

Christian Study

Lesson 243

Be Light

Focusing on Church beyond Sunday

How Can I Know and Understand What the Bible Means?

Understanding the Basic Gospel

Continuing on our review on the important truths, we would like to remind ourselves of our goal, in order not to be tossed to and fro by the wind into preaching another gospel different from the good news of Jesus Christ, which is our focus. **Galatians 1:8-9** "But even if we or an angel from Heaven preach a gospel to you beside what we preached to you, let him be accursed. **9** As we said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches a gospel to you beside what you have received, let him be accursed." By God's will we will continue explaining what our goal is by explaining what it is not and what it is. It is not a program of the month; it is not a quick fix formula or manipulative technique, rather, it's a process of inner growth and development that will require not only a continuing best effort but also our patience, to fully reap the benefits of these truths through the one hundred percent teaching and guidance of God the Holy Spirit. It's going to be a spiritual journey to discover the grace of God from the scriptures.

The Christian life is exchanging our lives for the life of Christ living in and through us. We will continue to explore this exchange life and find clear meaning for an often misunderstood fundamental truth that ensures abundant fulfilled living. Let us stay focus on His view of us and not on the inadequacies of our lives, in order to have full understanding that we are fully loved and accepted in Christ Jesus. Let us all do not refuse God's invitation to exchange our old identity for the joy of being complete in Christ. It is our prayer at "Be Light" that the Holy Spirit uses His word and the Biblical truths to enable all mankind to fully experience Christ's resurrected life, to enjoy and rejoice in the liberty that He has purchased for all by His blood and to grow you in His wonderful grace.

A moment of Reflection

Before we begin this study of the conflict within, I would ask that we pray for GOD to teach us what we don't know, make us what we are not and through the Holy Spirit ground us in the understanding of the truth about the conflict within us.

The Conflict Within

Today there are widespread misconceptions about what it means to grow in grace. Most Christians I believe would expect spiritual growth to include an increasing awareness of one's own "holiness." They would predict that a person who is growing would become less aware of his sinfulness. Those views could not be more wrong. Regardless of the depth of our gratitude to Jesus Christ for all He has done, and in spite of all He has taught us in our spiritual pilgrimage, we still have sin within us influencing us through thoughts, desires, and habits. We never grow to a point where we are incapable of sinning. As we grow in grace we become more aware of the evil within us.

Towards the end of his life the Apostle Paul, in his continued understanding of the grace of God through the finished work of Jesus Christ wrote **1 Timothy 1:15-16** This is a true saying, to be completely accepted and believed: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I am the worst of them, **16** but God was merciful to me in order that Christ Jesus might show his full patience in dealing with me, the worst of sinners, as an example for all those who would later believe in him and receive eternal life." It is shocking to think of the apostle describing himself that way, and some would even call it false humility, but he was dead serious.

When we first come to Christ, most of us need no convincing that we have committed sins. However, we usually have little understanding of what it really means to be a sinner by nature. We have only begun to see our desperate need for a Savior---not only from the just punishment for our sins, but for one who would save us from ourselves and some of the people around us. Over time He allows us to see more and more into our hearts. He progressively opens our eyes to see new areas where we have not yet learned to trust Him. He allows us to discover that our hearts really are wicked and deceitful when left to themselves, and He allows us to discover by experience the truth that apart from Him we really can do nothing. But none of this is meant to drive us to despair, nor meant for the purpose of condemning as long as you are in Christ.

"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." **Romans 8:1** He shows us the truth about ourselves so that we learn to live dependently on Him for life that only He can live.

John 15:15 "I am the vine, you are the branches: he who is in me at all times as I am in him, gives much fruit, because without me you are able to do nothing."

The Lord's motive is to free us from the bondage of error, and to teach us to allow Him to live His life through us. Our failures do not shock Him or surprise Him. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, and loves us still. He takes us wherever we are, and works steadily and unfailingly to complete His work in us. We have to learn to say from the heart, "What a wretched man that I am! Who will

rescue me" before we can ever rejoice with any depth in the answer; **25**"Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" **Romans 7:24-25**

This is why an understanding of the unconditional love and acceptance of God in Jesus Christ is absolutely essential for growing in grace. Apart from the assurance of His grace and acceptance, we could not survive under our self-discovery. It is not always pleasant to learn the truth about ourselves, but the Lord's mercy is always there, giving us hope and reassuring us of His love. We can be thankful we are abiding in a person who is full of grace and truth.

