

2016-01-09

What more do you want? #1, The break up

Hi all,

"There are more fish in the sea you know. At college you'll meet girls from all over, and how do you know one of them isn't who God has for you." That is what my mom said to me, and what led to me breaking up with Barb while we were in high school.

Barb was my first 'real' girlfriend and mom was concerned that I needed to see all the variety of those so called fish in the sea. Barb and I had started dating when she was 15 and I had just turned 16: We were young, skinny, and found in each other someone to talk through life's issues. One out of those 3 is still true.

But I understood what mom said. The next year I was off to Indiana University (IU) while Barb would be a 2 hour drive away back home, a senior in high school. IU had about 35,000 students on campus at the time, meaning at least 17,500 of them would be the female variety of fish in that big sea.

I broke Barb's heart

Urged on by mom, I broke up with her before I had a chance to think it through. When I had time to slow down and think, this was my reasoning:

Barb and I had talked through everything in life in those 2 years we'd dated. Her home life had been horrible, and my dad had left our family, forcing me to grow up fast, so we were two broken people who found the Lord and healing together.

I knew she would be a great mom, that she would always be faithful, that she was as honest as the day is long with a very strong sense of right and wrong - she was and remains intense. I was like the Proverbs 31:10-11 husband who valued her above rubys and whose heart safely trusted in her. I also knew her amazing sense of humor, her tenderness of heart, her love of nature and butterflies, and eye for detail.

I came to the conclusion no matter who I met at college, there would be none better than Barb.

Once you know a person is honest, they can't become more honest. They are wholly honest. Once you know a person loves the Lord 100% as you do, they can't improve on 100%. Once you know she has given her whole heart to you, there is no way to receive more than that 100%.

I realized the rest is just making allowances for personality differences in how those qualities are applied to life, and that simply means growth in character in Christ on each person's part as life happens through the years. As long as each continues to grow and mature as a person in Christ, they can work anything out.

So why would I leave someone I knew so well and who knew me so well, for some 'fish' I hadn't even met? And since she had given 100% of her heart to me and I to her, it meant no matter who I met, they could do no better than give me 100% of their heart.

That day I stopped looking forever, went back to her and she graciously received me, and we've been together uninterrupted since.

Christ in you

Paul teaches the same truth concerning Christ in us and how nothing we could ever do can add to that.

"He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also along with Him freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32

The themes throughout Paul's many letters all revolve around the fact we have Christ in us because the Father gave us His only Son, which is a complete work. He had 1 Son, and He gave Him: He could do no more, He could do no better.

Could He give each believer a galaxy to rule? A galaxy is merely a part of creation, no where near the giving of His Son. Could the Father give each person amazing super abilities to fly or see through walls? What ability or talent could He empower us with that could even come close to Christ in us? Could the Father give us each 100 angels to command? A million angels at our command can't compare to having Christ in us.

Now from another perspective

And similarly, because we do have the Father's only Son in us by the Father's Spirit, is there anything you or I could do to add to that? Could any of us do 1 thing to add to what Jesus did on the cross? We have 100% of His heart in His action on the cross. There is no thing you or I could ever do to add to that love.

How could we through formulas or rituals, add to or improve upon that? So stop looking. Stop trying.

Do we think fasting 40 days will therefore impress Him? Do we think being at church at every service impresses Him? We already have 100% of His heart, we can't make Him love us more!

Like I was with Barb, realizing I could never find anyone better than her, but in her I had all things, so stopped looking, Paul is saying Christ is in you, so what more could you have, what more could you want? What can you add to that? If God the Creator and Source of all good things gave us His Son, who by the Father's Spirit lives in us, is there anything we can contribute to what He has already done?

Who can rest in this knowledge?

This may sound like a silly question, for knowing the above we would think we could all rest in Christ and go about our lives without trying to impress the Father, that we would leave all efforts to come to Him on our own merits or try to manipulate Him to do what we want or need. We would think our lives would be focused on simply walking in communion with Him, making praying without ceasing a reality through conversation carried on all the day long.

