

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2024

The Bible is unlike any other book because the very words were breathed (inspired) by God. *God has breathed life into all of Scripture. It is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right. By using Scripture, the servant of God can be completely prepared to do every good thing.*^{2Tim.3:16} The words in the Bible still contain God's breath (His life) and they are our spiritual food: *Life is spiritual. Your physical existence doesn't contribute to that life. The words that I have spoken to you are spiritual. They are life.*^{Jn.6:63} Jesus answered, *'It is written: Man doesn't live only on bread. He also lives on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*^{Matt.4:4} And so it is important for us to study the Bible. *Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*^{2Tim.2:14-15} However, we should be careful to only take out of the Bible what is there and not add anything to the Bible: *Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.*^{Deut.4:2} *I am warning everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If you add anything to them, God will add to you the plagues told about in this book. If you take any words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from you your share in the tree of life. He will also take away your place in the Holy City. This book tells about these things.*^{Rev.22:18-19}

Exegesis and Eisegesis. Exegesis is the process of getting "out" ('ex') of the text what is truly there in the first place. The opposite of **exegesis** is **eisegesis** which is the process of putting "into" ('eis') the text something that wasn't intended by the author and is almost a "blank cheque" for you to make the Bible say whatever you want! To do **exegesis**, the correct principles of Bible interpretation (hermeneutics) need to be understood:

The first principle is context: Always read the entire passage/chapter/book before preaching from a single verse.

The second principle is consistency: Never interpret a text so that your interpretation contradicts the overall message of Scripture.

Don't be afraid of using other reference studies besides the Bible—even Paul did that: *When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.*^{2Tim.4:13} But be careful not to get side-tracked from the main purpose of the Bible—which is to explain God's plan of salvation to mankind through Jesus Christ, His Son and our Saviour!

Father, may we clearly know Your will and achieve the height and depth of spiritual wisdom and understanding. May our lives be a credit to You, Lord; and what's more, may we continue to delight You by doing every good work and growing in the true knowledge that comes from being close to You. Strengthen us with Your infinite power, according to Your glorious might, so that we will have everything we need to hold on and endure hardship patiently and joyfully. Thank You, Father, as You have made us eligible to receive our portion of the inheritance given to all those set apart by the light. You have rescued us from dark powers and brought us safely into the kingdom of Your Son, whom You love and in whom we are redeemed and forgiven of our sins through His blood. [Colossians 1:9-14 The Voice]

God is Spirit and He reveals Himself to spirit and He can reveal Himself to our spirit through the Word. For instance, we hear someone read the Word of God. The thing that is read is weighed and measured by our intellect but in some way which is inexplicable to reason, it affects our spirit. It answers a need. Listening to the Word God changes our spirit. E.W.Kenyon

Style Definition: Heading 1: Don't keep with next, Don't keep lines together

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20/03/2024

Psalm 103

Video Kathryn Kuhlman interviewing Corrie Ten Boom 17.21

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.^{Matt. 5:5}

Questions

How is God's Kingdom different from the kingdoms of this world?

What does it mean to be meek?

How is Christianity different from other religions (including Judaism)?

Are the promises of the Old Testament still relevant in the New Covenant?

What are the blessings of God's Kingdom?

How can we qualify for the blessings of God's Kingdom?

Comments

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What are the blessings of God's Kingdom?

How can we qualify for the blessings of God's Kingdom?

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13/03/2024

Psalm 102:16-28

Video Kathryn Kuhlman interviewing Corrie Ten Boom 6.42

Questions

Is it unspiritual to be sad?

How does God comfort us?

Is God's comfort automatic or do we have to do anything to receive it?

How can we understand the Bible better?

Will we always have a good harvest when we sow generously?

What is your favourite Scripture?

Comments

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted

Is it unspiritual to be sad?

No! Jesus was anointed with joy but also had sad times

But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." Heb.1:8-9

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept. Jn.11:33-35

Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Jn.12:27-28

He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Matt.26:37-39

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. Lk.19:41-42

How does God comfort us?

God comforts us a mother comforts her children

For this is what the LORD says: "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem." Is.56:12-13

God comforts us a father comforts his children

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. Ps.103:13-14

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. 2Cor.1:3-7

God comforts us by showing us His love and compassion

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility

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value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Phil.2:1-5

But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Turn to me and have mercy on me; show your strength in behalf of your servant; save me, because I serve you just as my mother did. Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me. Ps.86:15-14

Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains! For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me. Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me. Is.49:13-16

God comforts us through fellowship

For when we came into Macedonia, we had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever. Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. 2Cor.7:5-11

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Ps.23:4

God comforts us through His promises

My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life. The arrogant mock me unmercifully, but I do not turn from your law. I remember, LORD, your ancient laws, and I find comfort in them. Ps.119:50-52

I have seen their ways, but I will heal them; I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel's mourners, creating praise on their lips. Peace, peace, to those far and near," says the LORD. "And I will heal them." But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked." Is.57:18-21

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour. Is.61:1-3

Is God's comfort automatic or do we have to do anything to receive it?

God's gift of comfort is free but we have to receive it. We have to apply the Scriptures and add our faith to them (i.e., believe the Scriptures and act on them)

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed [because those who heard did not combine it with faith]. Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, Heb.4:1-3

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world." Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, "I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding." And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not

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seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.” But concerning Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”Rom.10:16-21

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.1Thess.2:13

How can we understand the Bible better?

The Holy Spirit authored the Bible and He gives revelation (understanding). Academic study is important but there is also a spiritual dimension to Scripture

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.^{2Tim.3:14-17}

Pay attention to the Holy Spirit

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.”Jn.16:12-15

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.1Cor.2:10-16

Pay attention to the Scriptures

We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.2Pet.1:19-21

Will we always have a good harvest when we sow generously?

We should sow generously and abundantly

Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.^{Ecd.11:6}

Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you. But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your own strength and on your many warriors,Hos.10:12-13

Christian giving is giving to God—even though we give to people and organisations.

We will always have a good spiritual harvest when we sow to God but there is no guarantee we will see any direct results from what we do or give.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.Gal.5:7-10

And so it is to God that we look for a return or a harvest—not the person or organisation we physically gave to.

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And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Heb. 11:6

Here is something to remember. The one who plants only a little will gather only a little. And the one who plants a lot will gather a lot. You should each give what you have decided in your heart to give. You shouldn't give if you don't want to. You shouldn't give because you are forced to. God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to shower all kinds of blessings on you. In all things and at all times you will have everything you need. You will do more and more good works. It is written, "They have spread their gifts around to poor people. Their good works continue forever." God supplies seed to the planter. He supplies bread for food. God will also supply and increase the amount of your seed. He will increase the results of your good works. You will be made rich in every way. Then you can always give freely. We will take your many gifts to the people who need them. And they will give thanks to God. Your gifts meet the needs of God's people. And that's not all. Your gifts also cause many people to thank God. You have shown yourselves to be worthy by what you have given. So people will praise God because you obey him. That proves that you really believe the good news about Christ. They will also praise God because you share freely with them and with everyone else. Their hearts will be filled with longing for you when they pray for you. God has given you grace that is better than anything. Let us give thanks to God for his gift. It is so great that no one can tell how wonderful it really is! 2Cor. 9:6-15

And God rarely gives back to us the same sort of gift that we gave out! (i.e. we should never look for a financial return on our money but see it as sowing a spiritual gift that will bear spiritual fruit)

"The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves [use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends], so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?" Lk. 16:8-12

Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." Matt. 18:21

And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Lk. 12:29-34

When Tithing Comes With a Money-Back Guarantee

Kate Shellnutt June 28, 2016 www.christianitytoday.com

How did churches like NewSpring and LifeChurch get thousands of Christians to start giving? By offering a refund if God isn't faithful.

This month, hundreds of Christians at a South Carolina megachurch can request a refund on all the money they've given since March.

NewSpring Church, led by pastor Perry Noble, is one of hundreds of congregations across the country that have offered 90-day tithing challenges.

Participants sign up with a commitment to give 10 percent of their income or more, and if "God doesn't hold true to his promises of blessings" after three months, they can request their money back—no questions asked. It's the church's version of "satisfaction guaranteed."

