

God Desires To Perfect Our Christian Character

(WE NEED TO BE WILLING)
(MATT.23:37)

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It is God's plan and God's work in this Gospel Age, to bring us to not only have the image of Christ within ourselves, but to also grow and develop into a full stature spiritually of Jesus Christ, and to be like Him ..(to see things as He sees things, weigh things as He weighs them, and value things as He values them). That is to live and walk as He lived and walked on this earth. What a safe and sure example that is! (We must be willing to allow Him to do that (Matt.23:37) *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem", "How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"*

Christ is an example that we can never afford to get away from, and the only safe course to take in this life, of being prepared for Eternal life. And it is the only plan that will ever enable us to receive 'Eternal life'. So, that is what we must be trusting God to do in our life, to so teach us, and work on our Christian character, so that we will become full grown men and women in Christ Jesus.

We know Paul told the Ephesians that we are not to be like *"children tossed to and fro by every 'changing wind of doctrine', and of men lying in wait to deceive us"* (Eph.4:14). Rather we are to receive and accept the Truth, live in the Truth, become full grown men and women in Christ Jesus, and (Vs.15) *"grow up into union with Him who is our Head, even Christ."*

Is that not some goal and destiny to look forward to!! (To have a Christlike nature within ourselves).

The nice part is, we do not have to do it of ourselves, and God does not expect us to do so. It is God's will and the work of His Holy Spirit to do that great work within us, and God must do it,

for we cannot do any of it ourselves. God is not only to teach us, but He enables us to receive it from Him. We only have to repent of the old nature that was in us and be willing to accept and be guided by a new nature that God wants to instill within our heart (if we will let Him).

We are to become Christlike, because Paul said, if any man has not the Spirit of Christ within, then he is not in Christ. That does not mean that we must be full-grown Christians the first day that we receive the Holy Spirit, or we are not one of His people. We may be very far from the full image of Christ, and from being full-grown Christians when we first receive the Holy Spirit. But, if we will let go of the self-life, and let God have full control of our life, He will teach and develop us until we are like Him.

That is quite a difference from what we would get into, if we do not watch out. At times, we can get into a pretty fine nest, but Jesus did not have that. He never laid up a penny ahead, but He trusted every day for His daily bread and supplies, just as He taught His followers to do. (Matt.8:20) *"Foxes have holes", replied Jesus, "and birds have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."*

That is a wonderful attitude for one to have, trusting in God daily, and not laying up a thing for the future. Jesus did not even have a cemetery lot, which many people (of the world) think that they must have. But His burial was taken care of just as Moses was (and everybody else who trusted in God in this life.)

We should also have the same attitude toward our fellow man that Jesus had. He never resented anything that any person ever did. Neither did He try to right His own wrongs by using human efforts. That is the way we are 'called to walk' in our life.(1 Pet.2:21-23) *"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."*

When we have Christ in our heart, we will walk in the same way, because we will have the same attitude that He did, and it will be no trouble to take that kind of forgiving attitude toward other people and situations in our life. It was no trouble for Christ to meet wrongs done to Him, in a right

way, (as the Scriptures instruct us to do). When He was reproached and persecuted, He did not even say anything to defend Himself.

That is the beautiful part of the Gospel message and the New Covenant plan. When we are conformed to the image of Christ, it becomes just as easy, delightful, and actually a real pleasure to walk on a humble plain as Jesus walked during his life here. And, with the Holy Spirit in control, it will become easy to meet things and people, as Jesus met them.

We all know people who do not have the Holy Spirit within them, and if you cross their bow, you will see some fireworks. This is because the devil makes it a pleasure for them to flare up and release pent-up feelings (of displeasure and hatred). However, it is not that way with people in the Truth of God.

When Christ gets in a person's heart, it is just as easy and satisfying to meet things right, as it was to flare up when we had the old nature of the self-life in our heart. It is an entirely different nature within, and that is God's plan for us.

It would not be a bit of use for us to feel like kicking or fighting back when Christ gets possession of our life. We will not have to squelch anything, because it will not be any trouble for us to 'meet things right', with a Christ-like nature in our heart. We may be tempted to fight back, but it will only be a temptation for us to refuse. And, that is God's plan, for us to have the very nature of Christ fully developed in us, then we will find pleasure in meeting situations as Christ met them.

That is the great difference between true Christians in Bible times, and professing Christians of today. Bible Christians that we read about, had a real spirituality, and that made the difference. They were not different people. They were just as helpless and hopeless (in their own strength) as we are, but they allowed God to teach and develop them, and to take possession of their heart (just as we also must do in our life).

