

Father Misha El-Meskeen

# BE TRANSFORMED



The Monastery of St. Macarius  
Scetis

Father Mattia El-Meskene

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The Monastery of St. George's  
Scotia

Father Matta El-Meskeen  
*The Spiritual Father of the Monastery of St Macarius*

# Be Transformed

A Message to those who Look Forward  
to a Better Life

The Monastery of St Macarius  
*Scetis*

تغيروا عن شكلكم (إنجليزي)

**Be Transformed**

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# Introduction

## **The Inevitability of Continuous Change in a Christian Life**

A Christian life means a life in the spirit, being reborn from God, occurring and being built on an extremely important process: that of an unending transformation, continuous in human nature.

The main influence and element producing that transformation in human nature is God Himself, by the immediate action of the Holy Spirit through the sacraments, and a daily life of love, praise, thanksgiving and testimony.

The Gospel, the word of God, a living and effective agent that is an absolutely spiritual one is the means given to man by God to be used in acquiring the continuous transformation, through self-will and personal effort.

According to the expression of Christ Himself, the word of God is spirit, a way of life and actions, and according to Paul the Apostle's words: "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12), able to penetrate the innermost soul and body to reach its aim of change. This description is practical and true, so can we accept, believe and begin to implement it?

This transformation in a Christian life is considered the basic process that begins the account of life with God and continues with it as its means. Change is a radical operation without which there exists no beginning or continuation to a life with God.

Change in a Christian life has two parts:

A Divine part through the Mystery of God's work;

A human part that is fulfilled through man's work with effort, willful power, and vigilance.

Both are connected and each drives the other to make it continue longer.

## **First – The Divine Part in the Change**

### **A – The Mystery of Rebirth:**

This is the first and most important process in a Christian life. There is no existence for this life without it. It is the mysterious birth directly from God wherein a fundamental change occurs in the first creation of man i.e. the creation from dust, inherited from Adam. Man thus becomes, through being born again, or born anew from above, from the Holy Spirit and water, he becomes a son of God instead of having been a son to Adam, a son to the resurrection instead of having been a son to death.

The inevitable result of this birth is that man begins to take on the great spiritual factors for a new life completely different and opposite in every way to the first life:

“He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Tit 3:5-7).

All the elements of this new life, the life of the resurrection from the dead to become heirs with Christ, with its gifts, characteristics, and commandments were set by Christ in the Gospel.

### **B – The Mystery of the Body and the Blood:**

Christ, to ensure the permanency of this new life, made it emanate from Him, from His life, from His Spirit, Flesh and Blood. Following the Mystery of rebirth from God through the Holy Spirit, He established another Mystery that is the Mystery of nourishment, the Mystery of eating of His Flesh and drinking His blood to provide,

through the person of Christ Himself, the power for the new life with all of its characteristics, ideas and behavior that are in Christ.

Each of the two mysteries, the mystery of being born anew and the mystery of partaking of the flesh and blood, is considered a continuous, effective act of connecting with the living Divine nature. Each Mystery is an essential element of transformation which is continual and permanent because the Divine, spiritual action, is different to the human, material one. The human action, such as the birth of the body or eating the fruits of the earth, is a time action that begins and ends, but the Divine action begins and never ends. The Divine change that is made by the Holy Spirit in man in each of the mysteries of rebirth, and the mystery of partaking of the body and blood, is a permanent change, continuous and never ending. This truth in itself must be a source to us of joy, assurance, and courage, feeding us with a living, ongoing and unending hope.

The new birth we received through the Holy Spirit and water is a continual and permanent transformation in the human being, unending like all God's deeds. The Holy Spirit develops it and accomplish it in us every day, although its development and completion has no end. It is made manifest through our works. We discover its continuity in us by daily becoming closer to its source, i.e. the Holy Spirit, through worship, thanksgiving, praise, testimony and true love. But to attain its completeness and conclusion is above our human ability.

The mystery of partaking of the body and blood is the mystery of gaining life from the life of Christ and connecting to him personally. Every time we partake of the flesh and the blood we enter the mystery of the Lord's death and proclaim it, i.e. acknowledge it, because we are changing towards it, dying and resurrecting with Him.

The mystery of partaking of the flesh and blood of the Lord is a continuous change in man's nature, because through it is fulfilled the mystery of 'passover' with Christ in death, and 'passover' with Christ in the resurrection. The reason is that Christ's death and His

resurrection are two acts of a permanent influence and effect. That is why the Gospel emphasized that the work of partaking of the body and blood of Christ is a continuous act: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26).