The challenge pulls inspiration from the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, which states:

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it (Mal. 3:10).

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“God literally says, ‘*Test me out, see if I’m God,*’” Noble preached. “You and I cannot out-give him.” About 440 Christians joined NewSpring’s most recent challenge. Of the more than 7,000 participants over the past four years, fewer than 20—that’s a fraction of 1 percent—have asked for their money back.

The Bible says that when we do this God will bless us, not just materially, but God blesses us in more ways than we can imagine,” said Life.Church lead pastor Craig Groeschel. “We will lead the way with irrational generosity because we truly believe it’s more blessed to give than to receive.”

NewSpring Church To Offer 90-Day Refund On Salvation

<http://babylonbee.com/news/newspring-church-offer-90-day-refund-salvation/>

ANDERSON, SC—Continuing its recent theme of provocative statements, NewSpring Church announced Tuesday that they will refund the salvation of anyone not completely satisfied after 90 days of confessing themselves a Christian and getting saved.

“What we’re saying is, within 90 days of saying the Sinner’s Prayer and accepting Jesus into your heart, if you haven’t seen a radical change, we’ll let you go. We won’t pester you about joining any groups, we won’t try to get you to tithe—none of it,” a NewSpring spokesperson confirmed to reporters. “We’re just willing to stake that the Bible is true—even to the point of refunding your salvation. That’s how confident we are.”

The church’s website has a page dedicated to what they’re calling the “90-Day Salvation Challenge,” replete with claims that work, finances, health, and relationships will all markedly improve after becoming a Christian. If any individual isn’t completely satisfied, the website states NewSpring will “Unsave you—no questions asked. We’ll even help remove the little fish symbol from the back of your car.”

Although NewSpring isn’t able to refund anyone’s time, their website does say that those who are unsatisfied with their salvation will get a set of high-quality kitchen knives just for trying it out.

Compare that with Bible teaching!

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ^{1Tim.6:6-10}

Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies will have their fill of poverty. A faithful person will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished. To show partiality is not good—yet a person will do wrong for a piece of bread. The stingy are eager to get rich and are unaware that poverty awaits them. ^{Pron.28:19-22}

What is your favourite Scripture?

I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him. Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, Ps.40:1-4

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Psalm 102:1-17

Video Kathryn Kuhlman interviewing Corrie Ten Boom

Questions

What does “*blessed*” mean?

What does “*poor in spirit*” mean?

How is God’s spiritual Kingdom different from the natural kingdoms of this world?

Give some examples where God’s Kingdom is different from this world’s kingdoms

Can we be theologically right but spiritually wrong?

What can we do to keep our heart in tune (in unison) with God’s heart?

Comments

What does “*blessed*” mean?

To be blessed is to possess God’s favour—to have God smile on us and receive His grace and peace:

The LORD spoke to Moses. He said: Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘Here is how I want you to bless the people of Israel. Say to them, “May the LORD bless you and take good care of you. May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. May the LORD look on you with favour and give you his peace.” In that way they will put the blessing of my name on the people of Israel. And I will bless them.’^{Nu.6:22-27}

Being happy comes from favourable external circumstances whereas being blessed comes from favourable internal circumstances

we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.^{Rom.5:1}

Christ is in us, the hope of glory.^{Col.1:}

What does “*poor in spirit*” mean?

It does not mean “*poor-spirited*” or “*mean spirited*” because God’s blessings make us rich not poor!

He will make you rich in every way.^{2Cor.9:11}

The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it.^{Prm.10:22}

Those who are mean-spirited or stingy we will become poor (actually, they already are poor!).

One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.^{Prm.11:24-25}

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.^{2Cor.9:6-8}

God’s Kingdom is about abundance—spiritual abundance, an abundance of grace and peace:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.^{2Pet.1:2}

How precious is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.^{Ps.36:7-9}

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.^{2Pet.1:3-4}

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.^{Rom.14:17}

The “*poor in spirit*” are those who are humble in spirit, who know that they have nothing good of themselves and must rely on God alone!

Before salvation we had no inherent or intrinsic goodness:

There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.^{Rom.3:10-12}

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This doesn't mean there aren't nice people—there are lots of lovely people who spend their lives being good to others. No! What this means is that there is no-one who by nature, is right with God—no-one who is good enough to enter God's holy presence. But at conversion we were given a new spirit—just like Ezekiel prophesied:

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.^{Ezek. 11:19-20}

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.^{Ezek. 36:26-27}

We are given Jesus' righteousness:

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.^{Phil. 3:8-9}

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.^{2Cor. 5:21}

But after salvation, we still need to rely on God for our rightness and our holiness.

We shouldn't put the Lord to the test as some of them did. They were killed by snakes. Don't complain as some of them did. The angel of death destroyed them. These things happened to make them an example for others. These things were written down as a warning for us who are living in the closing days of history. So, people who think they are standing firmly should be careful that they don't fall.^{1Cor. 10:9-12}

How is God's spiritual Kingdom different from the natural kingdoms of this world?

God's Kingdom is spiritual and has spiritual values

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."^{Jn. 18:36}

Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst." Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. People will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation."^{Lk. 17:20-25}

Give some examples where God's Kingdom is different from this world's kingdoms

Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."^{Lk. 22:25-30}

Can we be theologically right but spiritually wrong?

Yes! Christianity is a heart religion and God looks on the heart

The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.^{1Sam. 16:7}

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."^{Matt. 5:27-30}

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Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin." Acts.8:20-23

Whenever God slew them, they would seek him; they eagerly turned to him again. They remembered that God was their Rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer. But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues; their hearts were not loyal to him, they were not faithful to his covenant. Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath. Ps.78:34-38

"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' " 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Matt.21:28-31

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honour at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; [7] they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Matt.23:1-12

Without faith

But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin. Rom.14:23

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Heb.11:6

Without love

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,* but do not have love, I gain nothing. 2Cor.13:1-13

What can we do to keep our heart in tune (in unison) with God's heart?

Stay in fellowship with God, His Word and His people

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. Gal.5:25-26

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. Heb.10:25

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts.2:42-47

Make sure that we say the same as God

It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, 2Cor.4:13

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These are the things you are to teach and insist on. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain. 1Tim.6:2-6

Keep in step with the Holy Spirit

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. Gal. 5:19-26

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Psalm 101

Video What's the Difference Between Bad Theology and Her

Questions

Where does evil come from?

How dangerous is the devil to Christians?

Can a Christian live a holy life?

Why is it important to know the Bible?

Are there any absolutely essential doctrines of Christianity?

Can we disagree with a Church's teaching and continue in fellowship?

Comments

Where does evil come from?

Evil originally came from the devil but now it comes from anywhere he has dominion—including people.

It appears that pride was satan's original sin

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendour. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.' "* Ezek.28:11-19

Pride is still the manifestation of sin

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. 1Jn.2:15-17

But the real sin is unbelief—

But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin. Rom.14:23

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Heb.11:6

What we usually call “sin” is actually a manifestation of unbelief

“Are you still so dull?” Jesus asked them. “Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.” Matt.15:16-20

“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.” Lk.6:43-45

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Temptation leads to sin and sin leads to death

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Jas.1:13-15

From now on the Israelites must not go near the tent of meeting, or they will bear the consequences of their sin and will die. Nu.18:22

The one who sins is the one who will die. Ezek.18:20

We must master sin

So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." Gen.4:5-7

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. Tit.2:11-14

How dangerous is the devil to Christians?

Our reaction to Satan's attacks has more to do with the outcome than the attacks themselves.

Give the devil an inch and he'll become a ruler!

The devil is as dangerous as we let him

Although the devil is prowling like a lion, he cannot harm us (unless we give him an open door)

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them. We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. 1Jn.5:18-21

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. 1Pet.5:6-11

The devil is very crafty at deception

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" Gen.3:1

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry." We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. 1Cor.10:1-13

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Can a Christian live a holy life?

