

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE in REALITY

The First-Century Gospel Church

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Every true believer would be most fortunate to truly realize and understand what the “true Christian life” really means. But, professed Christians today “are occupied with a variety of (outward) activities”, but, as the Bible predicted, this will all be in vain.

Jesus spoke about outwardly religious people of His day (Matt.15: 8-9), “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines, the commandments of men.”

Their outwardly religious gestures, adornments, other activities of ‘self’, and pious words, are thoroughly useless (toward living a life of faith and trust on God), which is in essence, the actual true Christian life. To be truthful, all those outward activities are very harmful spiritually (the late Pastor explained, and they will bring no spiritual blessing whatsoever, because they are inspired by the devil who is in control of the self-life).

It is bad enough to have ‘self’ and the devil in control of daily affairs in a person’s life, and so, make wrong decisions on fellowship matters (to please family members, employers, or others), instead of following God’s directions in His Word. Or, to make decisions based on the ‘financial aspect’ of a situation (the cheapest way out instead of deciding in God’s will),.. or, to depend on the kind of climate, or what we eat or drink for the ‘health’ of our body. However, as bad as those decisions are, nothing could be worse than to have the devil leading and controlling us under the ‘cloak of religion’ (and we can be sure that the devil fully knows that). The devil will hide behind any outward activities of a self-life that he can devise, which are meant to deceive and make us seem to feel more righteous before God, (instead of us following Christ, having guidance of the unseen Holy Spirit, and receiving real spiritual light as God promised). (John 8:12, Jesus said), “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness’, but have the ‘light of life’.”

There couldn’t be anything more valuable than to allow God to lead, teach, and guide us (as He did with successful Bible characters who allowed Him to guide them) because our eternal life depends on it.

If we allow the devil to deceive us by listening to the many and various misleading opinions of God’s Truth from false teachers who tickle the ears of listeners, ... (instead of us heeding to full Truth messages from God’s Word and depending on the promised presence of the Holy Spirit to teach and lead us),.. then we would actually be placing ourselves on the devil’s territory to be deceived by him.

‘False teaching’ and ‘outward religion’ is far worse and more dangerous and prevalent among ‘professed’ Christians in this present day (if that is possible), because of all those outward activities and gestures which are still controlled by self and Satan, who disguises himself as an ‘angel of light’. In most cases those same people are not ‘trusting’ God for anything, ... or in any part of their life, while at the same time professing to be believing Christians. However, Jesus told us, (Matt. 7:20-21) “So by their fruits at any rate, you will easily recognize them. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”

Jesus spoke very plainly about the multitudes of ‘professed Christians’ in the world (then and now), (Matt.7:22-23) “Many will say to me on that day, “Master, Master, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name expelled demons, and in Thy name performed many mighty works?’ “And then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you: begone from me, you doers of wickedness.’ (Outwardly religious professed Christians that Jesus spoke about, had failed to put His teachings into practice by

trusting on Him for things in their life. So He called them doers of wickedness and told them "begone from Me".

We must have the sin of Adam reversed in our life, and, return to trusting (depending) on God, instead of on 'self'. That is being born again of the Spirit, Who will teach us to always trust on the 'One whom God has sent'. Jesus said (Luke 18:17), "I tell you in solemn truth that, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child, will certainly not enter it."

Referring, however, to those who take His Words to heart and who "do the will of God", by putting His Words into practice in their life (He said Matt.7:24) "Everyone who hears these my teachings and acts upon them will be found to resemble a wise man who builds his house upon rock;". Which means that God will protect those who believe His Word and whose trust is "on the One whom He has sent', ... and so, protect them from being deceived by false teachers and other agents of Satan, who are deceiving people to rely on false places of trust and outward activities of self to try to obtain righteousness which God's Spirit will bestow on those who believe His Word and trust on Him.

Wasting time on religious gestures which make one seem to 'feel more righteous', will only hinder a person from understanding the real meaning of what Jesus has already accomplished for them on the Cross (and throws God's offers of mercy to the winds). Outward religious activities hinder a person from making a commitment toward 'obedient faith' in God, ... and to be led and taught by His Spirit to 'do His will' in their life, ...because they become deceived to think their own efforts will make them more righteous (but, instead, leads to compromises of faith on God). (Hebr.10:38) "But it is by faith that My righteous servant shall live;". That is the right and only road back to God, and toward reversing the sin of Adam in our life.

The apostle Paul referred to religious or ceremonial customs of a self-life, and the outward religious practice of circumcision (because that was prevalent with professed Christians at that time)(1 Cor.7:19) "Circumcision is nothing, and un-circumcision is nothing; obedience to God's commandments is everything."

Apostle Paul could see that their outward religion was a hindrance to their having real faith in God, and that it was "all in vain" as Jesus said. It was inspired and controlled by the devil" (to prevent a person from getting on the right road back to God by reversing the wrong steps that Adam had taken.