It is therefore extremely necessary for the growth of our spiritual life to open up, through faith, to God's work in us, that is continual through the sacraments, whether that which was fulfilled with the second birth (baptism) or that which is fulfilled through Holy Communion. This is the intrinsic and basic part in impelling the transformation with which we will change from a life according to the flesh to a life according to the spirit without cease, in a continual manner as God's work never stops. Whoever has a spiritually warm life will realize it as he feels a real renewal every day and every second.

## **Second – The Human Part in the Change**

The Human part in the change of a Christian life follows and depends on the Divine part that was concluded in man through the sacraments. Man must consequently change by his will because he has taken on a new will and a new nature through the mystery of rebirth, and thus he must change his manner of thinking and behavior having taken the power of a new life from the life of Christ through the mystery of Holy Communion of the body and the blood.

But it has been perceived that human change whether in will-power, thoughts or behavior does not come by itself as the result of baptism and holy communion, for here the Lord has made another agent extremely fundamental, and that is the Gospel, i.e. the effective living Word of God, that Christ expressed as a spirit: "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63). St Paul the Apostle, having truly experienced it expressed it as: "living and



powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb 4:12).

The new will is born in fact and actually exists in us through the rebirth, but needs a moving power and light to guide it; a truth to lead, train, and encourage it.

Herein comes the role of the Gospel, as a basic and very important mediator, installing in us the gift that was given us through the sacrament. The holy spiritual new thinking and new spiritual behavior are actually present in the innermost of our new spiritual being that we gained through partaking of the body and blood. Our new thinking needs yet a power to activate it, a spiritual power beyond our old thinking and weak, exhausted, backward logic that is the product of our whims, appetites, and carnal weakness.

The free spiritual behavior in accordance to Christ, and the spirit are thus actually within us the inevitable result to the participation in the essence of Christ’s life, body, and blood through Holy Communion. But this behavior is in need of an act that will move it and release it boundless, without fear, and without stumbling of the old usual customs and sins. As for the power of the new mind and that of the new behavior, they are lying deeply in the Gospel and in the effective living Word.

## **God's Commandments in the Gospel inciting to Change**

It is clear that change in a Christian life is an important process, God having set its rules with extreme precision. God has directly offered us this new life with the self-will, thoughts, and behavior, through the sacraments as a continuous and permanent change (transformation). Having given us this new life freely, God gave us with it the Gospel, His active living word, to be our continual source for the capacity to change from a lame, evil will in us into a capable good will, from an evil and inadequate mind into a spiritual one voicing God's glory, from a sick behavior servile to the desires of the flesh into a spiritual virtual behavior witness to God's grace. Because it is not through the spoken knowledge alone that we bear witness to God but it is through the works in us that we bear witness to Him as the Apostle Paul's words in the book of Titus: "They profess to know God, but they deny him by their deeds" (Tit 1:16).

Let us listen to God's commandments emphasizing and firmly inciting us to change:

### **The Epistle to the Romans:**

"Do not be conformed to this world, but *be transformed* by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect" (12:2). The aim of change is to gain the high quality of Divine willpower, and to enjoy the absoluteness of God.

"So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (6:11). The change from death to life required here is that of a type of intellect man must daily remember it over.

"No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been

brought from death to life (daily change from death to life), and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. (The change through willpower from sin to righteousness as a commandment. The mystery being:) For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace” (6: 13, 14). The Apostle Paul explains here the ability to change, nay the need and its inevitability, as we received the grace within us instead of the law that ruled us.

“You are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness” (6:16). (Here, obedience is self-will.)

“But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart (completely faithful) to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted” (6:17) That is to say, the Gospel and the oral tradition of the Fathers. The Gospel here proves to be a *freeing power*.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God (The power of His mercy preserved in the Gospel is also the mystery of transformation being a commandment) that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (12:1 NKJV).

“Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light” (13:12). Laying aside and putting on here is a complete and final illustrated connotation of transformation being a continuous process.

“Let us live honorably as in the day (light), not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy” (13:13). (Darkness ... darkness ... darkness.)

“Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh (sin), to gratify its desires” (13:14). (Beware of sin = mind, willpower, conduct).