We will never be without sin

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.1Jn.1:5-2:2*

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.Phil.3:13-14

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.Jas.3:3-8

But our new nature is holy

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable [incorruptible, immortal] through the living and enduring word of God. 1Pet.1:14-23

Why is it important to know the Bible?

Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.Matt.22:29

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.2Tim.3:14-17

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.Jn.20:30-31

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.Jn.6:63

"Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."Deut.32:46-47

My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity.Pron.3:1-2

Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'? If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—Jn.10:34-35

Are there any absolutely essential doctrines of Christianity?

Yes

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The Apostles' Creed summarizes it well

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again; He ascended into heaven, He is seated at the right hand of the Father, and He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. AMEN.

The eternal nature and deity of Jesus

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*Jn.1:1-3

The vicarious death of Jesus

*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*Is.53:5-6

*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.*Acts.4:12

The resurrection of Jesus

*Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.*2Tim.2:8

*Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*1Cor.15:1-8

Faith in Jesus and submission to His Lordship

*But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*Rom.10:8-13

Depravity of mankind (all have sinned)

Ministry of the Holy Spirit

The return of Jesus

The inspiration and of the Scriptures

Can we disagree with a Church's teaching and continue in fellowship?

Depends which teachings!

The essential doctrines cannot be compromised but secondary doctrines and Church traditions should not stop fellowship. However, sometimes the differences make it hard to work together

For instance, if a church insists salvation is conditional on baptism (either christening "baptism" or even adult baptism), their understanding of salvation is very weak or worse—and it would be difficult to share any meaningful work (although a limited relationship might be possible).

A Church that holds a strong sacramental position would be difficult to work with because they believe that God's grace is received by objects rather than faith.

A Church that prays for the dead, prays to "saints" or Mary would be difficult to work with

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Theosophy tries to make us believe that all people have the nature of deity, the “spark of divinity dwells in all men and new birth is simply the awakening, blowing into flame”. If man had a spark of deity or any part of deity abiding in him then man was already God incarnate. No spark of divinity is in man apart from the new birth. Every man born again is an incarnation and Christianity is a miracle.

The Holy Spirit makes His home in the physical body (of a Believer) and dominates the human spirit that has been re-created. As this is cultured and developed by through the Word there is no limit to its possibilities.

Before we were Born Again, our minds were in harmony with our unregenerate spirit. Now that our spirit has been recreated, our minds become renewed by the Word. Now the two, our spirit and our mind are brought into harmony.

Your mind, which has been dominated by the senses, receiving all of its knowledge through the nerve centres, is being renewed through the Word, so that it is coming into fellowship with your recreated spirit. What is spirit? In a word it may be said that it is the divine element in man or, perhaps more correctly, that which is cognizant (aware) of God. It is not the intellectual or mental or aesthetic (philosophical theory as to what is beautiful) or sensational (of the senses) part of man but the spiritual, the higher nature, that which recognises and holds converse with the heavenly and divine.

Faith demands a sweet fellowship with God, an abandonment to His Word, a recognition of His Lordship and a walk in love. When faith dies, philosophy flourishes. A living Christ and a living Father God perfectly satisfies and we need no philosophy, we need no metaphysics. It is when we lose Christ out of our daily life that we turn to metaphysics and philosophical theories that have no place in the life of faith. **E.W.Kenyon** *Righteousness (An unpublished manuscript)*

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21/02/2024

Psalm 100

Video Greg Koukl - Faithless Prayer

Questions

Why is there chaos and darkness in society?

Is it realistic to be optimistic about the future?

What do you base your hope on?

How important is Jesus' resurrection to the Christian faith?

Explain what you understand by "faith".

Comments

Why is there chaos and darkness in society?

There was darkness before the world was created (but not chaos)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Gen.1:1-3

so Chaos means disorder, confusion, anarchy. Everything God created was good and so this the chaos came after God had completed Creation:

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. Gen.1:31-2:1

The devil destroys and brings chaos—and the world is under the his influence/control

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. Jn.10:10

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. 1 Jn.5:19

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. Eph.2:1-2

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 'An enemy did this,' he replied... He answered, 'The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.' Matt.13:24-43

Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Cor.4:1-4

Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." Jn.12:30-32

When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and

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their God. Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness. Is.8:19-22

Is it realistic to be optimistic about the future?

Yes! Jesus is the Christ who come to bring light

For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. 2Cor.4:5-6

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honour Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. Is.9:1-2

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. Jn.1:6-10

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God. Jn.3:18-21

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Jn.8:12

Then Jesus cried out, "Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." Jn.12:44-46

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1Jn.1:5-7

We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 2Pet.1:19

For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Eph.5:5-14

What do you base your hope on?

Our hope is not in our piety or our good works or even the church

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Lk.18:9-14

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The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight." Lk. 16:14

Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied: "If someone ventures a word with you, will you be impatient? But who can keep from speaking? Think how you have instructed many, how you have strengthened feeble hands. Your words have supported those who stumbled; you have strengthened faltering knees. But now trouble comes to you, and you are discouraged; it strikes you, and you are dismayed. Should not your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope? Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed? Job. 4:1-7 After the LORD had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Job. 42:7

Our hope is in God Himself

For you have been my hope, Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth. From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you. Ps. 71:5-6

This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope." Matt. 12:17-21

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 1 Cor. 15:19-20

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. Eph. 1:11-12

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, 1 Tim. 1:1

He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. 1 Pet. 1:20-21 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Is. 40:30-31

Our hope is in God's Word

May your unfailing love come to me, LORD, your salvation, according to your promise; then I can answer anyone who taunts me, for I trust in your word. Never take your word of truth from my mouth, for I have put my hope in your laws. I will always obey your law, for ever and ever. Ps. 119:41-44

Our hope is in God's promise

We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised. When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. Heb. 6:11-20

How important is Jesus' resurrection to the Christian faith?

Jesus' resurrection is pivotal to the Christian faith

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I'm more convinced than ever that Christianity is not based on a mystical revelation or self-inspired philosophy. It's deeply rooted in history. In fact, it is the only religious system I can think of that depends on a historical event (the resurrection of Jesus) being real—not fake—news. *Alisa Childers.*

Another Gospel

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. 1Cor.15:3-8

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 1Cor.15:13-20

Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him... Seeing what was to come, [David] spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. Acts.2:22-34

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Rom.10:9

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, 2Tim.2:8

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. Eph.1:18-21

It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. 2Cor.4:13-14

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Rev.1:17-18

Explain what you understand by "faith".

Biblically, "faith" is "the power or skill to act in accordance with the nature of the kingdom of God". It is a trust in what we have reason to believe is true.

Perhaps the best known Gospel verse is John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Understood in this way, we see that faith is built on reason and we should have good reasons for thinking that Christianity is true before we dedicate ourselves completely to it. There are 2 aspects to faith—"believing that" and "believing in".

Faith is **believing that** God exists:

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And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.^{Heb.11:6}

But even the demons believe in God— they tremble with fear!^{Jas.2:19}

But saving faith is also **believing in God and Jesus Christ:**

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.^{Acts.16:31-32}

This is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent.^{Jn.17:3}

This is an active reliance on, or trust in, what you believe is true. Both believing that God exists and believing in God are necessary for genuine Christian faith.

Faith is a response to evidence, not a rejoicing in the absence of evidence. The Bible was written so that we could have a reliable, trustworthy record of the facts.

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.^{Jn.20:30-31} *Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*^{Lk.1:1-4}

Yes we build our faith on reason and true faith is credible because it is based on Jesus Christ who rose from the grave with an immortal body and gave many indisputable proofs to many different people and many different times.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep... Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality... But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you.^{1Cor.15:20-58}

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Psalm 99

Video Can Struggling and Doubt Ever Be Beneficial

Questions

Why is it important to begin our prayers with reverencing God and His Name?

Is temptation sin?

Where does temptation come from?

How can we resist temptation?

Does God tempt us?

How important is it to end our prayers by focusing on God's power and glory?

God is Spirit and He reveals Himself to spirit and He can reveal Himself to our spirit through the Word. For instance, we hear someone read the Word of God. The thing that is read is weighed and measured by our intellect but in some way which is inexplicable to reason, it affects our spirit. It answers a need. Listening to the Word God changes our spirit.

