

Things that Pertain to
Life & Godliness



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Introduction

As Christ was about to ascend into Heaven after his brief earthly ministry of around three years, He gave a poignant message to His followers who were gathered to see Him just prior to His departure. He said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This little band of believers would now be entrusted with continuing the ministry that He had begun. The church was born, the great commission given. These frail men of the earth, like millions after them, would make Him known throughout the world. These disciples would make disciples.

But they would not be alone, they would now be empowered from within. The ascension of Christ triggered the coming of the Holy Spirit who would now reside in each and every one of them. He would be their guide in this great undertaking.

The Great Commission to make disciples continues. Like the disciples of old, the Spirit of Christ is at work in us, leading and guiding us, equipping and encouraging us to carry on this great work.

We must not fail in this calling. We must not allow the things of the world to take precedence over our love for Christ. He must have preeminence in our lives. We must remind ourselves of His words to us, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not take up his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (Lu 14:26, 27). These are compelling words, indeed! This is a call that can only be done by the power of Christ in us. And He will do it as we yield ourselves to Him.

THE ONE TRUE GOSPEL

The gospel has always been under attack. False teachers have been around since the beginning of the church to pervert the gospel of Christ, which is by grace through faith. They offer another gospel. It rejects the atoning work of Christ's death on the cross. It is a gospel of works, of self effort and it is satanic. Paul addressed this perversion in his letter to the Galatians. They were being carried away by certain Jewish teachers of the circumcision party, as Paul describes them, who were bringing confusion to the believers by advocating circumcision, observing the law, and keeping Jewish holy days as part of the gospel. Paul stressed to the church that this was, in fact, no gospel at all.

He reiterated that salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ and not by works of the law. He said that they had been bewitched and asked, "Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh" (Gal 3:2, 3)?

His argument is that if they turn back to be justified by the law, they will be required to abide by all things written therein and will become slaves to the Law rather than children of freedom. He drives home his point by saying, it is "for freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1). He appeals to them to reconsider their action and not be enslaved again.

Paul's final word to these believers is to tell them that it is not by conformity to certain rites and customs that a man is to be accepted by God. No, it is none of these. It is, in fact, becoming *a new creation* that matters (Gal 6:15).

THE NEW CREATION

If there is any doubt about the power of the gospel of grace to change the life of those who are dead in sin, Paul brings clarity by declaring that what takes place when a person believes, is not behavioral modification leading to outward reform, but an inward change so dramatic that it is referred to as becoming a new creation. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Cor 5:17).

This is regeneration through the Spirit of God. “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Tit 3:4-7).

The loving kindness of God is just what we needed at just the right time

The loving kindness of God is just what we needed at just the right time. “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6). Paul further explains the dramatic shift that takes place by describing how God exerts His mighty power to bring us out of sin and death. He states in Colossians 1:13, 14 that God “delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

As a new creation we have been given all that we need to live a godly life in Christ. Romans 6:32 states, “He who did not spare

His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?" Certainly, we can infer that if God gave the gift of His Son (the greater gift) what is it to give the lesser, all things to live righteously. This is reinforced by 2 Peter 1:3, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness."

TURNING POINT - A NEW WAY OF LIFE

Having been given all that we need to live a lifestyle that is pleasing to God, we now begin a new journey of developing into a true disciple of Christ. We must begin to think differently about who we are and who Christ is in us. As a new believer this will happen only by studying the Bible. In it we discover a multitude of answers to questions relating to our new life, for example:

Who we are in Christ

Who Christ is in us

How to relate to Him

How to know what we have in Him

How we relate to the church

How we relate to one another

How to conduct ourselves in the world

How to avoid sin

How to live a godly life

How to mature as a believer

How to share the gospel

How to make disciples

Obviously, this takes time. But it is necessary for our growth in Christ. We cannot comprehend everything all at once.

1 Peter 1:2 describes this new life like being a new born baby growing up into salvation. Our growth will depend on how much we are willing to appropriate the Word. Deuteronomy 8:3 states, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” The Word is what nourishes our new life. We need a steady diet of it in order to grow spiritually.

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Knowledge of the truth of God’s Word is the only way we can understand our freedom in Christ. This is what brings about a true transformation of our life in Him. We are told in Romans 6:4 that we have been raised to walk in a new way of life. In addition, Romans 6:6 states, “We know that our old self was crucified with Him (Christ) in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.” The passions and appetites of our flesh have been rendered powerless so that sin no longer has power over us.

