

# **"STEPS TO OUR SUCCESS IN THE CHRIST LIFE"**

The First-Century Gospel Church/Philadelphia

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'Believing' God's Word about what Jesus Christ (His Son) accomplished for us on the Cross at Calvary, is what enables us to have the privilege of being pardoned and cleansed by His Atonement Blood. We must believe for that Pardon and Cleansing, the same as we are to believe for everything else in our 'life of trust' (on the Son of God). It is the beginning (and the first step) toward success in the true Christian life, but our 'Pardon and Cleansing of Sin' is only 'one step'. We are to strive toward our goal (the Apostle said), "with my eyes fixed on the goal, I push on to secure the prize of God's heavenward call in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:14).

Believing God's 'Salvation Message' to obey and trust on His Son (a message that was sent through Jesus), enables a person to accept it (if their heart is 'willing' to accept it). It should inspire a person to repent of their sins, and make the 'choice' to sincerely commit themselves to follow Christ, surrender the self-life to God, and to be 'born again' of the Spirit. (Believing God's Word that we are pardoned and cleansed by the shed Blood of His Son, repenting, in order to be 'born again' of the Spirit and making a sincere commitment to having God's will accomplished in our life, ... (are the first steps toward success in the true Christian life). Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." (So, that means these steps are very necessary for our Eternal Life.)

It is through the sanctifying work of the 'Holy Spirit' (received from God by a truly repentant soul), ... that the nature of 'self' is removed from our heart. The removal of 'self' is the third step, and the 'most important' thing that must take place (in the life of every believer). Without the guidance and work of the Holy Spirit to remove the self-life from the person's heart, they would not be ready for Eternal Life.

Accepting God's Message into one's heart, allows for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to take control of every action and decision in their life. It is the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit that removes 'self', sanctifies a person, and prepares them through an obedient faith, to be worthy of Eternal Life. Paul said that Jesus had instructed him (Acts 26:18) "I send you to open their eyes (Jews and Gentiles), that they may turn from darkness to light and from the obedience to Satan, to God, in order to receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance, among those who are sanctified through faith in Me."

So, in a letter to the Romans, Paul explained God's Message about what the sacrifice of His Son would mean to everyone who believed on the cleansing power of His Atonement Blood. (Rom.3:25-26) "He it is whom God put forward as a Mercy-seat, made effective through faith in His Blood, in order to demonstrate His righteousness— because of the

passing over (in God's forbearance), of the sins previously committed", "to demonstrate— His righteousness, and be shown as the giver of righteousness to those who 'believe' in Jesus." (27-28) "Where then is there room for your boasting? (human pride excluded), "It is forever shut out. On— the ground of faith. For we maintain (Paul said) "that it is as the 'result of faith' that a man is held to be righteous."

(Gen. 15:6 says), that "Abraham 'believed' God," (thus, he was able to act in faith), "and this was placed to his credit as righteousness."

So, we can see how important it is for a person to truly 'understand' and believe God's Message about the redeeming work that His Son accomplished for us on Calvary's Cross. It is the whole basis for our faith. That realization is what enables a person to place trust on the Son of God for things in this life (to be confident that we can trust on Him to prepare us for Eternal Life), and so, be "among those who are sanctified through faith in 'Me'." (as Jesus said).

It can be the beginning of having the perfect conditions of the Garden of Eden restored in our life here. Most importantly, our realization and belief on what Christ accomplished by His Atonement sacrifice, enables God to prepare us for the Kingdom of Heaven. It will enable the Holy Spirit to remove the nature of 'self' from our heart (that third and most important step toward success in a true Christian life) and replace that nature of 'self' with divine nature.

In human matters if we don't believe a word which tells us what someone of something can do), we would have no reason to put our confidence on that person or thing (to accomplish anything for us). Our faith will always be in what we believe about something.

It is the same principle involved in truly believing God's Message about what His Son's work on the Cross has already accomplished for us. The power of Christ's atonement Blood covers everything in the true Christian 'life of trust', and that is what we must all come to realize. When a person turns their dependance to a human source of help (or deliverance), it is saying, that they really don't believe on the power of the atonement Blood of Jesus Christ (even though one may be saying that they believe).

God's 'Salvation Message' is, that our sins have been pardoned and cleansed. The great work of Jesus Christ pardoned every sin that we or anyone else ever committed. He bore the guilt of us all; paid one hundred per cent for it, to totally dismiss everything that God could have against us.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ's life, pardoned, cleansed, and purged us from our sins (so we need not go back to them). He is the lamb slain to pay the price for sin, from the creation of the world. There is a total pardon from sin, from the time that Adam fell until now. The sacrifice of His life acquitted us of every sin we ever committed, (if we will sincerely confess them to God, when those sins are revealed to us). The only thing that Jesus is pleading for us to

do, is to be willing to admit and sincerely confess our sins and mistakes, and turn our life back to Him, so that the Holy Spirit can do what God promised to do for us. "When He is come, the Spirit of Truth, He will guide you into all the Truth." (says John 16:13).