Comments

Is it important to begin our prayers with reverencing God and His Name?

God is worthy of all praise and worship is expressing God's worth to us. Reverencing God and His Name is also the polite way to address Him and the Biblical way too!

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the

*LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*Ps.100:4-5

*Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples. For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. Splendour and majesty are before him; strength and joy in his dwelling place. Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength, ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness. Tremble before him, all the earth! The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved. Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!"*1Chron.16:23-31

Is temptation sin?

No! Even Jesus was tempted—but He did not sin

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.^{Heb.4:14-16}

Since all of these sons and daughters have flesh and blood, Jesus took on flesh and blood to be like them. He did this so that by dying he would destroy the one who had power over death (that is, the devil). In this way he would free those who were slaves all their lives because they were afraid of dying. So Jesus helps Abraham's descendants rather than helping angels. Therefore, he had to become like his brothers and sisters so that he could be merciful. He became like them so that he could serve as a faithful chief priest in God's presence and make peace with God for their sins. Because Jesus experienced temptation when he suffered, he is able to help others when they are tempted. Brothers and sisters, you are holy partners in a heavenly calling. So look carefully at Jesus, the apostle and chief priest about whom we make our declaration of faith.^{Heb.2:14-3:1}

Where does temptation come from?

The devil:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, [3] but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' " "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman.

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"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Gen. 3:1-7

[And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Rev. 12:7-11

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. Rev. 20:1-3]

As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. Mk. 1:10-12

Then come together again so that satan will not tempt you. 1 Cor. 7:5

I sent Timothy to find out about your faith. I wanted to see whether the tempter had in some way tempted you, making our work meaningless. 1 Thess. 3:5

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Eph. 6:16-17

He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. 1 Tim 3:7

Self — people's own desires

Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 1 Tim. 6:9-12

A person's own folly leads to their ruin, yet their heart rages against the LORD. Prov. 19:3

Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. 2 Pet. 3:15-17

How can we resist temptation?

Word of God

During that time the devil came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread." But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" ... Jesus answered him, "It is also written... Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. Matt. 4:3-11

Faith

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In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.^{Eph.6:16-18}

Submit to God

Keep us from falling into sin when we are tempted. Save us from the evil one.^{NIV}

*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*Jas.4:7-8

Say “No”!

*For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*Tit.2:11-14

Does God tempt us?

No—God can’t tempt or be tempted

*When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*Jas.1:13-15

But God does test us to show us our dependence on Him and He allows difficulties to strengthen our faith

*Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.”*Ex.16:4-5

*Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.*Deut.8:1-5

*Praise our God, all peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard; he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping. For you, God, tested us; you refined us like silver. You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. You let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance.*Ps.66:8-12

*My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.*Pron.3:11-12

*And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.*Heb.12:5-13

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How important is it to end our prayers by focusing on God's power and glory?

Very important. If we take our eyes off God's ability we will be overcome by the situation

They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan." Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it." But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them." Nu.13:26-33

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" Mk.4:35-41

When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" Matt.14:26-31

Benedictions or Doxologies from the Bible

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. Jude 24-25

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Eph.3:20-21

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. 2Pet.3:18

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07/02/2024

Psalm 98

Questions

What are the main differences between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world?

Can we be citizens of God's Kingdom and be good citizens in our country?

Why should we pray for our daily bread?

On what basis does God forgive our sins?

Explain: *forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

What is peace?

How do we get God's peace?

Comments

What are the main differences between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world?

The Kingdom of God is the rule of Christ in peoples' hearts;

The kingdom of this world is the rule of self (or even the devil) in people's hearts.

There are also the political kingdoms of nations.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."^{Jn.18:36}

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.

Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.^{Eph.2:1-6}

Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?^{1Cor.1:20}

I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.^{2Cor.10:2-6}

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."^{Jn.12:31-32}

We are to live by the values and ethics of God's Kingdom not by the values and ethics of this world's kingdom:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.^{1Jn.2:15-17}

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.^{Rom.12:2}

Dear friends, you are outsiders and strangers in this world. So I'm asking you not to give in to your sinful longings. They fight against your soul. People who don't believe might say you are doing wrong. But lead good lives among them. Then they will see your good works. And they will give glory to God on the day he comes to judge.^{1Pet.2:11-12}

Can we be citizens of God's Kingdom and be good citizens in our country?

Yes! And we should

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Make the Master proud of you by being good citizens. Respect the authorities, whatever their level; they are God's emissaries for keeping order. It is God's will that by doing good, you might cure the ignorance of the fools who think you're a danger to society. Exercise your freedom by serving God, not by breaking the rules. Treat everyone you meet with dignity. Love your spiritual family. Revere God. Respect the government.^{1Pet.2:13-17}

Of course, we live in this world and should function as citizens of political kingdoms but we “march to a different tune”—we have different standards and different ethics.

Jesus said to them, “The kings of nations have power over their people, and those in authority call themselves friends of the people. But you're not going to be that way! Rather, the greatest among you must be like the youngest, and your leader must be like a servant. Who's the greatest, the person who sits at the table or the servant? Isn't it really the person who sits at the table? But I'm among you as a servant. You have stood by me in the troubles that have tested me. So as my Father has given me a kingdom, I'm giving it to you. You will eat and drink at my table in my kingdom. You will also sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel.”^{Lk.22:25-30}

Why should we pray for our daily bread?

Because we are dependent on God for our life—provision, protection, promotion

Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”^{Jn.19:11}

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.

The authorities that exist have been established by God.^{Rom.13:1}

“Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he

deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.^{Dan.2:20-21}

The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.^{Dan.4:17}

We should remember our dependence on God:

Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.^{Jas.1:16-17}

Even when we work hard, it is God who enables us to work!

You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.^{Deut.8:17-18}

LORD, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us.^{Is.26:12}

And when we ask God for our daily food, we are not being lazy—we are not asking God to put our food on in our cupboard or on our plate! Whilst we should ask God for our daily needs, we must also do our part:

For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.” We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat.^{2Thess.3:10-12}

We still need to sow the seed to grow the wheat to make the bread:

Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.^{Ecd.11:6} *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: “They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.” Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*^{2Cor.9:6-11}

We should also be thankful for our daily bread! Jesus regularly gave thanks

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And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves.^{Matt.14:19}

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples.^{Matt.26:26}

On what basis does God forgive our sins?

On God's Grace alone! That means it has nothing to do with us or our ability (or lack of ability)

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.^{Rom.5:8}

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.^{1Pet.3:18}

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.^{1Jn.4:10}

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.^{Eph.1:7-8}

Explain: forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

The word “forgive” literally means “to send away” or “expire” and so if we don't forgive others we will still carry the guilt of our own sins!

Trespass/Debt Vs 12 οφειλέματος, to owe. Debt, that which is owed, which is strictly due (Ro 4:4). Also an offense, a trespass which requires reparation

Debt/sin Vs 14 παραπτώμα paráptōma; to fall by the wayside. Debts: to fall by the wayside. Fault, lapse, error, mistake, wrongdoing.

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.^{Rom.3:23-24}

Sin ἁμαρτάνω hamartánoō. To sin, to miss a mark on the way, not to hit the mark. One who keeps missing the mark in his relationship to God is a sinner.

Our relationship with God is based on the forgiveness of our sins which is a work of grace (i.e. God freely forgives them by the merit of Jesus' death alone. God's forgiveness of our sins is unconditional).

Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.^{Acts.13:38-39}

But in this prayer Jesus is explaining that if we hold a grudge against someone else, we will disconnect with God and never experience the peace that God has promised us. The New Covenant deals with our conscience in a way that the Old Covenant never could:

The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order. But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption... How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! or this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.^{Heb.9:8-15}

What is peace?

tranquillity, arising from reconciliation with God and a sense of a divine favour

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Shalom is peace and prosperity, health and wealth

Old Testament saints expected to die in peace

You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. Gen.15:15

How do we get God's peace?