**The First Epistle to the Corinthians:**

“But strive for the greater gifts” (12:31). Inflaming self-will requires strength, preparation, and support, as the intensity required is supernatural.

“Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy” (14:1). (The Commandment containing the secret to success to him who obeys.)

**The Second Epistle to the Corinthians:**

“And all of us, with unveiled faces (without the veil of the Law), seeing (an actual fact) the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit” (3:18). (The change towards the fullness of Christ’s image through the power of the Spirit.)

“... not to accept the grace of God in vain” (6:1). This means that we must not cease the struggle or daily diligence in striving to change.

“Since we have these promises (through the Gospel), beloved, let us cleanse ourselves (proof of the presence of our new will and an existence of purity with grace) from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God” (7:1).

“I myself, Paul, appeal to you ... Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human (Grace and the Gospel), but they have divine power to destroy strongholds (exposing and shaming the thoughts and conduct of the old self). We destroy arguments (old ideas) and every proud obstacle (the devil’s pride and doubts) raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought (human) captive to obey Christ (through the Gospel)” (10:3-5).

**The Epistle to the Galatians:**

“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (3:27). (As death dons life, the change is inherent with baptism, and its steadfastness a truth that exists in us.)

“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (5:1). (Any bond without Christ is a yoke of slavery.)

“Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh” (5:16). (Through the Holy Spirit: i.e. the desires exist in us but we must not adhere to them. Here to behave spiritually is a Divine Commandment as well as to deny the gratification of fleshly desires.) “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law (the only stipulation for freedom). Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these (The works of the flesh have no power over us, but it is us who give it the power through our submission to them). ... And those who belong to Christ Jesus (through baptism) have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (An existing state and truth that need work). If we live by the Spirit (the Holy Spirit), let us also be guided by the Spirit” (5:18-25). (If we were born by the water and the Spirit, for Christ, then we must walk in the Spirit, according to the Gospel.)

**The Epistle to the Ephesians:**

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love (Christ to enter in us expects a special stature of love). I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (3:17-19). This is the utmost limit of change and its perfection, and therefore a fixed design the saints fulfilled.

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (4:1). (To respond to change according to the Gospel.)

“Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds [The relation between the state of mind and conduct is made clear, if the conduct is wrong then the mind is sick. “Because you the judge are doing the very same things” (Rom 2:1)]. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. That is not the way you learned Christ! (Through the Gospel and the oral tradition of the forefathers). For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds (in the light of the work of knowledge in the Gospel, the means being the Gospel), and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (4:17-24). (The qualification for the new man is a direct allusion to baptism.)

“Therefore be imitators of God, (Imitators of God: when you feel that you have begun to love others without return even a negative return, know then that the Divine love has started to pour into you) as beloved children, (children resemble their father) and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us” (5:1, 2). “Everyone who loves the parent loves the child” (1 John 5:1).

“But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned (not to be mentioned) among you, as is proper among saints. ... for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be associated with

them (departing from the system of holiness is extremely dangerous). For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light” (5:3, 6-8). (A complete transformation or change).

“Live as children of light ... Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord” (5:8, 10) (Every change produces a test of what is pleasing to the Lord.)

“Therefore it says, ‘Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you’ ” (5:14). (A Passover from death to resurrection.)

“So do not be foolish (the pleasures of the flesh are spiritual folly), but understand what the will of the Lord is” (5:17). (A call to a quick transformation from the foolishness of the flesh to spiritual awareness.)

“Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (A registered sign, a sign of fullness). Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ” (5:18-21). (The spiritual man easily submits to every plan because he has no ego.)

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God” (6:10, 11). (Faith and hope are the testimony, internal armor, and source of internal power that is within us and is not external).

### **The Epistle to the Philippians:**

“Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27). (A constitution and system; the gospel, nothing else, God is a whole that cannot be divided up.)

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ” (2:5). (The steps

of descent are the mystery of glory and elevation – the cross or war).

“Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you (through the sacrament, mystery, and the Gospel), enabling you both to will (self will) and to work (conduct) for his good pleasure” (2:12, 13). (Joyfully as the loss is horrendous and the gain fantastic.)

“Stand firm thus in the Lord.... Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice” (4:1, 4). (It is a commandment based on a truth and rightly that need nothing but to be begun and immediately carried out with continual perseverance.)

*Think about these things ...* “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise” (4:8). (The boundaries of the new mind with Christ).