The Word is our lifeline. It is how God communicates His will to us

Paul reiterates this in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” His point is that the cross is to be the instrument to carry out the denial of our whole self, all its natural motives and impulses, so far as they come in conflict with the claims of Christ on our lives.

THE VALUE OF THE WORD IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER

We must see the Word as having great value in our lives. We are admonished to study it (2 Tim 2:15), know it (Col 3:16), and continue in it (Jn 8:31, 32). The Word is our lifeline. It is how God communicates His will to us. It is living and active, it is profitable, it penetrates, it chastens, it corrects and instructs us. It equips us for every good work. It is a lamp and a light. The Psalmist said, “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psa 119:103-105). Psalm 1 also reminds us that delighting in the law of the LORD, and meditating on it day and night, prevents us from being drawn into the ways of the ungodly.

Delighting, meditating, and obeying the Word enables us to walk in freedom. Paul states in Romans 12:2 that we are not to be conformed to the world, to its way of thinking, but be transformed by renewing our minds. Failure to do this gives Satan access to invade our minds with his lies which will bring about a darkening of our understanding. Unless we recognize this and respond with the Word of truth, he will raise up demonic strongholds that poison our thinking. This will lead us away from the knowledge of the truth. The consequences will be bondage to sin and loss of freedom in following Christ.

**If we continue to listen to his lies we
will be taken captive to do his will**

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

To fully comprehend how much God has made provision for us to know Him, we must understand what happened when He called us to salvation. Ephesians 1 tells us that we have been chosen by him, we have been adopted as sons, we have redemption through his blood, forgiveness of our sins, we have an inheritance and we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of our redemption, or the day Christ comes for us.

The point of all of this is to realize that God has left nothing to chance when it comes to knowing Him and walking with Him. Of equal importance is knowing that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in each believer. When God saved us He did not leave us to our own devices to try to live the holy life that He called us to. In fact, 1 Corinthians 2:12 states that we have not received the spirit of the world (a satanic spirit) but the Spirit who is from God (the Holy Spirit), that we might understand the things freely given to us by God because no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Furthermore, He is the One who guides us into all truth according to John 16:1

**God has left nothing to chance
when it comes to knowing Him**

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul begins by encouraging the church in his prayer for them. In it he asks “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Eph 1:17). Without wisdom and knowledge they would be spiritually impaired and ill equipped to remain steadfast in their walk with Christ.

It seems that Peter answers Paul's prayer in 2 Peter 1:3, 4 with these words: "[God's] divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire." In other words, the Holy Spirit and the Word, enable every believer to become a participant in mutual fellowship with God's divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world. This is possible since they are living in the kingdom of Christ where there is no slavery to sin. Hence they are free to choose righteousness and holiness since they know the truth which, therefore, makes them free.

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." (Rom 8:14). What does it mean to be led by the Spirit of God and how can we know if we are truly being led by Him? As always, the answers to these questions are in the Word of God. The Spirit of God is also called the Spirit of truth. The Word is truth, therefore the Spirit and the Word are always in agreement. God never speaks to us contrary to His Word and the Spirit will never lead us to contradict the Word.

God never speaks contrary to His Word

Being led by the Spirit is to understand that the Spirit of God is working in harmony with the Word of God to lead us into the will of God which will ultimately conform us into the image of Christ.

As was stated previously, it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to understand the things freely given to us by God because no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

If the Spirit of God is divorced from the Word of God or vice versa, there will be deviation from the Truth. This lays the foundation for heresy and doctrines of demons. However, accepting and believing that the work of the Spirit is to “guide us into all truth” (Jn 16:13), will insure that Christ is formed in us, in other words, our mind and life is in complete harmony with the mind and life of Christ, thus glorifying Him in all that we do.

A FOCUS TOWARD ETERNITY

Although we are eternal beings, we are still tied to this fleshly body until we are given new glorified bodies at the return of Christ. In the meantime, our outer self is wasting away, as Paul describes it in 2 Corinthians 4:16. He goes on to say, “our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (16b-18). In other words, we are not to focus on earthly pleasure, or to seek after wealth or fame. Nor should we fix our minds on the trials and sorrows of this life. They are, after all, temporal and momentary compared to eternity. Conversely, the joys of heaven are everlasting, joy unspeakable in the city of God. We should, therefore, set our minds and hearts on things above, as Paul directs in Colossians 3:1, 2.

