The process of sanctification leads us into righteousness, holiness, and glorification; at times, it's a painful experience but faith endures. His sanctification converts our weakness into His strength and our carnal souls into His holy bride. The stumbling,

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the stumbling, and the falling down will pass away. Like the writing of this book, striking the correct keys; or the work it takes for a pianist to finally perform in the concert hall, how we end the race matters most.

¹² Those who want to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.¹³ For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.¹⁴ But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.¹⁵ For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

(Galatians 6:12-15 NIV)

¹⁸ For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

¹⁹ For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

²⁰ Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (1 Corinthians 1:18-20)

Some have turned away from the offense of the cross, but the weight of the cross is the truth of our Savior in the scriptures that prophesied His death. On its wood, He endured our pain. How can we deny the glory of its mission or shun its offense? but we carry our own crosses, living by His accomplishments in our fleshly nature, nailed to the cross He bore.

And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. (Galatians 5:11)

¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

(Colossians 1:19-20 NIV)

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¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.
(Philippians 3:18-21 NIV)

6 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this will we do if God permit.
(Hebrews 6:1-3)

The message of the gospel is all about the cross in our lives. All who are willing to take up the cross, putting to death the sins of the flesh by the practice of faith each day, gain life; those who refuse the cross, lose their lives.

By the freedom Jesus Christ has given us, we choose life over death; we stay near the heart of Jesus in heaven—holy and righteous. So, we live our lives by faith in His words, and His words give us eternal life. We were born of the Spirit with the right to this inheritance in Christ, and we choose to keep what is rightfully ours. We are the called and chosen ones, and we will remain in the righteous One as His Spirit leads us:

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.
(Romans 5:8-9 NKJV)

119 Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

² Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, *and that* seek him with the whole heart.

³ They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.
(Psalm 119:1-3)