### **The Epistle to the Colossians:**

“So that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son” (1:10-13). (The change here is extraordinary. It is an act of transport, as taking hold of someone crossing an abyss.)

“And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death



(in baptism), so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him (Through death He fulfilled every penalty that can be complained about on the part of the devil)—provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel” (1:21-23). (The Gospel!...the Gospel!).

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him (conduct is not as an individual, nor personal, it is a style, evangelical, like all the saints; the moment we accept Christ as Savior, Redeemer and King, its power starts as a gift), rooted and built up in him” (2:6, 7). (Founding, then building).

“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, ... In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision (baptism), by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead” (2:9-12). (Christ died and was buried to pay the price and penalty of the disgrace of sins and then resurrected from among the dead. Through death and the resurrection Christ removed the body of human sin and gave us the body of His glory. In baptism we are buried with Him and rise with Him thus removing through Him our sinful human bodies. In baptism we don the whole fullness of Christ.)

“You have died (sin, the flesh and the world), and your life (in the resurrection) is hidden with Christ in God” (3:3). (God’s work is in secret through Christ). Therefore, “whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient” (3:5, 6). (God’s commandment concerns not only our minds but also the members of our body.)

“Seeing that you have stripped off the old self (through burial

with Christ in baptism) with its practices, and have clothed yourselves with the new self (through the resurrection), which is being renewed in knowledge (the Gospel) according to the image of its creator" (3:9, 10).

"As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience" (3:12). (God's children's characteristics).

"Clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (3:14). (God's nature qualifying for inheritance and union.)

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (3:16). (The Gospel becomes the capital of everlasting life. He who is rich in the word is rich in Christ.)

"Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving" (4:2). (The new man's work in separation from the world.)

### **The First Epistle to the Thessalonians:**

"We ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus (the main point of the matter is that Christ is responsible for the commandment) that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more" (4:1). (Here the Gospel and tradition are the sure and effective manner of conduct.)

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication" (4:3). (The practical conduct for sanctification is itself God's will and the target of the renewed self will.)

"We urge you, beloved, to do so more and more" (4:10). (Limitless change and growth.)

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus (impossible

without Him) for you” (5:16-18).

“Abstain from every form of evil” (5:22). (Never belittle sin for it begins as a tiny motion.)

“May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely (the fulfillment of sanctification is a very special work of God – sanctification begins with us and is completed through God); and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:23). (Perfection is an outstanding work of God.) “The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this” (5:24). (This means that it is not because of our call or encouragement but originally due to a calling from God, who is truthful and will surely act according to His calling.)

### **The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians:**

“God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2:13, 14). (The greatest perfection is the grace of change. Notice here that the choice of being saved is a free act of God fulfilled by the sanctification from God of the spirit, through the mysteries, and on our part by belief in the truth through the gospel. This leads to the fulfillment of glory.)

“So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter” (2:15). (Tradition and the gospel.)

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts (To struggle and persevere) and strengthen them (through the hidden work of His grace) in every good work and word (the gospel)” (2:16, 17).

“The Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one” (3:3). (God Himself takes care of the important and

outstanding works, as it is He who establishes, and preserves from the devil.)

“May the Lord (Holy Spirit) direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ” (3:5). (The hidden work of the Spirit for fulfillment till perfection).

### **The First Epistle to Timothy:**

“But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness” (6:11). (A passive and positive struggle).

“Fight the good fight of the faith” (6:12). (A positive fight, work, conduct, and guidance.)

“Take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called” (6:12). (A personified image of eternal life we take hold of not to fall.)

### **The Second Epistle to Timothy:**

“I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands” (1:6).

“For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline” (1:7). (Beware! because every spirit of failure is not from God, it is the voice of the devil.)

“Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord (unfulfilled Divine love)... but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God” (1:8). (The power of God is the source of comfort and endurance in tribulation.)

### **The Epistle to Titus:**

“Show yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity (method), and sound speech that cannot be censured.... For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us (through the spirit in the conscience and through the gospel) to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in

the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (2:7, 8, 11-13). (To deny something is to eradicate its existence from the mind, thoughts, and conduct.)

### **The Epistle to the Hebrews:**

“Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ” (13:20, 21). (We never work on our own.)

### **The Letter of James:**

“In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures” (1:18). (The new birth is a creation of God.)

“Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls” (1:21). (The gospel is a strong and excellent means for salvation as a seed sown in the earth of the heart.)