There is a pattern of growth in believers----especially those who come to Christ in their adult years---that is so common as to be monotonous. When we are first born again, there is an incredible sense of peace and well being. We have just gone from darkness to light, and believe me we know the difference. There is a sort of "honeymoon period" where the Christian life seems easy. It is easy: we are Christ-conscious instead of self-conscious, and we discover new thoughts and habits becoming part of our lives without laboring. However, we also discover some other things. We find out that there are still sins we can't seem to shake. Easily, we become involve in the practice of religion. In the absence of reality, and in the fear of being discovered, we become actors, and the downward changing pattern begins. There is a waning of spiritual zeal, the loss of desire to read the Bible, maybe even a desire to drop our Christian fellowship altogether, "It isn't working," we inwardly cry.

What has happened? Usually a number of things; we have forgotten that our first love is a person; we have strayed from Christ. We have not grown in the knowledge of our acceptance and identity in Him. Perhaps we don't know He lives in us, and that the Christian life is lived by dependency upon Him. But along with these we have also picked up an erroneous idea of spiritual growth that fails to take into account the sin which indwells us. That is why the common questions are; "If I am a new creature in Christ, why do I still sin? Why do I still have temptation? Why do I still fall into that I want to be free from?"

The Bible teaches, **"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).** We need to understand not only what that does mean but what it doesn't mean. In Christ the Christian has been raised up with Him to new life, he has been given a new identity, he has received the indwelling Holy Spirit, who renews his mind according to God's truth; his citizenship is now in heaven. And he has become an alien in this world; his spirit now cries; "Abba, Father" as a beloved child of God. However, even though he has become a new man spiritually, he still lives in the old man's body, indwelt with sin. He still has the old man's thinking pattern, the old memories, and the old habits. He still lives in the world that stands opposed to the truth of God. He still tends to believe error until his mind has been renewed by truth from God's Word.

As we look in more detail at what the Bible says about indwelling sin, we encounter the biblical term "flesh." I want to clarify first that this word does not refer strictly to our bodies. God made us with a body. Our bodies are not evil in themselves, nor are they our enemies. It is sin which indwells our humanity that is the enemy. God created man as a spiritual being who lives in a physical body, but as we have seen man chose to live independently of God. Therefore, "flesh" is an appropriate term for the quality of existence of a person who is not allowing God to manifest His life in and through him. As a born again child of God, the spirit of God lives in you. The Bible describes an ongoing conflict between the spirit and the flesh, between God working in my life and my stubborn tendency to believe and practice error.

Here is how the apostle describe the conflict in **Galatians 5:17** "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do" He went on to describe what the sin within us produces:

Galatians 5:19-21 "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are: adultery, fornication, immorality, lewdness, **20** idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, **21** envies, murders, drinking bouts, revelries, and the like; which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Not very pretty, is it? Paul is not saying that every person will do each of these things to their fullest extent, but he is saying that these qualities accurately describe the nature of sin in man. His flesh can never produce the quality of life that Paul describes in the next verses, called "the fruit of the spirit"; Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. **Galatians 5:22-23**. These qualities are a description of God's nature and life, and no man can generate these on his own.

When you see what the Bible says about the nature of the flesh, you begin to realize that there is no sin that you and I are not capable of committing under the right set of circumstances. The truth regarding indwelling sin is rather strong medicine; it is not easy to take. Therefore it is good at this point to remember that truth is not always pleasant to hear, but truth will set you free. One of the primary truths we must come to in our Christian life on our own. is that our flesh does not improve over time; in fact, it gets worse as it receives more programming from the world. How long will this conflict take place within us? As long as we live in these unredeemed bodies, you and I will not be free from the influence of sin in our flesh until the Lord Jesus returns and gives new bodies to go with the new identities we have received---but in the meantime we can grow in grace.

As you and I come face-to face with the reality of indwelling sin, you see the vital importance of the principle I shared with you some time ago. You grow in grace as you focus on what God is doing in the midst of what you are doing... To engage oneself in prolonged self- analysis is not the answer. The more we try to analyze ourselves and discover causes for our sins and failures the more we'll go around and around in circles, only to find ourselves deeper in despair. The answer is not in ourselves the answer is found in looking to our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ

It is no secret, what God can do. What He's done for others, He'll do for you.

Our mission is to help people find strength and security on the foundation that can never be shaken, cracked or shattered. This foundation is the remarkable truth of God's unconditional love and His indisputable grace experienced in a relationship with Jesus Christ. The critics of Christianity have launched a full attack to discredit the person and works of Jesus Christ and the reliability of His word. We cannot be silent anymore. Let us as children of light, stand firm in the faith, because He who has taken us this far will never forsake us. You are called Christians, be careful of that name. Let not our Lord Jesus Christ be blasphemed on your account

Believe this, "Jesus did not come to make bad people good, He came to make dead people live."

Keep It Simple

Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

If you have any questions, comments or you know anybody else who will benefit from this study please feel free to give us their email address and they will be added to our mailing list to receive weekly lessons. The email address is

santigiemandol@yahoo.com,

Remember: A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle (Ephesians 5:8)

Lets go light another candle!

Looking forward to some questions from you.