But this requires a certain condition of the heart - all others will live by performance based faith.

Have you considered that the 10 Commandments carried no promises of eternal reward or glory? There was no promise of reward, of earthly blessing, of answered prayer if you kept them - they were just commands.

Even in the 613 laws of Moses, which were divided between the moral law, the health/sanitary law, and the laws of worship, the most He said was choose life, choose blessing*, and if you do what I command it could be like heaven on earth*. Nothing was said about earning eternal reward or a future in heaven. They just said 'Do this'. (*Deuteronomy 30:19, 11:21)

Why did He do it that way?

The Father designed it so a person had to walk with Him simply because they love Him, and His mercy, grace, and justice without promise of being upgraded to first class in some heavenly destiny. By saying "I command this" He was giving people the opportunity to search their hearts and motives - He sought people who loved righteousness and Him and observed His commands whole heartedly simply because they love rightness and Him.

People serving Him with ulterior motives like personal gain, promise of reward in heaven, promise of riches on earth, need not apply. He issued commands without talk of heavenly reward that He might have a people who walk with Him purely out of love of Him and His ways.

He hasn't changed

Jesus said the Father seeks those to worship Him in spirit and truth*. The word 'worship' is 'proskuneo' which is from 'pros', towards, and 'kuneo', to kiss. Literally then, the Father is seeking people who in purity of spirit and motive, kiss Him. He just wants us to love Him for love's sake. That is what worship is to be. No 'kiss' to get something from Him. No 'kiss' to impress Him - just worship in love for love's sake. *John 4:23-24

Once a person realizes they have Christ in them, that should end all ulterior motives, all performance and formula and ritual based service to Him. Falling in love with the Father and Lord starts when we are born again and know what we were saved from, and grows over time. The pure in heart even if they get off that love motive for a season, always come back to just walking with the Father because they love Him.

We have 100% of what the Father could give us - His Son through the Father's Holy Spirit, lives in us. If we don't let that sink in we may go off sampling other 'fish' in the sea before we realize we have all we could ever have or want right now, in Him. I've run out of room for today, more next week. Blessings!

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2016-01-16

What more do you want? #2 (Why reindeer fly)

Hi all,

On Christmas night after a full day of everything that is Christmas day, I was rolling Chris to the bathroom and getting him set, and as I headed for the door so he could have some privacy he asked, "Dad: Know why reindeer fly?"

I turned back to look at him through the partially closed door and responded, "No, why?" to which he quickly answered: "Because they can't swim."

I studied his face for a smile and twinkle in his eye, but he was quite serious, not trying to make a joke but rather answer that age old question - Why do (Santa's) reindeer fly? I told him, "That's good thinking Chris! They have to go all those places and some of it is over water, so it makes sense they can't swim, so they fly. Good thinking son!"

Outside the box of religious culture

While the rest of us think Santa's reindeer fly for speed, Chris was thinking outside the box to the core issue and decided it is because they can't swim.

(For all concerned: Yes, though a mental 4 year old (but just turned 36 on 12/23) Chris knows Santa isn't real and knows we give gifts to one another because the Father gave us His greatest gift, and he loves Jesus and knows Him well. But he also knows the culture of commercial Christmas like the rest of us.)

Last week I shared how we have Christ in us which means we have the maximum we could have from the Father - "He spared not His only Son, but gave Him for us all, how shall He not along with His Son also give us freely all things?" (Romans 8:32)

Thinking outside the 4 walls of the church box: Christ in us versus religion

Having Christ in us means we have a personal responsibility and accountability to Him within, and because other disciples have Christ in them as well, we are accountable to those brothers and sisters with whom we fellowship. They too are living, breathing temples of God

Additionally, the result of each believer having Christ inside assumes one is moving into maturity in Christ, and that means trusting Christ in one another.

