



**TRANSFORMATIVE SPIRITUAL RENEWAL**  
Kenneth Nwagbogu  
Kentish Town | London, England

The Gospel of Jesus Christ establishes a perfect and all-sufficient standard of truth that is to guide a Christian’s conduct (**2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:25**). It is God’s power for complete deliverance from sin and death and results in ultimate salvation in heaven.



In becoming Christians, we are united with Christ and become subject to the life-giving law of the Spirit of Christ that liberates from the law of sin and death (**Romans 6:18**). Christians are accordingly a select group with a heavenly citizenship that is more substantial and enduring than our temporal one (**1 Peter 2:9; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 11:13-16**).

Since the breaking down of the wall of partition dividing Jew from Gentile (**Ephesians 2:14**), no one nation can claim to be especially favored by God. Rather, those belonging to spiritual Israel across the nations are united in a common spiritual life in Christ, a life that is reserved for those who walk by faith and not by sight (**2 Corinthians 5:7**).

Abraham’s firmness in walking by faith to pursue his journey from Ur to the land of promise and the resolution of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when threatened with the fiery furnace are examples of walking by faith and not by sight.

Christians emulate these exemplars when we prioritize our eternal citizenship in the indestructible kingdom established by the God of heaven (**Daniel 2:44**). This citizenship has no tangible accompanying documents, such as birth certificates, passports, and driver’s licenses, such as we have with our citizenship in the earthly nations to which we temporarily belong.

By the paradox of faith (**Hebrews 11:1**), we can maintain a common life in Christ with saints even in nations with which our respective countries might be in military, diplomatic, or economic conflict. This fellowship is deeper, richer, and fuller than any possible communion

with our non-Christian compatriots because the relationship is spiritual and by faith, not carnal and by sight (specifically, accident of birth).

Christians may be, indeed should be, patriots and good citizens who pray for God to bless our respective countries. But to associate such prayers with thoughts of special favor for specific countries is to fall prey to a prideful and unscriptural delusion.

On this side of the cross, God favors, not particular nations, but His followers in each nation (**Acts 10:34-35**). To honor our various nations and their accompanying emblems is a fine thing, but to *worship* flags, uniforms, etc., or to downplay or excuse the evils our nations may do is to fall into the same gross error of “confidence in the flesh” — pride in vain things — both of which condemned fleshly Israel that we have been called upon to reject (**Philippians 3:2-11**).

In affirming “my country right or wrong,” we demonstrate that we are still conformed to this world’s standards: in proclaiming the praises of Jesus Christ, we become living witnesses to the truth to which He bore witness (**John 18:37**).

The vehicle for becoming such living witnesses is an inward spiritual transformation, resulting in an outward pattern of behavior that does not conform to this world’s mores (**Romans 12:2**). The alternative — continuing to place false confidence in our earthly citizenship — introduces factional strife and discord into our relations with our fellow citizens of Christ’s kingdom not only internationally but also domestically.

The context of the political party systems that many democratic countries have settled into usually involves mixing the sacred with the profane by associating spiritual truth with the party we happen to support and spiritual falsehood with its main political opponent.

In such a setting, people believe *Our* party is to be defended in all things; its representatives are always considered well-intentioned, even when they are clearly in the wrong. The *other* party is always to be attacked; on the rare occasions in

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God-Centered Worship

## JUNE 2021 NEWSLETTER

which they appear to have better proposals than *Our* party, these good initiatives must still be opposed as it is accepted that they always have ulterior motives even for good policies. Such is the party spirit in its political manifestation, which reduces even supposedly intelligent persons to the level of objectivity and impartiality of a typically rabid sports fan. The church cannot allow such an atmosphere.

As regards the Lord's church, this sectarian spirit is strongly condemned throughout the New Testament (**1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:3-4; Galatians 5:19-20, 26; Philippians 2:3-4**). Consider that the disagreements alluded to in the above passages were organic to the individuals and assemblies addressed.

How much worse that so much of the strife alienating Christians from one another currently has been imported from a world to which Christians have been expressly warned not to give undue consideration (**Mark 12:17; Luke 17:21; John 18:36**)? When under the influence of the party spirit, we are anything but living witnesses of truth because that which we are supporting is a proxy for the only approved vehicle of salvation, Christ's church. That statement is also true when consideration is given to adding man-made institutions such as a Bible college, an orphanage, or a missionary society to the Lord's plan. Whether by entertaining the party spirit or by adding such organizations, the church becomes man-made and consequently intrinsically flawed.

The Church of Christ, by contrast, is *sui generis* (one of a kind). No man-made organization can ever be "according to its kind." The Lord's church is distinct from all human organizations. It is largely because of their structural flaws that disputes over man-made organizations tend to engender bitter passions so un-akin to the spiritual edification that should arise from the airing of differences of opinion over church affairs by those who are spiritual. May we endeavour to cultivate the fruit of a spiritually transformed life (**Galatians 5:22-26**) even in these contentious times.

### WHO CAN SEPARATE YOU FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST?

J. Todd Richardson  
Houston, MO

In this time of great uncertainty, when life just sometimes seems really crazy and nothing seems solid or sure, it is so comforting to turn to such powerful and peaceful scriptures as found in Romans 8:35: "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*"

This powerful question, however, is not a rhetorical one. The fact that Paul asks the question implies there is, in fact, something or "someone" who can indeed separate us from Jesus and His love.