“But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves” (1:22). (Without works the gospel is hindered.)

“Those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty (the gospel), and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed (happy and successful) in their doing” (1:25). (The powerful effect of the word on the works’ success, because the word perfects and liberates.)

“Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.... You see that faith was active along with his (Abraham’s) works, and faith was brought to completion by the works” (2:17, 22).

“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” (4:7, 8). (A passive and positive fight, continuous resistance and approaching.)

### **The First Epistle of Peter:**

“I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul” (2:11). (There no joy whatsoever for the foreigner and the traveler to indulge in pleasures, even that of eating. Abstaining from pleasures here is established on the basis of a complete separation between our life of the flesh (the world) and our spiritual life ‘Christ’.)

“Whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin” (4:1).

“Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same intention” (4:1). (Sharing Christ’s suffering puts a stop to the power of sin.)

“And after you have suffered for a little while (the fight of good faith), the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you” (5:10).

### **The Second Epistle of Peter:**

“... having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. ... But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue (actions), to virtue knowledge (according to the gospel), to knowledge self-control (not ambitions), to self-control perseverance (due to the restrictions on the soul), to perseverance godliness (worship), to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love (complete love for all)” (1:4-7 NKJV).

“For if these things are yours and are increasing (continually) among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:8).

“For anyone who lacks these things (the continuous fight through

knowledge and conduct) is nearsighted (spiritually, seeing only what is visual) and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins” (1:9).

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble” (1:10) (i.e. If we hold on to the call according to the gospel and believe in the choice of Christ with steadfastness, then this is the Divine guarantee).

“For in this way (through this method of the gospel that is the steadfastness of the calling and of choice), entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you” (1:11).

“Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God” (3:11, 12).

“Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things (the quick coming of the Lord), strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord (His slowness in coming so as to fulfill His mission to save the world) as salvation” (3:14, 15).

“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (3:18).

### **The First Epistle of John:**

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world” (2:15). (The commandment to renounce the love of the world, those in it and that which exists in it is based on the wealth and greatness of God the Father’s love that is sufficient, nourishing and filling all man’s emotions and faculties. This is based on the passage and change that occurred from living a life according to the flesh to a life according to the spirit.)

“And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence and not be put to shame before him at his coming” (2:28). “With unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror” (2 Cor 3:18). (The visional emphasis is powerful so as to gain the power of the gospel and Christ. “Whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him” (1 Thess 5:10). (The emphasis here is also on living with great adherence.)

“No one who abides in him sins” (3:6).

“If we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us” (4:12). (Perfection: to attain perfection is to become steadfast. This cannot happen except by loving all.)

“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (4:16 NKJV).

“By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit” (4:13).

“When he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure” (3:2, 3). (Hope is a power of purification and continual change.)

There is a significant verse showing that we, ourselves, are responsible for the disappearance of the divine truth with our own will, because we do not strive towards allowing the new will to open up to the knowledge of the word that allows its entrance to light and to the right conduct: “They deliberately ignore this fact” (2 Pet 3:5).



## **The Means to comprehend the Word of God producing the change**

We are puzzled when without explanation or elucidation we first read these commandments of few words and face their heavy demands: “Be transformed,” “put off the old man,” “put on the new man,” “put to death your members which are on the earth.”

Yet when we review the examples of those who were able to carry out these commandments and have fulfilled all these demands we find them not merely thousands, but millions over the centuries in every generation up till the present. Then when we study these examples that actually succeeded in applying the gospel, gaining change and fulfillment in following the new life till the end we find in humanity examples of different types and of every stature. There were those who were the worst examples of human conduct, those who were the weakest whether in their will, intellectual or physical status, proving that the secret to success is not based on specific human elements or unique personal capabilities.

Therefore the secret exists for sure within the commandment itself that is in the effective living Divine word of the gospel containing the actual power of our salvation at all levels. The soul has only to accept this salvation and respond to its demands through the will and effort.

### **The Way to adhere to the Power of the Effective Living Word**

There exist two main factors:

First: Continual concentration on the commandment,

Second: Placing all hope on the grace of God that supports the word.

**The first factor: The continuous concentration on the commandment, i.e. the word of God in the gospel:**

Here, reading needs to be done with lots of deep meditation,

repeatedly, patiently, with an open submissive mind, and vigilance.