Trusting Christ in others means as we are in relationships with other believers we get to know what is going on in each other's lives. There are many times when I hear something going on in someone's life and think "I'd do that differently", but I trust Christ in them and know that He will walk them through it. What they do is unto the Lord, not unto me, so my responsibility is to love and pray not try to butt in where I'm not wanted.

If someone takes issue with something us we try to make peace as much as we can, but in the end if they continue to take issue, we step back and realize their issue is with Christ in them, no longer us, and trust Christ to deal with them. Though we are concerned for one another and pray for one another, there is no sense of worry or fear or carrying someone else's burden to the point of laying awake at night worried for them, because Christ is in them and He is fully capable of sustaining them. We pray, and rest in Him.

Paul taught this in I Corinthians 8 and 10:24-33 and Romans 14 when he talks of each person having to choose as unto the Lord whether they eat meat in a restaurant that had earlier been sacrificed to idols, or eat only vegetables, or choose one day over another to worship on, or drink wine or not. He said what each does is unto the Lord, and he says, "God receives him."

I always keep that in the back of my mind when dealing with another person no matter how direct I must be; they are the highest form of human a person can be, Christ is in them. They are my brother or sister no matter how obnoxious. That helps me walk in love and honor them properly, and keep my attitude straight, knowing they give account now and later as will I, to Jesus one day.

Religion says

But religion doesn't trust Christ in a person because the design of the system is for a person to know the structure rather than the Person of Christ. As a result people know a church experience (We sure had church today! is often the remark) without knowing or experiencing Him in that church experience.

Accountability is therefore not to one another as Jesus taught, but is to attendance, giving, and volunteering. The auditorium must control from the outside, external means ranging from the pastor manipulating the congregation by guilt and condemnation from the pulpit to a creating a church culture of fear of doing something wrong lest the devil get you. It's all a form of external manipulation designed by the system centuries ago to keep the 'sheep' in line that many pastors today gladly go along with because they know nothing else.

What form of 'church' builds you up?

The auditorium church affirms a person from the outside, while relationship based faith affirms a person from within. Therefore relationship based, Christ in each person faith doesn't appeal to the flesh, doesn't stir a person up emotionally. Meetings in homes are to the flesh rather boring, for people there are used to being serious about growing in Christ and dealing with the heart, knowledge in Christ, and getting to know one another, often over a meal.

Healthy family based church that meets in homes requires the investment of all in a commitment of time and risk of getting to know one another and being known by others. Not everyone wants to make that investment, but are rather content to sit back and be entertained in the auditorium where nothing is required of them.

But having nothing required of us is not Biblical Christianity and leaves one feeling full yet dissatisfied, knowing there is more but not knowing what or where to find it. Is it possible those boring old home meetings might actually be the key to person growth and attaining those friends in the faith we've so desperately looked for but not found in the auditorium?

To those outwardly focused on being entertained as in the auditorium, house church meetings can be boring, but to those who make the investment to return each time and get to know one another, it is rich and strengthening as a network of close friends in the faith is developed, a 'safety net' of those you know you can trust to be there and pray for you should you need anything.

Consider that if Christ is in every believer, and that believer is also a disciple - a learner - of Christ, then we must put a certain amount of faith in Christ in them as they walk out their own salvation.

In New Testament reality of Christ in each person, accountability is to one another for Christ is also in those with whom we fellowship. It is as easy (and difficult) as Jesus said - if your brother has something against you, go to him and be reconciled. And, we forgive those who trespass against us, for as we stand praying, we forgive.

We aren't accountable to a system, but a Person, Christ Jesus who lives within, and to one another. Thus we love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves.

Christ in us

"From henceforth I know no man according to the flesh (according to earthly standards)...for if any man is in Christ he is a new creation..." II Corinthians 5:16-17

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor freeman, male nor female: For you are all one in Christ Jesus."

