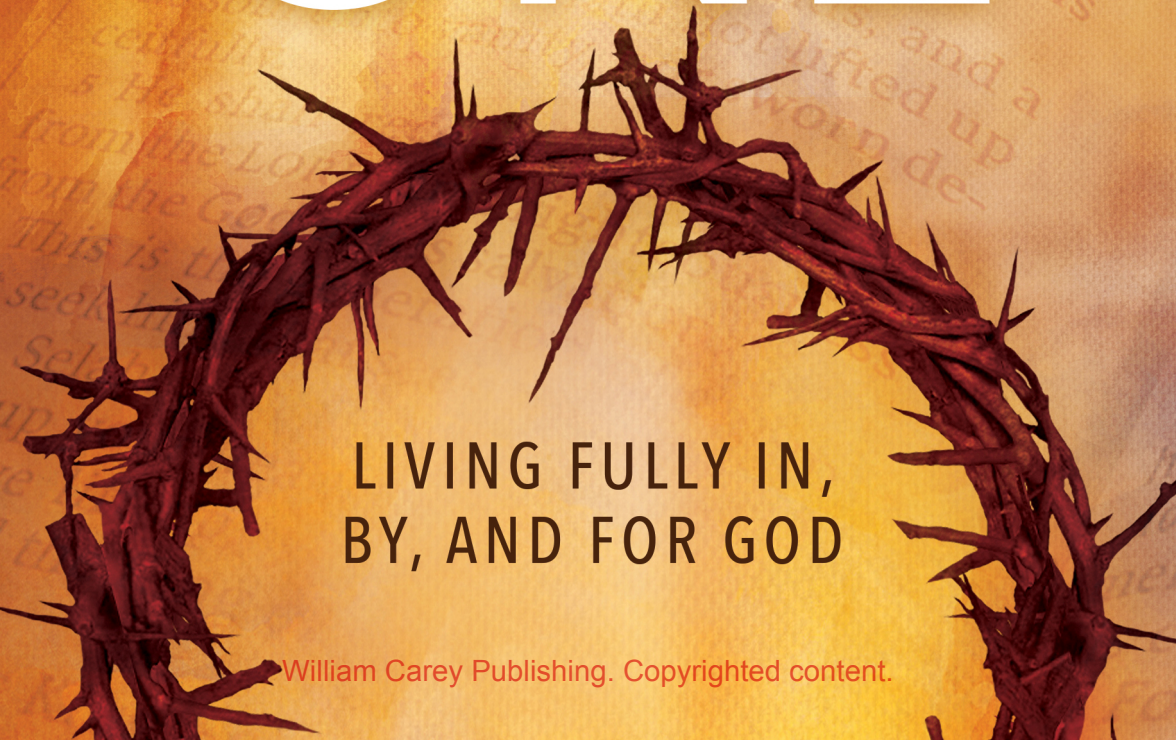
CURTIS SERGEANT

THE ONLY ONE



LIVING FULLY IN, BY, AND FOR GOD

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The Only One: Living Fully in, by, and for God
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1 An All-Encompassing Way of Life

Theopraxy *is a frame of reference that defines every part of life—both what we do and why we do it.*

> He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.
>
> —2 Corinthians 5:15

> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.
>
> —Titus 2:11–14

Jesus died to change *why* we live (2 Corinthians 5:15). He died so that we would live for Him, not ourselves. And His grace is meant to change *how* we live (Titus 2:11–14). We are to be His people, "zealous for good deeds." This is the life of Theopraxy. The Bible describes it in various ways:

- being filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9, 52);
- walking in the light (John 8:12; 11:9; 12:35; Ephesians 5:8; 1 John 1:5–7);
- walking in newness of life (Romans 6:4);
- walking in the Spirit (Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:16, 25);
- walking in love (Romans 14:15; Ephesians 5:2);
- walking by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7);

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- walking in truth (3 John 1:1, 3–4);
- abiding in Christ (John 15:4–7, 9–10; 1 John 2:27–28; 3:6, 24; 4:13);
- abiding in the Holy Spirit (John 14:17);
- abiding in the light (1 John 2:10);
- abiding in the Son and the Father (1 John 2:24);
- walking as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6);
- walking worthy of the Lord (Colossians 1:10); and
- walking worthy of your calling (Ephesians 4:1).

These descriptions demonstrate that believers are to be "all in" with every aspect of their lives. Belonging to God is a comprehensive experience that controls every aspect of life.

The Theopraxic life is not an attempt to earn salvation. It is the grateful response to a loving and worthy God for His amazing grace and great mercy. Any other response would be inconceivable when we recognize what we deserve and what God gives. When people willingly live insipid lives after seemingly being redeemed by the Lord, there is reason to question the authenticity of their salvation.