FAITH THAT MATTERS

One of the most striking passages of scripture in the New Testament is found in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. In verse six we are told that “without faith it is impossible to please God.” Notice that the writer did not say that it is hard to please God, or difficult to please God without faith, but that it is impossible to please Him without faith. We also find in that same chapter those who lived by faith, died in faith and were commended for their faith.

True faith is to “believe that He [God] exists and that He rewards those who seek Him” (Heb 11:6b). Where does this kind of faith come from? It is not a natural faith like that which we exercise without thinking, such as, sitting in a chair before we examine it to see if it will hold our weight, or flying in an airplane without checking to see if the engines are in good order or to see if the pilot is qualified to fly us to our destination. No, it is not that kind of faith, but it is a God- given supernatural faith that enables us to draw near to God. It is described as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1).

It is the kind of faith that caused Noah to build the arc, that caused Abraham to follow God not knowing where he was going. It is the kind of faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Faith that caused women to receive back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise to a better life. Others suffered

mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. These are the heroes of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven. They had the kind of faith that pleases God. That kind of faith pleases Him because He gives it to all who call upon Him. It is the kind of faith that saves and the kind of faith that sustains all those who follow Him. It is not a stagnate faith, but a faith that increases as it is exercised. The Bible describes those of little faith and those of great faith. The apostles said to Jesus, “Increase our faith!” Jesus responded by saying, “If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it would obey you” (Lu 17:5, 6). In other words, exercise your small faith and see what God will do. This is how you build trust in Him. Over time faith will increase as your love and trust in Him increases. “And this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith” (1 Jn 5;4).

Over time faith will increase as your love and trust in Him increases

The following verse excerpted from the great hymn “Faith is The Victory,” by John Yates rings true.

We tread the road the saints before

With shouts of triumph trod.

By faith, they like a whirlwind’s breath,

Swept on o’er every field;

The faith by which they conquered death

Is still our shining shield

Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory!

O glorious victory, that overcomes the world.

THE EVIDENCE OF TRUE FAITH

In James chapter two, we find these words concerning faith: “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (v. 17). He goes on to say in verse twenty-six, “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.” True biblical faith will always influence believers to engage in good works. They show the fullness and completeness of faith. They reveal and declare the genuineness of faith and they display the perfection of faith.

INVESTING IN OTHERS

Works that belong to faith most always lead us to be involved with other people. It is in our spiritual DNA to be sensitive to the needs of others and to invest in their spiritual, as well as, their physical well being.

Paul describes this in Philippians 2:4 as looking to the interest of others. In other words, we are to live a selfless life. We are to “present [ourselves] to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and [our] members to God as instruments for righteousness” (Rom 6:13). Again, we read, “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). This is dedication to God entirely. Our mind and our will are given over to Christ, along with our body for His service.

**Our mandate from Christ is to preach
the gospel and to make disciples**

Our mandate from Christ is to preach the gospel and to make disciples. Upon hearing and believing the gospel, the new believer

must be taught how to live a life that is pleasing to Christ. Paul explains his passion to bring believers to maturity from scripture. “Him [Christ] we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Col 1:28). Again, he states, “I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal 4:19). Put simply, his goal is to instruct them with wisdom from the Word so that their life conforms to the life of Christ. This is the standard for making disciples.

We must also use the Word of God in making disciples. From Colossians 3:16, we learn that it is by letting the Word dwell in us richly, to know it well and how to use it effectively, that we are able, like Paul, to teach the things of God with all wisdom. There is no short cut for making disciples. In fact, it is a lifetime of learning. It is a work that God does in us through the indwelling Spirit and it is one that He will bring to completion at the day of Christ (Phil 1:6).

THE NEED FOR WISDOM

Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians was that they would receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation in their knowledge of God.

That is, being led by the Spirit, they would practice the requisites for godly and upright living and thus gain instruction concerning divine things. This wisdom is available to all believers. It is readily accessible because it comes from Christ who dwells in us, in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It is the wisdom which is from above and it is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere according to James 3:17.

Proverbs consistently reminds us to seek wisdom and understanding, “Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed” (Prov 3:13-18). Here we see the excellent nature of wisdom. It is wisdom that leads us to knowledge of things above. It is the wisdom of God spoken through the Word of God. As the Word dwells in us, so does the wisdom of God.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Paul said, “but one thing I do; forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13). Paul’s passion was to pursue Christ with all of his heart, mind and will. This is the hallmark of a true disciple. It is a reflection of true love for Christ and it bears testimony of a life genuinely changed by the power of the gospel. May each of our lives be marked by such a transformation.