"For in Christ Jesus being circumcised or not being circumcised means nothing, but only a new creature, and **as many as live by this rule, peace is upon them...**" Galatians 3:28, 6:15-16

"...Christ in you, which we preach..." Colossians 1:27-28

If you read through the New Testament you'll find everything, no matter the writer, is based on the amazing fact that Christ lives in us and that fact rearranged their thoughts. Can we start thinking like they thought?

What you're going to see in the coming months is the body of Christ coming more and more out of the externally focused auditorium and into the living rooms, but to do the body must become focused on Christ in us, the hope of glory. More next week...until then, blessings,

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2016-01-23

What more do you want? #3, New Year Res?

Hi all,

I was reading someone's post on Facebook about how she doesn't celebrate Christmas because of its pagan roots, listing many historical facts about the Roman celebration of Saturnalia and how the Roman church 'Christianized' the pagan celebration as her justification for not celebrating Christ's birth. I thought, 'Okay, that's her choice, and what she does is unto the Lord and He receives her, so I will too.'

But shortly after she posted her New Year's resolutions to lose weight, renew her relationship with her adult son once estranged, and various resolutions to spend more time with the Lord and in prayer, and so on.

I so wanted to write a reply telling her the history of New Year's resolutions; How the ancient Babylonians started the practice with each new year by making sacrifices to, and promising the gods they would repay debts from the previous year and return anything borrowed, believing they would gain the favor of the gods for the coming year.

The Romans also made New Year's resolutions by making sacrifices and promises to Janus, the 2 faced god with one face looking to the past and one to the future, promising to be a better person in the coming year. Early Christians 'Christianized' the Roman practice, using the New Year to reflect on past mistakes and promising the Lord to do better in the coming year.

It struck me how selective a religious person is in what they believe:, Picking and choosing what they want to obey and ignoring what they want to ignore. I didn't say anything to her because I've found most selectively religious people have the mind-set of "Don't confuse me with facts, my mind is already made up."

I've been talking about Christ in us, asking what more do we want and what more could God do?

We either go fully into the grace of Christ in us the hope of glory, or we settle into a double-minded spiritual life focused on external efforts to please God while mentally assenting to the fact Christ is in us, without knowing or walking in the reality of that fact.

External rules - Paul compares keeping the Jewish law versus the grace of Christ in us:

"Now we know the law is good, if a man use it lawfully, knowing this, the law was not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient..." I Timothy 1:8-9

"Do not be carried about by all kinds of strange teachings, for it is a good thing the heart is established with grace." Hebrews 13:9

The law is external, and it can be used for good as Paul said. It is made for the unrighteous, not you and I who are in Christ. It is good to be used for discerning right and wrong, to show a person what sin is and that they have sinned, but it wasn't made for you and I.

The heart is established with grace, not by external observations because simply, Christ, the embodiment of grace itself, is in us. Therefore our hearts are established with grace, not external things.

"For the grace of God that offers salvation to all people has been revealed to all, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we look for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Titus 2:11-14

Grace teaches us how to live godly lives, it isn't a license to live ungodly lives

The law doesn't teach, it commands. Grace teaches and empowers us to live for God. Think that through - why does grace teach us to deny sin and how to walk in righteousness? Because the Person of Grace, Christ, lives in us, walking with us through each point of decision, teaching us along the way and pointing out opportunities to do right. Grace is empowerment to live holy lives.

"Let no one judge you on food or drink, or in respect of a holy day or of Sabbath days, for those are shadows of something to come. But the body is of Christ." Colossians 2:16-17

Other versions clarify 'the body is of Christ' by translating it "the reality however, is found in Christ" and "...they have only symbolic value; but the substance (the reality of what is foreshadowed) belongs to Christ." (NIV, Amplified)

Why did God give the Old Testament law?