We cannot buy spiritual fruit with money or anything else from the natural world because it is a by-product of living in Christ:

Live in me, and I will live in you. A branch cannot produce any fruit by itself. It has to stay attached to the vine. In the same way, you cannot produce fruit unless you live in me. I am the vine. You are the branches. Those who live in me while I live in them will produce a lot of fruit. But you can't produce anything without me.^{Jn.15:4-5}

Both grace and peace come from God the Father and God the Son (who is the Prince of peace):

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.^{2Pet.1:2}

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace.^{Eph.2:13-14}

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.^{Is.9:6-7}

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.^{Rom.5:1}

When we know God and pray with thanksgiving and gentleness, peace will fill our heart:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.^{Phil.4:4-7}

Peace comes from loving God's Word:

Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble. I wait for your salvation, LORD, and I follow your commands. I obey your statutes, for I love them greatly. I obey your precepts and your statutes, for all my ways are known to you.^{Psa.119:165-168}

And peace also comes from keeping our minds on spiritual matters:

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal.^{Is.26:3-4}

And so if we hold a grudge against anyone, the peace that should control us and rule our hearts will be disrupted!

As holy people whom God has chosen and loved, be sympathetic, kind, humble, gentle, and patient. Put up with each other, and forgive each other if anyone has a complaint. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Above all, be loving. This ties everything together perfectly. Also, let Christ's peace control you. God has called you into this peace by bringing you into one body. Be thankful. Let Christ's word with all its wisdom and richness live in you. Use psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to teach and instruct yourselves about God's kindness. Sing to God in your hearts. Everything you say or do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.^{Col.3:12-17}

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Psalm 98

Video The Unexpected Way to Effectively Make Your Point

Questions

What is prayer?

What does “don't address anyone here on earth as 'Father,’” mean?

How can we honour God's Name?

Where is God's Kingdom?

What is God's Will?

How is God's Will done on earth?

Comments

What is prayer?

Prayer is communion with the Father; it is pondering what His Word says about our ideas and conforming our concepts to His. Never contemplate that sacred season with demons on your mind. Never project a war with darkness or anticipate a battle with evil forces. *Christ did all of that for us, in our name.* ^{Col.1:13; 2:15} T.L.Osborn

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed;

the motion of a hidden fire that trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try,

prayer the sublimest strains that reach the Majesty on high.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air,

his watchword at the gates of death: he enters heaven with prayer.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice, returning from his ways;

while angels in their songs rejoice, and cry, 'Behold, he prays!'

The saints in prayer appear as one, in word and deed and mind;

while with the Father and the Son sweet fellowship they find.

Nor prayer is made on earth alone: the Holy Spirit pleads,

and Jesus on the eternal throne for sinners intercedes.

O Thou by whom we come to God, the Life, the Truth, the Way,

the path of prayer thyself hast trod: Lord, teach us how to pray!

James Montgomery (author of "Angels from the realms of glory"):

In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly... As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine." "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief." Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." 1Sam.1:10-17

Hear my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray. In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly. For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness; with you, evil people are not welcome. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence. Ps.5:2-5

When we pray, we are expressing our dependence on God (c.f. many of the Psalms). *Andrew Corbett*

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Prayer isn't a "*spare wheel*" you pull out when in trouble, it's a "*steering wheel*" that directs the right path throughout your life. When we lose hope and think it's the end, God smiles and says, "*It's just a bend, not the end*".

Triumphant prayer is almost impossible where there is neglect of the study of the Word of God. Prayer that is born of meditation upon the Word of God is the prayer that soars upward most easily to God's listening ears. *R.A. Torrey*

Christian prayer takes its stand on the solid ground of the revealed Word and has nothing to do with vague, self-seeking vagaries. We pray on the basis of the prayer of the true Man Jesus Christ. ... We can pray aright to God only in the name of Jesus Christ. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

When we pray, we can rely on Jesus Christ, who is always praying for us and with us. Christ's praying on our behalf is what makes our prayers true prayer. Prayer is not fundamentally about us pouring out our words, our hearts, or our emotions to God... When suffering and grief make it difficult to pray, we can rest in the reality that the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ will continue to intercede on our behalf. When we go through seasons of dryness, we can persevere in faith, remembering that our experience of prayer is not foundational. Jesus Christ himself is the foundation, the Word of God, who always lives to intercede for us. Praying with the borrowed words of the Bible was one way God rebuilt my life of prayer on a more solid basis, reminding me that prayer is answering God, not generating my relationship with God. *Kristen Deede Johnson, "Our Theology of Prayer Matters More than Our Feelings."*

What does "don't address anyone here on earth as 'Father'" mean?

Don't let anyone call you 'Rabbi,' for you have only one teacher, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters. And don't address anyone here on earth as 'Father,' for only God in heaven is your spiritual Father. And don't let anyone call you 'Teacher,' for you have only one teacher, the Messiah. The greatest among you must be a servant. But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.^{Matt.23:8-12}

Interestingly, many of those who use this verse against RCs' use of the title "*Pope*" (Latin "*papa*" meaning "*Father*") and "*Father*" for their priests, are very happy to call the leader of their own congregation "*pastor*"!

In both the Old and New Testaments we are told to honour our parents (so Jesus didn't mean that we shouldn't call our Dad "*Father*"):

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."^{Eph.6:1-3}

Paul said that he was a spiritual father to the Believers in Corinth and that Timothy was his spiritual son (making Paul a spiritual father to him!).

Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.^{1Cor.4:15-17}

We should acknowledge God as our true Father and give Him the respect that He deserves:

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.^{1Jn.3:1-3}

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We should not try to gain authority over one another as teachers or masters, since Jesus is ultimately our teacher and master (you have one teacher... one instructor), to whom we are accountable. Jesus does not literally forbid use of the titles “teacher,” “doctor,” or “father” for all time and in all circumstances, but he prohibits his disciples from using these terms in the way the Pharisees used them, *i.e.* in a spirit that wrongly exalted leaders and reinforced human pride.

How can we honour God's Name?

Living by His standards; making Him proud of us by the way we live (think, speak and act)

Make the Master proud of you by being good citizens. Respect the authorities, whatever their level; they are God's emissaries for keeping order. It is God's will that by doing good, you might cure the ignorance of the fools who think you're a danger to society. Exercise your freedom by serving God, not by breaking the rules. Treat everyone you meet with dignity. Love your spiritual family. Revere God. Respect the government.^{1Pet.2:13-17}

Upholding the principles of God's Kingdom

Saying good things about God

Where is God's Kingdom?

Kingdom is the King's dom(ain) and so God's Kingdom is the dominion, rule or reign of God through Jesus Christ (Messiah)

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.” And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.Rev.11:15-17

Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.Is.9:7

“I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.” I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepterPs.2:6-9

Jesus dwells (reigns and rules) in our heart (spirit).

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. Col.3:15-16

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?2Cor.13:5

God's Kingdom is in heaven

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.Matt.5:3-12

The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.2Tim.4:18

He replied, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.Matt.13:11

Heaven is in our heart!

Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst [is within or among you].” Then he said to his disciples, “The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. People will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which

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*flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.*Lk.17:20-25

What is God's Will?

God's will is His purpose—His plan

God's will is that none should perish

*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting [willing] anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*2Pet.3:9

(obviously some do perish and so God has a desired will and an implemented will). Not everything God wills, wants or desires will actually happen because He has given us a will—we have to choose to obey. By nature we are disobedient—at least until conversion—and so we don't choose to disobey—we disobey naturally. That is why new-birth is essential, so we want to obey.

How is God's Will done on earth?

God's will (of saving people) is done through sowing the seed of the Kingdom—the Word of God

*"This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.*Lk.8:11-15

*For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.*1Pet.1:23-25

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Psalm 97

Video Five Easy Issues_ Why Are Christians Confused_ — Stand to Reason University

Questions

What are the main differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant?

How can we know what parts of the Bible are potentials (aspirations) and what are promises?

How can we determine what is advice and what is instruction in the Bible?

What is faith?

How can we develop our faith?

How do we pray in faith?

Comments

What are the main differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant?