When we see professed Christians, saying "Lord, Lord", and taking part in many types of 'outward forms' of religion, but we do not see (or recognize) "the fruits of the Spirit" (Jesus said that we should see),.. then we are seeing "a people who honor me with their lips", but not in their hearts (as He explained).

However, if anyone gives their life to God right, holds steadfast in their faith and committed to do His Will, and accepts Him as their teacher, God will eliminate all that false activity and wasted time (in their spiritual life). As quickly as possible, God will bring a person to understand what is really essential, necessary, and worthwhile in the Christian's 'life of faith', and they will begin to act much different from the way of professed Christians of the world.

When a person gives their life to God right, He will enable them to compare professed Christians of today, with professed Christians in the Bible. God will enable a surrendered person to soon realize the great difference between those who just say they believe, and true believers in the Bible, and He will enable them to live like Bible Christians did." They will be taught and led by the Spirit to live the 'humble' life, (be committed to doing God's will, instead of the will of the self-life), and, to enjoy living victorious life of trust on God (just as Jesus did). That is the goal and object of all of God's dealings with us, to restore us to the Christian character that He first created,.. restore us to the image of God, the righteousness of God, the humility of God, and to everything else that is God-like. And, the most

valuable thing of all, is to have the 'love of God' within our heart(which should be the primary goal of every Christian).

"The way back to that goal is not via outward religious activity which only hinders us (and that the devil uses to deceive and make one feel like a Christian). The way back to that goal is what God enables us to learn, to know, and understand from His Word and by His Spirit, (and God alone could receive all glory for that).

"The first thing God wants us to learn on our road back to obedience to Him, is to depend on Him for everything that pertains to 'this present life',... not on many plans the world has devised. No person or thing that we could or would depend on (other than God) is worthwhile. Spending time on outward religious acts or activities are only used by Satan to deceive a person (the Pastor said). "It would only be 'wasted time' in a true Christian's life, for one to do so."

"True Christians in the Bible learned to trust God for the things in their life. An outstanding example of the results of fully trusting on God, is that of the three Hebrews (Daniel 3rd.chapter. It shows us what God can and will do for anyone else who will put their faith in Him as they did. God can bring every human being to that same 'place of trust', to where there is nothing else one can do for themselves, and nowhere else to turn but to God. We just have to give God a chance to help us, by turning our trust and dependance back to Him.

"However, if people continue to shut God out of their lives, by continuing to follow man's teaching, advice, and opinions controlled by the devil,...instead of being taught by God through living a 'life of trust' and learning from Him by experience, they will never learn to trust God for anything. The 'light' of the world is Jesus (we are told John 8:12). However, with the devil in control of one's life, it would be impossible to trust anybody but man.

The result of God's teaching and workmanship, can be seen by the stand those three Hebrews took, when they refused to bend their backs to the emperor's golden image, or to even make a fake gesture of trust in that image set up by man (by just acting like they were trusting in the king's golden image in order to save their life), when they were professing trust on God. They knew that burning to death instantly was to be their punishment, but still they refused to bow, and they stood for what was right and Scriptural. Any person who had not surrendered 'self' from their life, and, had not been taught by the Spirit of God, could not have taken such a stand of faith and trust in God.

Those men proved by their decision and actions, that their surrender was final, to depend on God for everything in their life. They were not going to compromise on where their 'place of trust' would be (by signing on with the king's order), no matter how severe the circumstances or penalties were. They were not just 'saying' "Lord, Lord",... nor, were they only "honoring God with their lips, while their hearts were far away" from Him. (They were surrendering all to God!).

They would not join in with the crowd of unbelievers, who were 'signing on' with the emperor's policy, by bowing to the rules he had set up to trust in his policy, instead of placing their 'trust' in God alone. They would not even be part of such a gesture of 'false trust', by following the multitudes on the easy and wide path (even if it meant their life)(which it did humanly speaking).

Those Hebrew children are an example of what we will do, when we are under God's teaching and workmanship" and being guided by His Spirit. It is the attitude that God will bring His people to take, when faced with making a Scriptural decision). God will enable us to also be un-compromising in where our 'place of trust' should be and remain. God is no respecter of persons, so He will bring every true child of His to that same place (which is necessary to test our faith) if we will take the same uncompromising 'position of trust' that those three Hebrews took. (They were tested, and they proved that their surrender of the 'self-life' was final, their commitment to trust in God was genuine, and their place of trust uncompromising). It was real faith, not an 'outward gesture'.

Therefore, God worked a miracle for them when the king had them thrown into the fiery furnace, as the fire could not even singe their hair. (Dan.3:24-25) "King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." The king and his counselors "saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them."

The miracle of protection they received from God, was the result of His teaching and workmanship in their lives, after they had truly surrendered the 'self-life' to do God's will in their life. And, it is an illustration of what kind of a God we serve, how safe it is to trust Him, and how sure we can be to believe His Word for our victory.