These specifications are of extreme importance for reading to form a mystical connection with the power of the commandment and produce its fruit.

If we would remember Christ's description of the Word of God's action entering into man's heart, then we would pay greater heed to the factors Christ mentioned for the word to attain its effectiveness. Christ described the word of God as a seed God sows in man's heart. God's role ends entirely at this point like that of the planter who has planted seeds in the earth. Afterwards it is man's turn to start preserving the seed in his heart for the devil not to seize it through desires of conceit and evil thoughts. Then it is also man's role to start the act of developing the word if his heart is good soil, i.e. is good for the growth of God's guidance and commandments as the new fertile soil that responds to a planter's efforts.

Christ's description shows the importance of man's role in accepting the word of life and holding on to it, keeping it precious within his heart, with vigilance till the word changes into action and conduct.

Following are a few verses that prove the mystery of focusing on the gospel's word to attain the full transformation required within the depth of human nature:

1 – "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3: 14, 15).

Note the amount of emphasis St Paul the Apostle places on the importance of continuing in what you have learned. Because it is according to the amount of man's steadfastness to the truth, he has learnt in contemplation and repetition day and night, that he will be transformed to put into practice and live through the power of God. Note also Paul the Apostle's emphasis on the ability of religious

books that have the power and rule over human nature—being the word of God, living and effective in creation—to change, discipline and rule man until he attains salvation.

2 – “Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jam 1: 21).

James the Apostle firmly warns us here that the door opened to us and prepared for our entrance to salvation is the ‘word’, commanding us to receive it with meekness, i.e. without haughtiness, objection and disputation. Meekness is fundamental for the word of God to enter our hearts and become totally implanted in our nature as the seed that becomes implanted in good soil.

We must not ignore the importance of the Apostle James’ description of the word being ‘implanted’. Here lies a wonderful act of fusion between the Divine word and our nature that James the Apostle reveals.

3 – “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (Jam 1: 22).

St James the Apostle here links the word with immediate works revealing and at the same time emphasizing the aim of the word and its power over conduct. The word is prepared to work on the will and conduct with the utmost speed and power if we open the door to it. The word of God is able at the same time to move mountains of ice and dirt from our consciences even from the innermost wits of our bones, and the deepest intersections of our souls unattainable by any therapy or physician. The word of God can awaken the new will that is asleep and inflame the conscience with courage, sanctity and purity, untying the shackles of the soul and body from the worst uncontrollable habits. All of which is subject to the human consciousness immediate acceptance to the word of God, giving it dominion over the throne of the heart with faithfulness, truthfulness and certainty in an unwavering faith and stubborn mind that strongly refuses doubt.

The Apostle James then warns us from the deception in which we fall intentionally when we hear the word with the power of the word

beginning to knock at the door of the conscience but we postpone the response and avoid its immediate implementation. The word consequently stops to act and only remains reserved in the mind, deceiving us with its existence and perhaps deceiving others too.

4 – “He who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing” (Jam 1:25).

The Apostle James once again points to the gospel as the perfect law, which if man obeys will attain the end, the goal and perfection. He also named it the law of liberty, as the power of the word and commandment are able to free man from the shackles of all forms of bondage: the fear of death, weakness due to sinning, servility to persons due to a feeling of deficiency or to desires of material gain or worldly glory.

Here the Apostle James emphasizes that the gospel is the law of liberty that is able, through the hidden power within it, to liberate whoever is under the bondage of anything.

Yet James the Apostle sets a main stipulation that it is not as soon as man ‘reads’ or gets to know this law that he becomes perfect or free but he must be inwardly tied to that law, having described it as ‘steadfastness’. When man follows steadfastly that which has been revealed to him of the law, he will then reach the perfection and liberty that is offered to every one who steadfastly adheres to it.

Once more James the Apostle warns that the matter requires a quick, practical execution or immediate response to the word’s dictates to the conscience after which the miracle is achieved meaning “he shall be blessed in his doing.” This means that he will immediately feel a terrific joy when he reaps the fruit of his toil and discovers that the power of the gospel has entered his being and is actively directing him.

5 – The Apostle James thus reaches a very precise and sensitive conclusion that is: “Faith without works is dead” (Jam 2:20 NKJV). Only at this point on the basis of this verse does it become clear and we under-

stand James the Apostle's deep meaning of 'work' being the sure proof that not only has man accepted the gospel but also all the items of faith in earnest and in practice, having not been a mere hearer of the word, deceiving himself and others, but fulfilling what he heard and received of the gospel and creed in a practical manner through his conduct. In that way he proves to himself and to others that he has become a true believer.