Old Covenant vs New Covenant

Jesus introduced the New Covenant in His blood

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. Lk. 22:20

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Heb. 12:23-24

The New Covenant made the Old Covenant obsolete

But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear. Heb. 8:6-13

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up.... When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order. But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death [useless rituals], so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. Heb. 9:1-15*

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Old Covenant	New Covenant
Conflict, struggle and unrest	Reconciliation, rest and peace: <i>Col.1:19-20; Eph.2:14-18</i>
Bondage and slavery	Freedom: <i>2Cor.3:17; Gal.4:21-5:1</i>
Law weak and useless	Better and permanent: <i>Heb.7:18-22</i>
Law of sin and death	Law of Spirit and Life: <i>Rom.8:2; 2Cor.3:6</i>
10 Commandments summarized as 2	1 Commandment—Royal law of love: <i>Jn.13:34-35; Gal.5:14; 1Cor.13:13</i>
Was an illustration, a type, a shadow	Is the substance and reality: <i>Col.2:14-17; Heb.10:1</i>
Was inferior and faulty	The New Covenant is permanent <i>Heb.8:6-7</i>
Was temporary until the New had come	The New Covenant replaces the Old Covenant which is now obsolete: <i>Heb.8:13; 10:9.</i>
Made man conscious of sin	Conscience is cleansed: <i>1Tim.1:5/19; Acts 23:1; Heb.9:14; 10:22; 13:18</i>
God's law written on stone	God's law written in our hearts: <i>Heb.8:10; 10:16; 1Jn.5:10</i>
Man's Responsibility. <i>If you fully obey... Deut.28</i>	God's Responsibility: <i>Heb.8:8-10; Eph.3:10</i>
Man failed to be righteous	Jesus is our Righteousness: <i>1Cor.1:30; 2Cor.5:21; Rom.3:21-22</i>
Man provided animals for sacrifices	God provides His Son as the Sacrifice: <i>Jn.1:29; 1Cor.5:7; 1Jn.2:2</i>
Man strived for victory	God gives the victory: <i>1Cor.15:57; 2Cor.2:14</i>
Man separated from God by Veil	Nothing separating man from God: <i>Rom.8:39; Eph.2:7</i>
Priest was a man who was a descendant of Aaron	Priest is Jesus: <i>Heb.6:20; 8:1; 10:19-22</i>
Priest's ministry was limited by death	Jesus' ministry is unlimited by His Resurrection: <i>Heb.7:26f</i>
Confessed sin to approach God	Confess Jesus to approach God: <i>Rom.10:8-10; Heb.4:16; 10:19-22</i>
Sacrifices were continually repeated	Christ died once for all: <i>1Pet.3:18; Heb.7:27; 9:26; 10:12</i>
Sin temporarily covered over (<i>atoned</i>)	Sin forgiven; taken away permanently: <i>Jn.1:29; Lk.24:45-49; Rom.11:27; 1Jn.3:5</i>
God dwelt in a place	God dwells in people: <i>Eph.2:22; 1Jn.4:12</i>
Worship was at Jerusalem	Worship is in spirit at the New Jerusalem: <i>Heb.12:22-24; Jn.4:23; Phil.3:3; Gal.4:24-26</i>
People were servants	We are sons and friends (albeit still servants): <i>2Cor.6:18; Rom.1:1; Jn.15:12-15; Gal.3:26; 4:6-7</i>

How can we know what parts of the Bible are potentials (aspirations) and what are promises?

To understand the difference between a potential and a promise in the Bible, we have to understand the context of the passage and also how the passage fits in with New Covenant teaching. We cannot claim physical healing or physical protection as an absolute but we can expect God to intervene and the over-riding principle is that although the sun and rain fall on righteous and unrighteous alike, there is a distinction between those who serve God and those who don't.

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*But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*Matt.5:44-45

*Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name. "On the day when I act," says the LORD Almighty, "they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not."*Mal.3:16-18

*Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.*eccl.8:12-13

*Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"*Gen.18:25

A lot of the proverbs are advice and aspirations or rather than promises. However the New Covenant promises are for us

*For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*2Cor.1:20-22

*As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—eternal life. I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.*1Jn.2:24-27

*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. [Live like that as you look forward to the day of God. It will make the day come more quickly.] That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.*2Pet.3:11-13

*God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. . . Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.*Acts.2:32-39

*And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*Eph.1:13-14

*He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*Gal.3:14

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*Eph.6:1-3

*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*2Pet.1:3-4

*Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?*Jas.2:5

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Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. Jas. 1:12

Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. Heb. 10:23

Not all promises are immediate—and some are only received in heaven

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. Heb. 10:36

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth... These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. Heb. 11:13; 39-40

What is faith?

Faith is the absolute trust in God—based on His Word and His Character

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power. 1 Cor. 2:4-5

And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Jas. 5:15-16

How can we develop our faith?

We use it or lose it!

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. 2 Thess. 1:3-4

The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. This is why I speak to them in parables: 'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them." But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear.' Matt. 13:10-17

[To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them. That is why I use these parables, For they look, but they don't really see. They hear, but they don't really listen or understand. This fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah that says, 'When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend.']

Pray in the spirit

But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Jude 17-21

Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on

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*praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains.*Eph.6:13-20

How do we pray in faith?

Have faith in God (not faith in our faith)

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." Mk.11:22-25

*Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful." After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendour of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever." As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men*2Chron20:20-22

We can trust God to remove whatever hinders us from bearing fruit for God. Moving a mountain is a metaphor for doing what is seemingly impossible

*Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together.*Is.40:4-5

*They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water. I will turn all my mountains into roads, and my highways will be raised up.*Is.49:10-11

*So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island."*Acts.27:25-26

*Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.*Heb.6:1-3

God's Word works in those who believe

*And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.*1Thess.2:13

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17/01/2024

Psalm 96

Video Aren't We All Children of God_ 5.40

Questions:

- How can we be sure that the Bible is trustworthy?
- Why is it important to read the Bible correctly?
- How can we be sure that we are interpreting the Bible correctly?
- Why should we take Jesus' teaching on prayer seriously?
- How can we apply Jesus' teaching on prayer to ourselves?
- How can we apply Jesus' teaching on prayer to our Church?

Comments:

How can we be sure that the Bible is trustworthy?

It has stood the test of time for 2000 years. The early Church did not make the writings into Scripture but merely recognised them as Scripture and inspired by the Holy Spirit. The inspiration of Scripture was recognised by its

1. **Intrinsic Content:** *All have the work and person of Jesus Christ as their central subject and are historically correct.*
2. **Moral Effect:** *Transforms people for the good.*
3. **Testimony:** *The Church had accepted them (this merely recognised inspiration, it did not determine it).*

a) Internal Testimony:

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe. ^{1Thes.2:13}

Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer. ^{2Thes.3:14-15}
Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. ^{2Pet.3:15-16}

b) External Testimony: Early Church Fathers: *Clement* cAD95 makes allusions to 1Corinthians Romans & Matthew; *Ignatius* cAD116 knew of all Paul's letters & quoted Matthew; *Polycarp* cAD150 knew Paul's letters, Matthew & Acts and quoted from 1Peter and 1John.

If we cannot identify what Scripture is, then we cannot properly distinguish any theological truth from error.

Why is it important to read the Bible correctly?

So we aren't deceived. If we are deceived, we are to be pitied above all people

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. ^{1Cor.15:14-19}

People have done many heinous deeds under the guise of religion including some under the deception of obeying Scripture. Paul killed Christians believing that he was obeying Scripture and serving God.

For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. ^{Gal.1:13-14}

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If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. Phil. 3:4-7

If we don't correctly divide the Word of God we will be never live in the promises of God but still be asking Him to do what He has already done

Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. [Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, dividing the word of truth aright.] Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. 2Tim. 2:14-17

The Holy Spirit is our Teacher

But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Jn. 14:26

As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him. 1Jn. 2:27

But God has given the Church giftings of teachers to open up the Scriptures to us so we can become mature

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so. Heb. 5:11-6:3

For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. [6] If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, and especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. 1Tim. 4:4-13

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Eph. 4:7-16

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The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." 1Tim.5:17-18

How can we be sure that we are interpreting the Bible correctly?