"Now we know that whatever the law of Moses says, it speaks to those under the law, so that the excuses of every mouth may be silenced from protesting and that all the world may be held accountable to God and subject to His judgement." Romans 3:19

The law came that the world could know sin and know they are sinners and accountable to God - up until Moses God had never defined what was sin and what wasn't sin. As mentioned earlier, it wasn't made for the righteous, but for sinners, and can be used to define sin. Paul says it yet again:

"Why then the law? What was its purpose? It was added after Abraham, to reveal to people their guilt because of transgressions (that is, to make people conscious of the sinfulness of sin)...Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a system of law (could) have been given which could impart life, then righteousness (right standing with God) would actually have been based on law." Galatians 3:19-22

In other words - The law came to show people what sin was, and that they are sinful, and if God could have given 1 law to obey that would have given Life, He would have - but external rules and regulations can't change the human spirit, that's why Jesus was needed, to legally make a way for our human spirits to be recreated by God that we may live forever with Him. Let me make this statement and think about it:

If all that happened at the cross was your sins were forgiven, you would still go to hell.

Why? Because the only spirits in heaven are those created by God's Spirit who are in right standing with Him - whether angelic or human. Therefore your 'ticket' to heaven is the born again human spirit. Our born again spirit is what enables us to go to heaven and live and thrive in the direct presence of the Father God.

Fortunately, the provision by the cross for forgiveness and being born again in our spirit is one.

Can we add to Christ in us?

"For in Christ Jesus neither is circumcision (anything of importance) nor uncircumcision, but only a new creation (which is the result of a new birth) - a spiritual transformation - a new nature in Christ Jesus. Peace and mercy be upon all those who walk by this rule (who discipline and conduct themselves according to this rule)..." Galatians 6:15-16 Amplified

Obscures our view from the important

Paul said 'peace and mercy' is upon those who discipline their lives and conduct themselves by that rule - what matters is a person being born again. Don't we want peace? Don't we want mercy? Then drop the focus on rules and regulations and what you think they should or shouldn't do to please God, and find joy in a person (in spite of themselves sometimes) in that they are born again and will in fact make it to heaven. We need to stop trying to be each other's Holy Spirit and know that if God accepts them, then in the end we must too. You can pick and choose your friends, but you have to love your family. Arghh...lol

Several people observed a man who was driving his car and following his dashboard GPS so closely he drove right across train tracks in spite of flashing lights and in between the down and locked gates, and didn't see the train that hit him. Today's detailed electronics that pinpoint every point of interest, every restaurant, every landmark, is very often unnecessary detail that obscures our main objective. That's what religion does.

A person can be so eager to please God they become focused on 'do this' or 'don't do that', forgetting that Christ lives in them and He is our main objective. He would love just to spend time with us in the midst of normal life, where we are, just as we are, for Christ in us IS the point.

I've run out of room, next week 'Christian witchcraft' versus Christ in us. Until then, blessings,
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2016-01-30

What more do you want? #4 (witchcraft)

Hi all,

We used to have a pet dog, a Golden Retriever named Abe. Our boys were young so it was a good time to shop for a family pet, and a co-worker had some 6 week old puppies for sale. When we visited them a storm was approaching with darkening clouds and ever louder thunder, and while all the puppies were running around and playing as they do, after a thunder clap one ran into the garage to take cover.

"What a smart dog" Barb said, "He knows the storm is coming so ran inside. We'll take that one." Little did we know at the time that wasn't smarts he was displaying, but fear. Abe was afraid of the storm and dumb as a box

of rocks. He had a good heart, but mentally speaking, the lights were flashing and the crossing gates were down, but there was no train coming down his tracks. He would grow up to become a Retriever that wouldn't retrieve and the largest lap dog you've ever seen.

He would sit at my feet and give me a sideways glance, looking away when I looked him directly in the eye. But when I turned away he would put 1 paw on my lap. I'd look at him and he would look away. Then when I was distracted the 2nd paw would come up on my lap. I'd look at him and he would look away. Then he would shuffle around to place the top half of his body on my lap in a half sitting position ready to jump, tail wagging in excited anticipation.

If I allowed him, I found myself with a 100 pound (45 kilo) Golden Retriever on my lap, totally at peace sitting there like an oversize golden canary on a narrow perch.