To receive that acquittal from sin, we are to give our life back to God, which is to reconsecrate our life to Him with faith that He (through the Holy Spirit) will guide us in living an 'overcoming' 'life of faith' (on the Son of God). (To each of seven Churches (Rev. chapters 2 & 3), Jesus told John to write; "He who overcomes", "and scrupulously obeys my commands, I will give authority over the nations;" "He shall in no way be hurt by the second death." To him who 'overcomes', "I will give him the privilege of eating the fruit of the 'tree of life'" (which is in the paradise of God)."

That is the promised inheritance for those who turn their life back to God (a 'baptism of repentance' (the Apostle said), to receive the Holy Spirit and believe on the Atonement work of Jesus Christ), and so to receive acquittal from sins that are confessed to God, "the passing over (in God's forbearance) of the sins previously committed".

That acquittal is a free gift! Something we must believe is, that we have a Blood-bought right to have our sins pardoned, because the Scriptures tell us, "He was wounded for our transgressions." That means His body was broken and Blood shed to 'forgive' us forever. (We must believe to accept what His atonement work already did for us).

Jesus 'invited' us to accept that 'state of forgiveness' and 'peace' that He purchased for us, (Matt. 11:28), "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus was referring to our lives here; and that everything will become restful when we 'come to Him' (in faith) to find peace. (29)"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Paul said it in this way (Rom.12:1) "I plead with you therefore, brethren, by the compassion of God, to present all your faculties to Him (meaning our entire body), as a 'living and holy sacrifice', acceptable to Him. This with you will be an act of reasonable worship." (That full surrender of 'self' is what Jesus meant, when He said, "Come unto Me".) When the Apostle Paul wrote the words of (Rom. 12:1-2), he had discovered how merciful God is toward everybody. When the Jews refused God's blessing, He turned to their worst enemies (the Gentiles) and gave the blessing to them.

A Jew (trained in Judaism) would know what Paul meant by 'a living Sacrifice'. A Sacrifice placed on the Altar of God was usually a slain animal, and the moment it was placed there, the Altar of God sanctified(purified) it. Nobody would have dreamed of removing it. It was given to God finally and forever (they would never take it back!

That is what Paul meant by a 'living sacrifice' (wholly and totally committed to do God's will). However, his letter was written to encourage (and to admonish) the Gentile Christians living in Rome, (as he had done Rom. 11:), and telling them not to boast, because they

had been grafted in, in the place of the Jews who had fallen away from faith in God.

It is important to understand that he told the Gentiles (which would include us), to present themselves, as a 'living sacrifice', (instead of offering a 'dead animal sacrifice'). By a 'living one', he meant, we are to commit ourselves completely to do God's 'will'; and to acknowledge that He is to be our Ruler and our Guide in everything. All that we are asked to do, is to place ourselves under God's control so His Holy Spirit can sanctify (and purify) us. We must give ourselves to God the best way we know how, for His will to be done in our life. We are to be assured that the Holy Spirit will always help us when we are willing to make a final commitment to do God's will in our life.

The Apostle admonished (Rom. 12:2), "And do not follow the customs of the present age, but be transformed by the entire renewal of your minds, so that you may learn by experience what God's 'will' is—that 'will' which is good and beautiful and perfect." (That means to be "Holy and acceptable unto Him which is your reasonable service." (which means a 'willingness' (on our part) to follow His Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A willingness is what God is looking for in everyone's heart, then the Holy Spirit can do the necessary work of sanctifying a person and preparing them for Eternal Life).

It is only reasonable to think that anybody whom God has created, (anyone whom He has pardoned with the Blood of His Son, anyone that God wants to make happy and victorious over trouble (and to prepare them for Eternal Life), that He should have full possession of them. They should be fully committed to doing God's will regarding every circumstance of their life. For one to get to Heaven, God's Word says, we should present ourselves as a 'living sacrifice' unto God, receive the Holy Spirit, and then become "holy and acceptable unto Him".

God always gives the Holy Spirit, the moment our lives are surrendered to Him. If it were possible, He would take possession of us without the surrender of the 'self-will'. But He can't do that because it is a free gift that we must choose to accept. We all have a free-will choice (to either accept or refuse the gift of the Holy Spirit), to take the place of 'self' in our heart.