See what has the Church has taught over the centuries. Of course the established Church has often gone into error and heresy but we should listen to the general teaching of those who have loved God and displayed the fruit of God

The Nicene Creed has been the benchmark for Doctrine for 1700 years and has stood the test of time.

We believe in one God the Father, the Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father (and the Son). With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Anything that conflicts with that statement of belief will, at best be a distraction, and at worst a deception. We may like to argue finer points of our interpretation such as how Jesus will return (and some want to debate when He will return too!) but those debates only lead to division. Any "new" interpretation of the Scriptures is likely to be at least skewed or most likely heretical—c.f. JW's, CLDS, Oneness and Unitarians, SDA, etc.

If we over-emphasised one doctrine it will make us unbalanced—such as tongues, Jesus' return, holiness, water baptism, predestination, freewill, prosperity, healing, etc. But balance is not a little of this or a little of that but the complete teaching of what God has given us on every subject.

Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. Matt.22:29

Whenever we promote the idea that things or routines have spiritual power over, or with, God or the enemy we have become superstitious. We can make seemingly good things like faith, prayer, fasting, giving, or even worship into a superstitious act - because we believe that if we do these things God must do something for us. In other words, the working of miracles is achievable by works of the flesh as Paul said in Galatians.

Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith. Gal.3:5

We can even turn faith into superstition! If we think that if we can only have faith in God then God must act, we have turned faith into superstition. The Scriptures declare that even our faith is a gift from God.

For by grace are you saved through faith- it is not of yourselves- it is a gift from God. Eph.2:8

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Paul told the Galatians that they had been "bewitched" because they had accepted the false teaching that a work of the flesh ("work of the law") could produce a spiritual result in and of itself Gal.3:1. He reminded them that any miracle, any work of the Spirit, was the result of God's grace and sovereignty. Yet today we hear people promoting a superstitious doctrine of prayer "power" where praying is disgracefully held up to be the means by which we can coerce God into action on our behalf, or even worse—do "battle" with the powers of darkness! Prayer is one of the greatest privileges of God's grace and is the means by which we commune with Him in pouring out our hearts, presenting our requests, and stilling our spirits to hear His voice. A similar thing could be said about worship. Worship is presented by the superstitious as the means by which we advance the Kingdom and defeat the enemy, when in fact it was always meant to be about adoring God with no thought of the worshiper benefiting in any way! Debating evil has little to do with faith, except knock it flat. We are ministers (servants), not philosophers. Our calling is compassion, prayer, faith and the Word.

Why should we take Jesus' teaching on prayer seriously?

Jesus is the Word of God^{Jn.1:1} who is also the Way, Truth and Life^{Jn.14:6}

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Jn.6:63

Life is spiritual. Your physical existence doesn't contribute to that life. The words that I have spoken to you are spiritual. They are life.

The Holy Spirit gives life. The body means nothing at all. The words I have spoken to you are from the Spirit. They give life.

The Spirit can make life. Sheer muscle and willpower don't make anything happen. Every word I've spoken to you is a Spirit-word, and so it is life-making.

How can we apply Jesus' teaching on prayer to ourselves?

Do it

Jesus answered them, "My mother and my brothers and sisters are those who listen to God's word and obey and practice it!" Lk.8:21

"Blessed is the mother who gave birth to you and nursed you." But Jesus said, "No, on the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey, practice and keep it." Lk.11:27-28

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. Jas.1:22-25

How can we apply Jesus' teaching on prayer to our Church?

Should we change the format of our meetings?

We always give the opportunity for open prayer and for personal prayer but not many take the opportunity to pray audibly

Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air.

Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. 1Cor.14:6-12

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For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. 1 Cor. 14:14-17

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10/01/2024

Psalm 95

Video Aren't We All Children of God

Questions

How can we have a good journey through life?

Can a Christian love God half-heartedly?

How can we be sure we are zealous for the right things?

Is there a difference between happy and joy?

How can we “view everything in the mirror of eternity”?

Comments

How can we have a good journey through life?

Prosperity literally means to have a good journey

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth.^{2Jn.2-3}

A more literal translation is “I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.” And the word “prosper” means “have a good journey”.

So John's prayer was that we may have a good journey through life but that it would depend on our soul's health!

That is why we need to take care of our soul and as our reading from the Psalms today reminds us, if we feel despondent, we should tell our soul to praise God and put our hope in Him:

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.^{Ps.42:5;114:3;5}

Praise is literally saying good and true words about God

Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, “His name is John.” Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising [eulogéo] God.^{Lk.1:62-64} Eulogy = good word

The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised [doxάζō] God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.” Doxology = glory word

True prosperity is to be blessed and the greatest blessing is knowing our sins are forgiven

Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”^{Rom.4:4-8}

Can a Christian love God half-heartedly?

Yes! But Jesus has some harsh words about them

Here is what I command you to write to the church in Laodicea. Here are the words of the One who is the Amen. What he gives witness to is faithful and true. He rules over what God has created. He says, ‘I know what you are doing. I know you aren't cold or hot. I wish you were either one or the other! But you are lukewarm. You aren't hot or cold. So I am going to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’^{Rev.3:14-22}

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Those who have been forgiven much, love much—and we have been forgiven everything!

“Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.” “You have judged correctly,” Jesus said...

“Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” ^{Ἰη. 7:41-47}

How can we be sure we are zealous for the right things?

We must base our zeal on knowledge not just on emotion or determination:

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. ^{Rom. 10:1-4}

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ^{Phil 3:4-9}

We base our knowledge on Scripture.

Our faith “was once for all entrusted to the saints.” *Jude 3*

Since our faith is defined by Scripture, and Scripture was given once for the benefit of all Christians, there are no hidden or lost manuscripts yet to be found, there are no secret books only familiar to a select few, and there are no people alive who have special revelation requiring us to go on a pilgrimage in order to be enlightened. God has not left us without a witness. The same supernatural power God used to produce His Word has also been used to preserve it.

See how I love your precepts; preserve my life, LORD, in accordance with your love. All your words are true; [Your instructions are totally reliable; The sum of your word is truth;] all your righteous laws are eternal. ^{Ps. 119:159-160}

After the books included in our NT were originally written they were in general use throughout the churches as were other books (similar to books of sermons, testimonies etc. of today.)

Soon an **accepted standard** needed to be recognised—a **CANON** (from Greek κανὼν kanōn, meaning "rule" or "measuring stick"). The standard or “measuring stick” used to measure or accept writing as Scripture was the **Inspiration** of the 27 books was the **standard** used

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. ^{2Tim. 3:16-17}

There are other writings from the apostles that were obviously inspirational but were not considered inspired and thus not included in Scripture

After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. ^{Col. 4:16}

Inspiration was evaluated and demonstrated by these 3 ways:

1. **Intrinsic Content** All have the work and person of Jesus Christ as their central subject and are historically correct.

2. **Moral Effect** Transforms people for the good.

3. **Testimony** The Church had accepted them. This did not determine inspiration but merely recognised it.

a. **Internal Testimony:**

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who

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believe. 1Thes.2:13

Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer. 2Thes. 3:14-15

Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. 2Pet. 3:15-16

b. **External Testimony:** Early Church Fathers: *Clement* cAD95 makes allusions to 1Cor. Rom. & Matt.; *Ignatius* cAD116 knew of all Paul's letters & quoted Matt.; *Polycarp* cAD150 knew Paul's letters, Matt. & Acts and quoted from 1Pet. & 1Jn.;

Note: The writings of Scripture were canonical at the moment they were written. Scripture was Scripture when the pen touched the parchment. This is very important because Christianity does not start by defining God, or Jesus Christ, or salvation—the basis of Christianity is found in the authority of Scripture. If we cannot identify what Scripture is, then we cannot properly distinguish any theological truth from error.

Apollos taught others enthusiastically:

Apollos had been taught the way of the Lord, and he taught others about Jesus with an enthusiastic spirit and with accuracy. Acts.18:25

But if we don't serve God with enthusiasm we will end up oppressed, suppressed and depressed! *If you do not serve the LORD your God with joy and enthusiasm for the abundant benefits you have received, you will serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you. You will be left hungry, thirsty, naked, and lacking in everything.* Deut.28:47-48

Is there a difference between happy and joy?