We have a saying in the US; "Give him an inch and he'll take a mile." For the rest of the world it might be 'Give him a centimeter and he'll take a kilometer.' That was Abe. If I allowed just 1 paw on my lap, he took that as approval to keep going.

And that is how religion is - if you have an empty space in your life, religion will move in to try to control it and take over. Like Abe, it waits until it thinks you aren't watching or are vulnerable, then a new rule is added or the rules change completely with a new set of standards to obey.

Edmund Burke, Irish statesman from the 1700's said: "*The people never give up their liberties but under some delusion.*" We have Christ in us, and nothing is better than God in us - Satan can't touch that! All he can do is cause us to be distracted and forgetful of what we have in Christ so that we remove ourselves from the knowledge of Christ in us, in exchange for submitting ourselves to a form of godliness; accomplished by delusion, manipulation, and fear through high sounding but wrong teaching.

Witchcraft in the church

"Oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you are not obeying the truth...did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or the hearing of faith? Having begun in the Spirit are you now made perfect (sanctified) by the flesh?"

So begins chapter 3 of Galatians, as Paul lays out the difference between having Christ in you versus obeying the Old Testament law. But the principle is the same whether we are talking the Old Testament law or a modern church that controls by fear and intimidation, tradition and man-made rules. The Galatians began in the freedom of Christ in them, but someone told them along the way they could be matured by and please God more by obeying the Jewish law.

I love the emphasis Paul places on where our priorities should be: Did you receive the Spirit by grace or by the law? Having the Holy Spirit IS the focus, the most valuable for Christ is in us, and the one thing we should always be aware of: Did you receive Him by doing external works, or grace?

What Paul said

The Greek word for 'bewitched' is 'baskaino' and means "To bring evil on a person by feigned (fake) praise or mislead and so charm" a person (Vine). It is used of leading someone into wrong teaching, and is seen when a person selectively believes some verses but not others, for instance.

The root of 'baskaino' is where we get the English root for 'fascinate'. "Fascinate" was first used to describe the process of bewitching a person, manipulating them for self centered gain, and the word 'enchant' is a synonym because of that. Paul is asking who enchanted them to leave the freedom of Christ for bondage? Like any deception, there is enough truth coupled with the lie that good hearted people who want to please God, don't realize until too late that in believing the kernel of truth, they also believed a huge lie.

The word 'perfect' is the word 'epiteleo' which means to bring something through to the end, so Paul was asking "Having begun in the Spirit 'are you now perfecting yourselves' by the flesh (law/legalism)?"

The essence of 'Christian' witchcraft

The future King Saul was the son of a wealthy man of the tribe of Benjamin.* When Samuel was led to anoint him King, we are told he was head and shoulders taller than all the people of Israel, and there was no one better looking than he. *1 Samuel 9:1-3

But he had a major character flaw, and that was the fear of man sustained by a horrible self image. Samuel would later say of him, "When you were little in your own sight God made you king..."* Because of no confidence in himself, he was a man pleaser with no 'backbone' to withstand the opinions of others, so was always being moved by fear of man to do unwise things.

Though the Spirit of God came on him* at times to prophesy or lead battles, he never allowed the Holy Spirit to change his basic character and self image, like so many Christians today. They have great experiences with and are touched by God, but never allow Him to actually change them (because that takes the work of rejecting old thoughts and feelings in favor of the new and unfamiliar God's ways and thoughts). I Samuel 9:21; 10:6-10,16-27; 11:6-15; 15:17

The last incident was when he was told to destroy all the Amalekites including their animals, but King Saul kept alive King Agag* (and relatives as we'd later find out**) and the best of the animals. When confronted he told Samuel the best of the animals had been saved to sacrifice to the Lord by the people, not him. *I Samuel 15:32; **Esther 3:1

Saul selectively obeyed the Lord and lied to cover it up, choosing to obey part of His command and not obey the rest. Then he blamed the people for that part while saying "I have obeyed the command of the Lord!"