The Holy Spirit is like the sunshine, which does not get in if we pull the shades down or close the curtains, but the sun does shine in when we raise the shades or open the curtains, ... so it is with the Holy Spirit, when we make a final surrender that we want to do God's will in our life.

The moment we present our body as a living sacrifice to God, the Holy Spirit comes in (whether we realize it or not). That is what it means "to be holy and acceptable unto Him, which is our reasonable service." (Rom.12:1).

Psalm 37:5-6 says it differently, but it means the same. "Commit your way to the Lord, 'Trust also in Him', And He shall bring it to

pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday."

(Paraphrased, today's English), "put yourself and everything that you want done in God's hands to stay (from the least to the greatest issue,) and allow Him to do it for you. Depend on Him alone to do it. (That would be "trusting also in Him".)

It means to give our life to God once and for all time, like a worldly person would sign a contract for a builder to construct a new home for them. It means to give God the job of doing whatever we would like to have done in our life, whether it be spiritually, the health of our body, God's peace and control in our home, or anything else. Our commitment to have God accomplish everything in our life, is the 'second step' toward a successful Christian life. It is only a step, however.

There were people in Bible times who were once filled with the Holy Spirit, (had the gift of prophecy, lived the Truth), but went to the Lake of Fire (not knowing they were heading there). King Saul was anointed by the prophet and lived a life of trust on God (in some areas of his life, and in his reign as King). However, he didn't complete the third (and most important) step of getting rid of 'self' from his heart. And he did not succeed through those efforts of 'self'. He didn't go all the way with God, by fully obeying His Word through the prophet, and King Saul lost the Spirit of God. He ended his life in suicide.

That third step, (getting rid of the 'self-life' through a new birth in Christ) "is the most important thing". Without it, the other two steps (although also important steps), are of no value. We must be definite about allowing the Holy Spirit to take 'self' from our heart, and to replace it with the 'divine nature' of Jesus Christ. Everything in our life here and ever after, depends on our getting rid of the self-will that we were born with. It is a work that must be completed within our heart. Eternal life will depend on how the third step is attended to (or dealt with).

Most denominational Churches do not really know about the 'new birth (and have never heard of having the self-life removed and being perfected in the Truth, (or the true Christian life of faith and trust on God for every part of life). Except for quoting Scriptures, "they have gotten away from the true teaching of the Bible" (and away from trusting God for all things in their life). "A person such as that still has an evil nature."

They believe that if a person joins their Church, attends services, puts a few dollars in the offering box, and is a decent, outward Christian, not knowing how to trust God (even for a postage stamp), (and without any true 'change of heart'), they would still be preached into Heaven. It is the evil nature under a 'cloak of religion' (and spiritual blindness).

"Most evangelical Church ministers don't even know to ask a person, "have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" Or

have you been born again of the Spirit and pardoned and cleansed?" (Nor to ask: is the Holy Spirit taking the nature of self from your heart?) The ministers don't say that a person has to take these three important steps (nor meet the three easy conditions to get to Heaven).

"When we consider that a person who goes to the Lake of Fire (through false religion), never gets out, and that a drop of water on the tip of their tongue would be a relief", "we must say, that is serious." "And yet, no Christian with even common sense, would accept such a thing" as those false promises being given by denominational church ministers).

The third step in the true Christian life, is the main point of God's teaching and dealings with someone who has surrendered their life to do His will, and that is for God to perfect people in the Truth" (by having the self-life removed from their heart). Also, to the extent that we are perfected in the faith, God will bring others into His Truth. King David said in his prayer of repentance, "Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me."

In summarizing the message (the late Pastor said), "many other people can be convicted and brought to repentance through you and I living the Truth in our life. Husbands and wives, (children and parents), will act right and be brought (by God) into the Truth. I have (personally) seen one person accept the Truth right, and their entire family would come to God's Truth (even large numbers outside of their families accepted the Truth), through seeing a Christian light shine through right actions and decisions of others).

"That is the way God will always work!!"

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#### MAIN POINTS:

1. God's divine plan is for people to hear His Word, believe it, take it to heart and repent, and to be baptized. We then must believe that we are pardoned and cleansed because of the 'redemption' provided in the atoning shed Blood of 'God's Son, Jesus the Christ whom He sent to this earth to redeem us from our sins.
2. A person then must also believe that they are being sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit, and so, being "born again" of the Spirit" (as Jesus said that we must be), and which will enable us to make a sincere commitment and consecration of our life to Christ.
3. Most importantly, the nature of the 'self-life', must be removed from our heart (by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit), because our Eternal Life will depend on how this third step is attended to (in our 'life of faith' "believing on the One whom God has sent") (which is the only pathway that will lead us to Eternal Life).

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