The example of King Jehoshaphat is also remarkable. He had given his life to God, but he had not yet learned to trust God for every-thing in his life. Only God can teach us that, when He finds us ready to learn the lessons. No doubt, Jehoshaphat had had other battles and tests to meet in his life, and had proven God's faithfulness in other ways, but he still had more tests to meet, to learn how to deal personally and successfully with God. We could never learn nor understand too much about how God had to test Jehoshaphat to prove his faith, and we could never refer to his example too often, because that is the way God has to deal with us to test our faith.

Jehoshaphat had repented, given his life to God, settled it to trust God according to His Word, and everything seemed to be going well. But, if we never had a battle to meet, we would never learn anything in the Christian 'life of faith'. Human prosperity without any 'financial battles', is one of the most dangerous and destructive things there could be to our spiritual life. For a person to make progress in the Truth, circumstances must arise that will require us to make a decision in favor of God or man (and they could arise many times a day). (1 Pet.1:6-7 we are told to "Rejoice triumphantly in the prospect of this, even if now, for a short time, you are compelled to sorrow amid various trials. The sorrow comes in order that the testing of your faith... being more precious than that of gold, which perishes and yet is proved by fire... may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the re-appearing of Jesus Christ."

In most Churches of the world, you will not get an inkling of the teaching that the road to eternal life is through the battles and trials we go through to see if we meet them right. God could see that Jehoshaphat needed to have his faith developed, and God allowed three armies to come against him, which put great fear in him. He knew that God was the only one who could save him and the Israelites, so he called for a fasting and prayer meeting with the people of Judah. Jehoshaphat's prayer was a model for us, as he spoke the whole truth of their situation to God (but he first got his eyes on God's power), before he mentioned his troubles to God). He prayed (2 Chron.20:6), "O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?"

What an inspiration of faith! It is a fact that when we look at ourselves and our troubles, we are filled with doubt and despair, but one sincere look at God and His Word will fill us with quietness and confidence. So, as Jehoshaphat got his eyes on God's power, he began to be inspired with confidence, and he claimed their right to have what God had given them. He then prayed, did you not say (vs.9) that if "we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your Name is in this temple), and (we) cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save."

What a combination of prayer for victory, as he claimed that promise of God in prayer, and believing that God could not go back on His promise. Then Jehoshaphat told God his troubles (vs.10-12), "And now, here are the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir--whom You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and did not destroy them--

"here they are, rewarding us by coming to throw us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit. "O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You."

A helpless person is the kind that God can help, because they have parted company with depending on self and the devil, and, have no where else to turn to other than God. What an example of prayer "nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You." ... to show us how we can have the devil's power defeated and connect us up with God's omnipotent power and authority over Heaven and earth (and a power that is always with us and at our disposal).

When Jehoshaphat prayed "but our eyes are upon You." (and he believed), God answered instantly, (vs.14-17) "Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah (a Levite in the midst of the assembly), And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat ! Thus says the Lord to you: `Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. `Tomorrow go down against them. `You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you." He told the problem to God, believed His promise to deliver and the battle was won instantly.

When we also fully surrender to do God's will in our life, and when we realize what kind of a God we have (like the three Hebrews and Jehoshaphat did under His teaching and training), God will enable us to be uncompromising in our life of faith and trust (and to make right decisions in our life).

When people continue to shut God out of their lives, and accept wrong teaching from man (or straight from the devil), they will never learn to 'trust' God for 'anything'. As noted before, for one "to understand what the "true Christian life" really means, is something every true believer would be most fortunate to come to realize," (instead of being occupied with outward 'religious gestures' under the 'cloak of religion', which will all be 'in vain', (Jesus said).

Actually living by faith in God's Word,... is the true 'Christian life' in reality.

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The First-Century Gospel Church/Philadelphia

"THE ACTUAL TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE"... SOME MAIN POINTS ARE:

- 1... How fortunate are true believers to be enabled to realize that outward religious gestures and activities, have no value whatever, spiritually..but they are a product of the self-life and used by Satan to be a hindrance to a true Christian keeping their eyes on God alone.
- 2... As bad as it is to have 'self' and the devil in control of our decisions in daily life situations, nothing could be worse than to have the devil leading us under the 'cloak of religion' (and the devil knows that). He will hide behind any outward activities of a self-life that he can devise for us to carry out, which are used to deceive us, and make us seem to feel more righteous before God.
- 3... How fortunate a person is to come to the place where they understand that living a 'life of genuine faith and trust' in God, ... is the only 'true Christian life'.
- 4... The devil deceives people into compromising their trust on God. The example of King Jehoshaphat's severe test from God is used in the message, to emphasize that when one is taught and led by God's Spirit (as He was) they will not compromise where their place of trust should be (and remain), no matter how hard the test or consequences may seem to await a person,... for God is faithful to provide, protect, and avenge in response to uncompromising faith on Him.

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