Happy usually refers to feeling good because of circumstances whereas joy is not dependant on external situations but an internal peace and contentment. The joy of the bubbling out of God's presence within us

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. Jn.7:37-39

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1Pet. 1:6-9

Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Ps. 126:2-3

The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household. Acts.16:34

The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Acts.13:49-52

How can we "view everything in the mirror of eternity"?

Keep our minds on spiritual matters and especially Jesus

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Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.Col.3:1-4

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.Heb.12:1-3

My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare.Ps.25:15

we do this through meditating (pondering) on what God has said (the Scriptures), singing praises to God (especially Scripture—and the Psalms are a great way so long as you see them through the death and resurrection of Jesus) and also through giving thanks to God.

Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.Eph.5:18-20

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Psalm 94

Questions

What is God's purpose for us?

Can a Christian's physical life be completely free from hardship?

Can a Christian's spiritual life be comfortable and enjoyable?

How can we become more spiritual?

Why is it important to partake in Church activities

What does it mean to be "anointed"?

Why should we be careful what we say and do?

Comments

What is God's purpose for us?

God's eternal purpose for us is to be saved:

Your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.^{Matt.18:14}

He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.^{2Pet.3:9}

He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus.^{Tim.1:9-10}

God's purpose for us is to enter His rest:

God's promise that we may enter his place of rest still stands. We are afraid that some of you think you won't enter his place of rest. We have heard the same Good News that your ancestors heard. But the message didn't help those who heard it in the past because they didn't believe... Therefore, a time of rest and worship exists for God's people. Those who entered his place of rest also rested from their work as God did from his. So we must make every effort to enter that place of rest. Then no one will be lost by following the example of those who refused to obey. God's word is living and active. It is sharper than any two-edged sword and cuts as deep as the place where soul and spirit meet, the place where joints and marrow meet. God's word judges a person's thoughts and intentions.^{Heb.4:1-12}

God's purpose for us is to see His wisdom displayed when we meet together

God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord. Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence.^{Eph.3:10-12}

Can a Christian's physical life be completely free from hardship?

No! We are still living under the result of Adam's sin, life will be toilsome until our bodies return to the ground.

You will have to work hard and sweat a lot to produce the food you eat. You were made out of the ground. And you will return to it. You are dust. So you will return to it.^{Gen.3:19}

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.^{Rom.8:18-25}

Jesus promised trouble

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."^{Jn.16:33}

Look at Paul's life

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death

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again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? 2Cor.11:23-29

James said we should expect trouble

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. Jas.1:2-4

Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. Jas.6:11

Peter said we should expect trouble

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 1Pet.4:12-16

So did Eliphaz

Hard times don't just grow out of the soil. Trouble doesn't jump out of the ground. People are born to have trouble. And that's just as sure as sparks fly up. Job.5:6-7

And Solomon

What does a man get for all of his hard work on earth? What does he get for all of his worries? As long as he lives, his work is nothing but pain and sorrow. Even at night his mind can't rest. That doesn't have any meaning either. Eccl.2:22-23

Should a Christian's spiritual life be comfortable and enjoyable?

Yes! Our spiritual life should be enjoyable and invigorating, never tiresome or wearisome—we can find rest for our souls!

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." ¹Matt. 11:28-30

If our soul is at rest, then the whole of our life will be well—but this is dependent on walking in the truth.

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. *[I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit.]* It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. ²1Jn. 2:3

In God's presence is great joy

For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 1Thess.1:4-7

Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? 1Thess.3:7-9

David said about him: "I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to

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the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.' Acts.2:25-28

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete. 1Jn.1:3-4

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." Heb.1:9

How can we become more spiritual?

We can't become more spiritual but we can become more mature

Within Christianity, there is not an elite group of people who have more access to God than others, or are who more “*spiritual*” than others—all Christians have equal access to God through Jesus.

God our Savior wants all people to be saved and to learn the truth. There is one God. There is also one mediator between God and humans—a human, Christ Jesus. He sacrificed himself for all people to free them from their sins. This message is valid for every era.^{1Tim.2:4-6}

Christians are born-again of God's Holy Spirit and so they are intrinsically spiritual.

Jesus answered, 'What I'm about to tell you is true. No one can enter God's kingdom without being born through water and the Holy Spirit. People give birth to people. But the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised when I say, 'You must all be born again.' The wind blows where it wants to. You hear the sound it makes. But you can't tell where it comes from or where it is going. It is the same with everyone who is born through the Spirit.'^{1Jn.3:5-8}

I will give them a single purpose and put a new spirit in them. I will remove their stubborn hearts and give them obedient hearts. Then they will live by my laws and obey my rules. They will be my people, and I will be their God.^{Ezek.11:19-20}

Christians have already been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.

Give praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Those blessings come from the heavenly world. They belong to us because we belong to Christ. God chose us to belong to Christ before the world was created. He chose us to be holy and without blame in his eyes. He loved us. So he decided long ago to adopt us as his children. He did it because of what Jesus Christ has done. It pleased God to do it. All those things bring praise to his glorious grace. God freely gave us his grace because of the One he loves. We have been set free because of what Christ has done. Through his blood our sins have been forgiven. We have been set free because God's grace is so rich. He poured his grace on us by giving us great wisdom and understanding.^{Eph.1:3-8}

Maturity is developed

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.^{Lk.8:14-15}

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.^{1Cor.2:6-7}

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.^{Eph.4:11-14}

Why is it important to partake in Church activities

Church is a life-boat not a pleasure-boat—we are all called to be workers not spectators.

Church is the fellowship of Believers and fellowship means participation and partnership

And so when we come together as Church, we should include everyone—which we do by singing our hymns together, by reading God's Word together, by praying together and saying “*Amen*” at the end of our prayers, by having our Bible Study and discussing what we have learnt from the Scriptures. *The evidence of the Spirit's presence [manifestation of the Spirit] is given to each person for the common good of*

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everyone... All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.^{1Cor.12:7,27}

So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church...

When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation.

All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.^{1Cor.14:12,26}

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.^{Eph.4:15-16}

What does it mean to be “anointed”?

To be anointed means to be filled, immersed, equipped and empowered with the Holy Spirit.

“Christ” means “Anointed One” and so Christians are “anointed”.

“Mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew nor rain, may no showers fall on your terraced fields. For there the shield of the mighty was despised, the shield of Saul—no longer rubbed with oil.^{2Sam.1:21}

Get up, you officers, oil the shields!^{Is.21:5}

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.^{Eph.6:16}

In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.^{1Jn.5:3-5}

Christians have the anointing of God in the Person of the Holy Spirit and the Presence of the Holy Spirit.

As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him... But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth.^{1Jn.2:20-27}

Jesus words were anointed i.e. they were greater than just mere words—they were spiritual words and communicated life:

Life is spiritual. Your physical existence doesn't contribute to that life. The words that I have spoken to you are spiritual. They are life.^{Jn.6:63}

Our words carry an anointing: they have spiritual power and spiritual life. Paul's impartation to Timothy was an impartation of life that was eternal:

I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.^{2Tim.1:5-7}

The anointing breaks the yoke:

It shall come to pass in that day that his burden will be taken away from your shoulder and his yoke from your neck, and the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil.^{Is.10:27}

In that day their burden will be lifted from your shoulders, their yoke from your neck; the yoke will be broken because you have grown so fat.

Why should we be careful what we say and do?

We represent Christ

Therefore, we are Christ's representatives, and through us God is calling you. We beg you on behalf of Christ to become reunited with God.^{2Cor.5:20}

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.^{Jas.3:13}

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the

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emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the emperor. 1Pet.2:11-17

We impart life with our words and that life is eternal so never give up on those you have prayed for, or you have spoken to:

No word from God will ever fail [no word from God is void of power].^{Lk.2:37}

We should take every opportunity to use the legacy of God's Word that we have within our hearts to sustain weary people:

The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears.^{Is.50:4-5}