Paul lays out a list of things that CANNOT, such as tribulation, distress, and persecution—just to name a few. The apostle goes further by emphatically declaring, "*for I am persuaded that neither death nor life*" nor a host of other angelic or demonic personalities have the ability or power to wrestle us from the loving embrace of Jesus' love. Not even Satan himself and all the forces of hell can tear us from Jesus' eternal love!



So, CAN we be separated from Christ's love; and if so, how and by whom?

The Bible makes clear that we can, indeed, be separated from Christ's love, which is the same as falling from God's grace. We come under God's grace by obeying the scriptural commands to obey the gospel. We fall from His grace when we revert to living in sin again. Listen to Paul's teaching earlier in this book: "*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*" (**Romans 6:1-2**).

So, any Christian who makes the decision to "live" in sin, without a true heart of faith and penitence, is separated from God's grace and, thus, Christ's love. It is not that the Lord wants us to be separated from Him; rather, He patiently pleads with us through the power of His word not to "choose" to walk away from the saving light of His love.

The Apostle John teaches the same principle, even though he uses a different image: "*But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*" (**1 John 1:7**).

So, WHO can separate you from Christ's love? ONLY YOU—YOURSELF!

Each of us makes his or her own choice to accept or reject the love of Jesus. He stands ready and willing to give us His love, to show us the way, and to lead us unto life eternal. It is up to each individual as to whether we accept it or turn away from it?

Hear the words of Jesus: "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with Me*" (**Revelation 3:20**).



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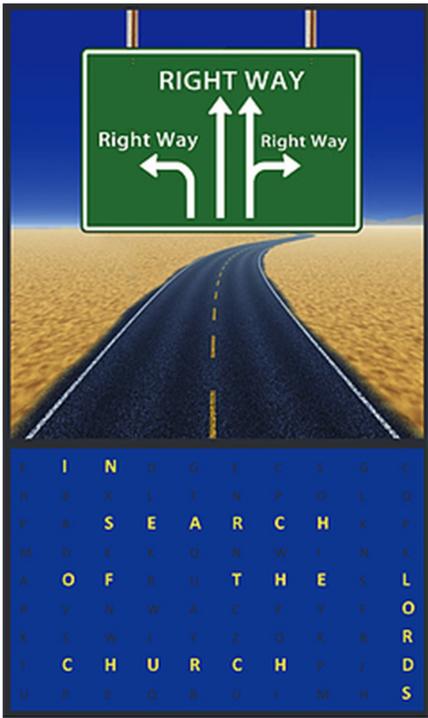
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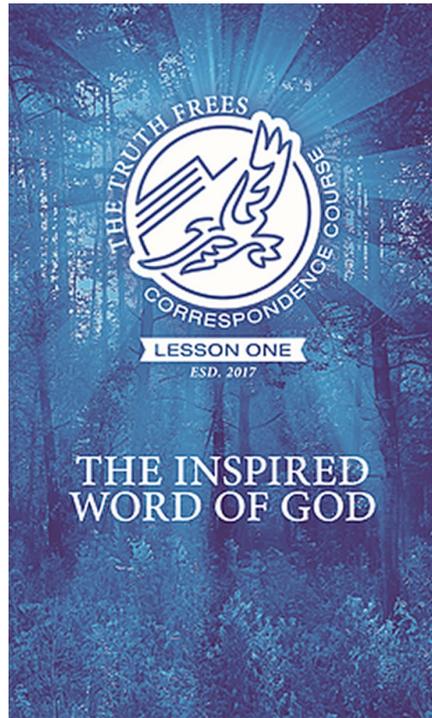
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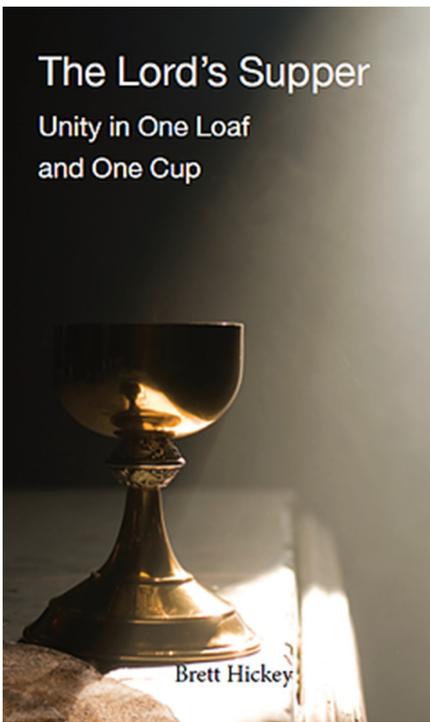
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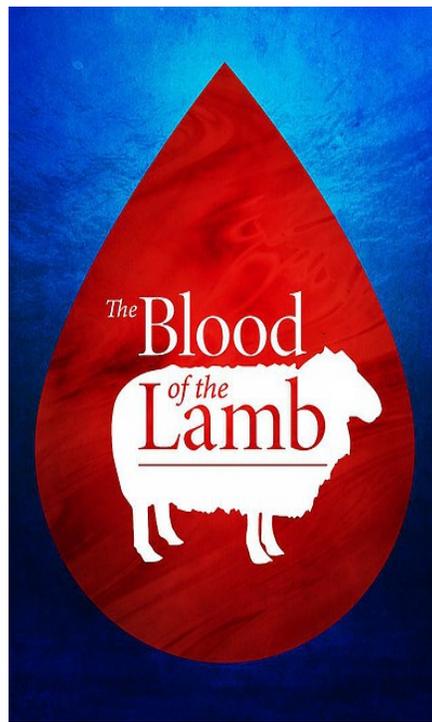
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