As Dallas Willard said (http://www.dwillard.org/articles/individual/live-life-to-the-full), Grace is not opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning. Effort is action. Earning is attitude. The New Testament expects God's children to take action to live out their faith.

Hebrews 6 demonstrates this point. The author speaks of the elementary aspects of faith, such as repentance and eternal life (6:1–3), but he encourages his readers to press on to maturity, which will be made visible in how they live their lives (4–9). Then, in verses 10–12, he says, "For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

God cares about our works. In fact, we are to demonstrate diligence in them. We are not to be lazy. Our diligence in doing God's works demonstrates our faith and shows that we are among those who will inherit God's promises. Hebrews 9:14 tells us that "the blood of Christ" cleanses us "to serve the living God."

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There are two grave errors that we can make here. The first is to believe that we must somehow earn our salvation. No! Salvation comes "by grace . . . through faith . . . not as a result of works" (Ephesians 2:8–9). The second is to think that since we are saved by grace, works don't matter—we have been saved and can now take it easy.

In our day, this second error is the more pervasive one. God calls us not to passivity, but to action—to join Him in the work of the Kingdom, now and for all eternity. Our salvation and righteousness before God depend on Christ's work, but now we are called to join Him in completing the work He has begun (Colossians 1:24).

James 2:14–26 says faith without works is "dead." James is not saying that good works produce salvation, but that works demonstrate salvation. Works are a symptom of saving faith, not a source of salvation. Faith, without the accompanying actions that demonstrate faith, is an impossibility—a self-contradiction. What we believe and value and desire will have practical impact on our lives, our words, and our actions. How we allocate our time, energy, and resources reveals our true values and priorities. Our decisions demonstrate our allegiance.

In John 15:1–17, Jesus tells us that we can do nothing apart from Him. This does not mean we are not to work. It means we are not to work apart from Him. In this passage, Jesus speaks as much about bearing fruit as He does about abiding. If we abide in Him, we will bear much fruit and thereby glorify Him. He repeatedly speaks of actions we are to take: lay down our lives, obey His commands, share His work, and bear fruit. Our life can find meaning only in Him and through Him. We are His, and He plans to put us to work.

The work we do for our King and the Kingdom does not earn us bragging rights. It is simply the natural result of our following Him. Jesus clearly communicated this attitude in Luke 17:7–10:

> Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, "Come immediately and sit down to eat"? But will he not say to him, "Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink"? He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? **So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, "We are unworthy slaves; we have done** *only* that which we ought to have done."

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Ephesians 2:8–10 illustrates the close connection between being saved by grace and being saved to join God in His work. We are not saved to sit, but to do good works which He has specifically prepared for each of us:

> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Similarly, people often emphasize that God's love for us is unrelated to our behavior or our attitude. It is frequently expressed that God cannot love us any more or any less than He does. Although this is true of His *agape* (the primary biblical term for God-like love) loving, it is not true of His *philos* (brotherly or warm affection love) love.

God's *agape* love is independent of our worthiness. God loves all people in this way. This is clear from such passages as Matthew 5:44-45, John 3:16, and Romans 5:8. God's *philos* love for us, however, is dependent upon our response to Him. This is clear from John 16:27:

> The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

The word *philos* is used in John 20:2 to describe Jesus' affection for John when John is referred to as the "disciple whom Jesus loved." This distinguishing characteristic set John apart. I want to have that sort of relationship with the Lord. I want to be a person He enjoys being with. I want to be pleasing to Him. Therefore I want to excel at doing what He asks. I want to be responsive to His desires. I want to be attentive to His will for me. I want to experience what Paul prayed for the Colossians in Colossians 1:9b-12a:

> That you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father.

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PRAYER

Lord, You died so that I would live for You. Your grace is designed to help me work with You and for Your Kingdom. Help me to remember this. Help me to live like this. I know that the life lived for You is the best possible life. But I'm often lazy or distracted or selfish. Forgive me. Show me my first steps to live a Kingdom-focused life. Give me the courage to take those steps. Then show me the next steps, and the next and the next. And give me the courage for those, as well.

QUESTIONS

Read the following questions, then pray and ask God what He wants you to learn and do. Listen quietly.

Note any commitments from the questions below in your journal. Note the dates by which you plan to fulfill those commitments.

1. Am I living for Jesus or for myself? How?
2. Am I passively waiting for my eternal reward or actively pursuing the advancement of God's Kingdom? How?
3. Do what I do and how I spend my time show that God's Kingdom is the motivating force in my life? How?
4. What specific actions does God want me to take in response to this chapter? (Note them in your journal and schedule them in your calendar.)
5. With whom (at least one name) does God want me to share what I have learned?

Ask the Lord to enable you to follow through on these commitments and to prepare the hearts of those with whom you intend to share insights.

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