This manipulation founded upon selective obedience to the Lord while hiding the truth is the core of witchcraft, and the principle Paul was talking about to the Galatians.

Samuel replied to King Saul:

"To obey is better than sacrifice, for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry..." I Samuel 15:22-23

The word 'rebellion' in Hebrew is 'meri', from 'marah', or bitterness, used in Exodus 15:23 of the bitter and poisonous waters Israel found after leaving Egypt. When Saul's heart became bitter, poisoned, thus rebellious towards obeying the Lord with a whole heart, he 'dug in his heels' wanting to do things his way.

This was because as I said above, he never let the Lord actually change him though the Holy Spirit came upon him often. 'Stubbornness' in Hebrew means 'hard, dry, dense, severe' and is as idolatry because it is the purposeful exalting of self and one's will over God and His will.

THAT is why rebellion is as witchcraft, and why Paul asked who had bewitched them.

Who had twisted God's Word to bring them under the law and/or select what parts to obey while outwardly stating they are obeying all of God's Word?. Who had hardened their hearts against the Spirit and Christ in them in order to turn them to legalism? Why had they exalted their will against the revealed truth of Christ in them?

Sanctification?

Paul asked "Having begun by the Spirit, are you now made complete by the (law) flesh?" The answer is 'no', having begun in the Spirit we are therefore logically, also made complete by the Spirit. And that's where we'll start next week. Christ is in you, don't let the 100 pound dog of religion gradually take over your lap.

Blessings,
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2016-02-06

What more do you want? #5 (scared of cops?)

Hi all,
When Barb and I were in high school she was a 'flag girl' with the marching band, one of several assigned a flag on a long pole that would perform synchronized maneuvers during breaks in athletic events.

One night after a football game we were driving to her house so she could change clothes and then we'd get some pizza: I remember it like it was yesterday - the uniform was like a cheerleader's, bright red and blue of the school colors, with the flag pole was sticking out the back window as we drove along, the warm night...

Suddenly, a police officer going the other direction passed us, then did a U-turn as he turned on his lights and siren, and pulled us over. I knew I wasn't speeding and assured Barb it would be okay.

He was very business-like and his flashlight ('torch' for UK influenced friends) shone directly on our faces, then around the car, then back to us...finally he said a white 2 door car like mine had been involved in a gas station robbery a few minutes earlier, with a man and woman, and we fit the description. I calmly replied we'd come from the football game, my girlfriend was a flag girl as he could see, and we were headed to her house from the game, not from a robbery. Wonder of wonders he believed the obvious, and we went our way.

At first my heart had been beating pretty fast, but at the same time I was secure in the fact we had done nothing wrong - not speeding, not driving reckless, and we certainly hadn't robbed a gas station. If my conscience hadn't been clear, I would have been afraid of the law, but instead I was at peace because inside I knew we were righteous in the eyes of the law, secure you might say, in that grace.

Sanctification

Paul asked the Galatians if having begun in the Spirit, were they now being matured by the law? The answer is no, of course. Paul was urging them to be secure in Christ and the truth of the new creation of the human spirit in Him, rather than be afraid they were missing God because people were telling them they had to obey x and y rules.

Paul said if you love God and love your neighbor as yourself*, you are fulfilling the law - so rest in that grace of Christ in you. It's that simple. Don't complicate your faith - He also said it is the devil's tactic to complicate our faith** by seducing us into a more complicated faith. *Romans 13:8-10, **II Corinthians 11:3-4

The basic logic of sanctification goes like this: We are born again, but we have to allow the life in our spirit to flow out of our spirit to renew our mind (thoughts/emotions) and then to our body, which becomes a living sacrifice to walk in God's ways. No problem so far. Living from spirit to soul to body.

Paul's issue with the Galatians was that people were manipulating (witchcraft) believers by telling them what they could and could not do to please God, rather than directing them to obeying Christ from the inside out.