6 – “Thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed (i.e. the gospel)” (Rom 6:17).

The Apostle Paul here explains with great precision the source of liberty and being freed from the power of sin. He defines it with unequivocal words: obedience from the heart to the word of God. Obedience from the heart means belief and immediate response. This is in fact the absolute confirmation of the power of God's word to untie the shackles of will, mind and conduct from the power of sin.

7 – “I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you” (1 Cor 1:4-6).

Here the Apostle Paul wakens our minds to note that the only way to richness in Christ is through the wealth of the word, meaning the gospel. As much as we are rich in the word we become rich in Christ. Richness in the word is not by learning and accurately repeating it but through earning its promises in our lives. He who is rich in the gospel word is he who has gained its power and used it in his life thus increasing the depth of his life in Christ.

Then the Apostle Paul points once more to the relationship between the degree of richness in Christ by mentioning: “in every way you were enriched” and the amount of riches in the word which he expressed as: “all speech and all knowledge.” This means that according to the amount we acquire from every word of the gospel, meaning all the commandments of the Lord and knowledge of all His words practicing them in our lives, we will increase in the richness in

Christ in everything. In other words in every thing concerning Christ Himself, i.e. His characteristics, glories, love and all mysteries.

This means that we are required to concentrate on every word, every commandment, every verse, and every teaching of the gospel, because the connection between them is close. In uniting them all together man gains more light, and depth increasing the facility to carry them out, and adding to his conduct the characteristics of Christian perfection. This means that richness in Christ is totally subject to the implementation of the profoundness and richness of the gospel.

It is of great importance to comment on the meaning of this great truth, that engagement, profoundness, and concentration on the gospel do not add to man's fatigue or form an extra load and exhaust the mind, neither do they complicate man's conduct as he might logically believe. It is completely to the contrary: more of the gospel with more profoundness, study, and vigilance, with added implementation and practice increases the easiness of life and the enlightenment of the mind.

8 – "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col 3:16).

Here the word reaches the point of a companionship, because dwelling in the theological evangelical concept of dwelling is that of a continuous advent and existence, so that man becomes the companion of the living word. The Apostle Paul gives us here an evangelical experience of the highest level, as the gospel becomes the participating power in every act and work. It then raises us to the richness of the level of a perfect life with the living word. This shows the satiation, sufficiency, and total dependency on the power of the gospel for us not to feel any need whatsoever. Through the word as the giving source in every situation we have dispensed with any worldly need and requirement.

Paul the Apostle teaches and had previously said that richness in the word directly means richness in Christ Himself and everything pertaining to Christ. Richness in Christ liberates man from every need.

Thus we deduce the powerful extent of concentration Christ and the Apostles have set on the living word, i.e. the gospel, as the source to change our conduct, renew the mind, liberate us from sin, liberate the spirit and accept the mystery of the new Christian life with all its amenities. Because the power of life and spirit existing in the active living word of God is in truth the direct source to gain aptitudes and new facilities that did not exist but were given to us through the mystery of the new birth, being our right that cannot be obtained through any other means.

**The second factor: Grace as an assistant agent to the word:**

In truth there still exists a chasm between the active living word and our bad suspecting minds that are hindered by painful experiences. It has therefore become actually necessary to have an intermediary that is reconciling, meek, and understands our ignorance overlooking our narrow-mindedness, to mediate between the word and our minds. Herein appears the grace of God to help, conciliate and enlighten. We must first get to know the meaning of the grace. Grace means the free power of God offered to us through the Holy Spirit or directly through Christ. Christ is therefore Himself the grace, and the Holy Spirit, Itself, is the grace when it, itself, works in us.

We must avow and mention the number of times, in our experience, we were puzzled by the word of God, perplexed, not understanding nor feeling the Divine proposed intention within it. How many times have we wept and on how many occasions have we spent time in silence when suddenly an inner voice emerged very clearly explaining the meaning and leading us to the intention, all of which was in accordance to the Spirit's and Christ's appraisal to the aptness of our spiritual stature, and suited to our position or hour's need. Thus the grace takes from the richness of the word and distributes it with extreme accuracy wisely, and simply according to our need as St. Paul the Apostle with authority says: "...according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in

wisdom and insight the mystery of his will” (Eph 1:7-9). Of course this is based on Christ’s previous proclamation concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in our minds when He said: “He will teach you all things”, “He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you”, “bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you”, “you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14 and 16 NKJV).