For example

Back in 1986 I was an Associate pastor in Boulder, Colorado helping a young woman trying to save her marriage. Her husband had become involved through a co-worker, with a local church that was part of the Church of Christ denomination. They believed unless you were baptized in water in their church you could not be saved.

The husband of this young woman wanted to serve God, and even though he was born again and was baptized with the Holy Spirit, he became concerned for his salvation due to his co-worker's constant arguing their doctrine all work week long. Badgered into submission coupled with his fear of missing God, he gave in.

But simply being born again their way wasn't enough. Now he had to become 'sanctified'. The elders of that church went through his wife's closet, throwing out any clothing they said was too suggestive, flattering, or sexy. The husband was told to burn the clothes rather than donate or sell them, lest he cause other women to sin as (they said) his wife was doing.

Next, they demanded they get rid of the TV because it could open him up to sin. Then it was the removal of all newspapers, magazines, and books from the home except the Bible and their church magazine and teachings. When the elders found out he and his wife went to the community swimming pool they outlawed that, saying other women in swim suits might cause him to lust after them.

All that was done in the name of 'sanctification'. Now that he was born again according to their standards, he must be sanctified, and you can clearly see from last week's teaching how this is a perfect example of witchcraft - the manipulation of God's Word and people for the purpose of external control. They ended up divorcing because he said, his wife was now unsaved and refusing to submit to him. He began in the Spirit, but believed the lie he would be made mature and complete by 'the law' - the flesh's efforts to please God.

But wait, there's more

A few years later in another church, a lady expressed concerned for her unsaved husband. She ran off a list of things she was doing in the church: She volunteered with the children's church and with the Christian school, she was active in the women's ministry, never missed a church service, was in charge of the church nursery, tithed off her household allowance...and she wanted to know why God hadn't answered her prayer for her

husband's salvation. Should she fast 1 day a week? What could she do to be more holy that God might be inclined to answer her prayer? She was trying to be 'sanctified' so her prayers would be answered.

My advice was grace - I told her to stay completely away from church for 1 month and take the time she would normally be involved in a church activity to be with her husband and their children - the husband can't compete with God, so bring God in her to him and show him the love and attention he and their children deserve, for the Lord is in that first and foremost. On a Sunday morning 3 weeks later, the whole family walked through the door, the husband having decided to believe on the Lord and serve Him when he saw the change in his wife - and they were active during the rest of our time at that church.

Are you living from the inside out, or from the outside in?

Having begun in the Spirit, we must be matured in the Spirit. We don't begin by the Spirit but then matured by legalism and its external rules and regulations. (Galatians 3:1-3)

Legalism/law is simply this - trying to gain acceptance or forgiveness from God through your own efforts. Sanctification is this - a lifestyle of living from the inside out in a series of small decisions for righteousness, from a position of grace and peace, with the certainty that Christ is in us guiding every step and decision submitted to Him.

We live in, and then out to our lives from a secure position in Christ, loving Him from the inside out, maturing because we want to, because we love Him, not because we fear if we do something wrong we've opened the door to some disease, disaster, or tragedy.

Fear

SO many people are involved in various religious activities just because they are afraid of 'missing God' or 'opening themselves up' to disaster, disease or tragedy. They don't know or ignore Romans 5:1-5 that says we are at peace with God and He with us, and we live in grace. Fear is often the root of religious efforts.

And many just want to learn more to draw them closer to God, whether that knowledge is Jewish roots, or attending conferences and meetings of various subjects to learn they hope, the single key that will open heaven for them so they can have an answered prayer. Christ is in us - get with Him in there.

My experience has been that nearly all miracles I've seen in my life have flowed from my intimacy with Him, and never from doing this or that ABOUT or FOR Him, but rather spending time WITH Him. Be aware that Christ is in you. You have the mind of God in you. Live by the rule Paul told the Galatians - the new creation is what matters, and if you do this, peace and mercy will be upon you.

We have Christ in us - what more could we want? New subject next week. Until then, blessings,
John Fenn

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