St Peter the Apostle reiterates this and strictly emphasizes it, realizing the benefit we will gain from the entrance of the grace into our minds, and our intellectual and emotional reading and contemplation of the gospel: “Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:13).

Here Peter the Apostle imagines how a Christian must gird his mind when he begins to read and understand, as a man girds his waist when he sets to accomplish an important work. “Gird up your minds” supposing “soberness” or “wakefulness” i.e. complete attention when man examines all the matters concerning the revelation of Christ, meaning recognizing and knowing Him. This is made clearer when we read the previous verses as follows:

“The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired (Note the effort the prophets made in order to understand the mysteries of God through the Holy Books.) about this salvation...It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things in which angels long to look” (1 Pet 1:10, 12).

After that, it is clear here why Peter the apostle requires us to gird our minds, wake-up, and hold on to the grace firmly when reading or listening to the gospel. Because Peter reminds us that these matters were especially written for us whether in the Old or New Testament, and that it was determined by a definite promise that the grace would serve us in such. It is a special service “the grace that was to be yours” to open our minds and supply us with the power of the Holy



Spirit to obtain our complete salvation, and realize the mysteries of Christ that are ours and in which the angels long to look.

The Apostle Peter here emphasizes the factor of the grace to the greatest degree knowing that there is no way for us to obtain the power of the work of salvation in us and the revelation of the mystery of Christ in our lives except through the grace: "Set your heart fully upon the grace" (1 Pet 1:13).

To hope means the total dependence to the direction of grace and holding on to its work firmly and completely in the same way a blind man holds on to the hand of the seeing, or in better words in the way Timaeus' son held on to Christ's fingers that touched his eyes and made him see. The word 'fully' here means that grace is totally able to complete its work in us and is just waiting for us to set our hearts on it.

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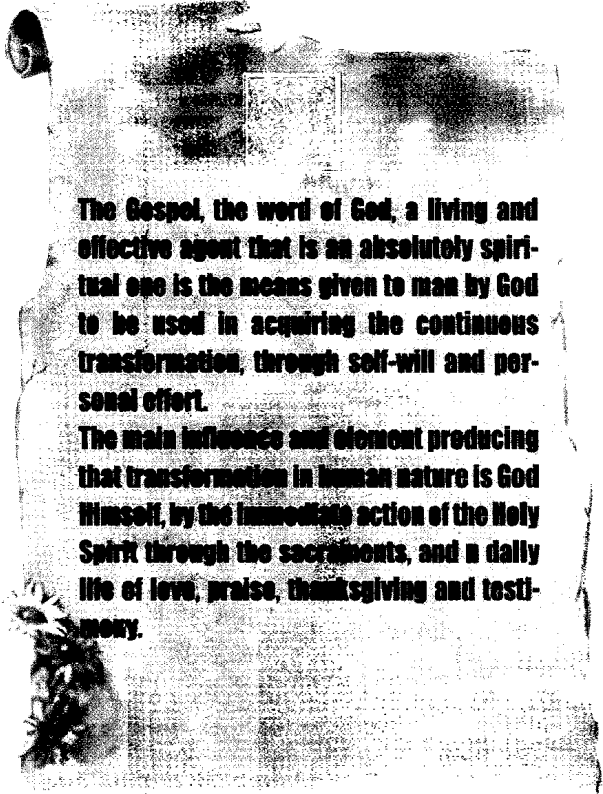
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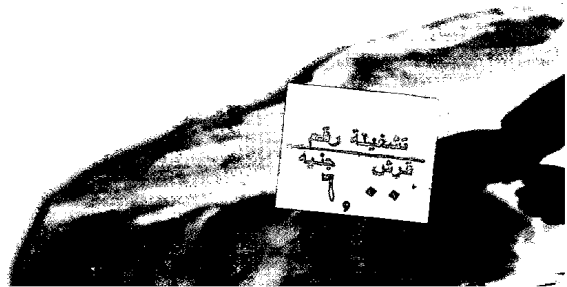
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The Gospel, the word of God, a living and effective agent that is an absolutely spiritual one is the means given to man by God to be used in acquiring the continuous transformation, through self-will and personal effort.

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