Of all the things the devil has tried to convince people of, it is that God has changed. Also, that people of today cannot have the same results in their life that Bible Christians had. The devil has succeeded in convincing many people that God will not do the same things for them, that He will not teach and develop them, and that He

will not answer their prayers for healing, peace within and among themselves, or the provision of finances and other needs.

That is a terrible delusion that the devil tries to put upon human beings, and it is surprising how many of professing Christians in the world today, believe those same 'lies of the devil'. The devil succeeds in taking away from them any hope for things in this life, and any hope for time and Eternity.

That is because the moment that we accept a changed Christ, then there is no 'Christ' in our life, and then 'we are done' (as Scriptures teach us). *Without the resurrected Christ in our life, our faith is in vain.* (1 Cor.15:17). The very foundation of all Truth, however, is that 'God' has never changed. Neither has anything about His Word or His plan for us changed.

That tells us that we can have the same results, the same answers to prayer, and most important of all, the same 'spirituality' as Bible Christians had.

We were just as 'spiritually blind' concerning the real Truth, as anybody else. But God will teach everyone who will let Him have control of their life, until they are able (as prophesied Malachi:18) *"Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."*

The apostle Paul told us the same thing, saying 'he that is spiritual, judges (or understands) everything'. But he himself is not understood. That means that the Holy Spirit will enable a Christian Believer to understand everything, but a person of the carnal nature will not understand Him. (John 14:17, John 1:12, Gal.3:2 and 3:22) The great difference between true Christians of the Bible, and false (professing) Christians of today, is that Bible Christians were taught by God, (and that is what made all the difference).

False Christians of today are taught by man, and that is far worse than if they were not taught at all, because they become deaf and dumb to the real Truth, for we recall what Jesus said (Matt 6:23), *"If however the very light within you is darkness, how dense must the darkness be!"*

If God looks at a person and He sees no

willingness to be led by His Spirit, He sees that it would not be of any use to try to teach or develop them (at least for the time being), and He would have to leave them alone. He would have to just leave them go along until He sees a 'willingness' in their heart to be led and taught by His Spirit. (Matt.23:37) **"but you were not willing,"** He said.

But, if God sees even a possibility of us responding to His teaching and training, then there will always be something doing in our life. We will be in one temptation after another in our life, to enable us to learn to meet the trials in a right way, and thus, to develop spiritually from those trials.

It may be the devil 'fighting us in our mind' (to not be fully committed to following Christ's humble example for us), or an oppression in the body (to see if we will trust only in God for the healing), or a financial battle (to see if we trust in Him alone, or turn to other sources for help). There will be things to meet in rapid succession, for God must work rapidly in our life, (since the possibility of our being in the last days seems very certain).

Of course, only God knows, and we cannot set a time or date, but there seems to be every indication of these being the closing days of the Gospel Age, as Bible prophecies say they are to be. We have had universal war, famine in parts of the world, and pestilence (among unbelievers). Everything seems to be ripe for the supernatural judgments to begin.

As Paul said, **"when they say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction will come upon them, and there will be no escape."** (1 Thes. 5:3) That is just one of the signs, and Jesus said, that when these things begin to come to pass, it is a sure sign that **"He is at the very door."**

If we are wise, we will consider these signs, and we will not want to do anything that will hinder our preparation for Eternal Life, by the grace of God. It is valuable for each one to understand that all the works of man will be destroyed, and everything else is to be dissolved. It will enable us to let go of the cares and anxieties of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and to know that all unnecessary worldly possessions (if we have any), are to be destroyed overnight. Jesus said, if we are in the fields, we are not even to go back to get anything out of the house, (when

the destruction comes upon the earth).

Some people may wonder what is the object of all of Christ's severe warnings? that inform us of the 'supernatural judgments' to come, with one plague in itself to destroy one third of the population of the earth (over 2 billion people). His warnings really have two objects. One is to warn people against the most horrible of all places, the Lake of Fire.

So, the harder the pathway is for the Christian, the more God can teach us and make it easier for us with each lesson learned in meeting circumstances according to His Word and Will for us. The harder the pathway is for us, the more of a warning it is against the terrible fate, lying just ahead.

If you had a friend walking on their way to an open trench at night, and you were positive that they were going to plunge into it and lose their life, and they would not listen or pay a bit of attention to you, well, the harder their pathway and the rougher the road, the longer it would take them to get there, thus, the better it would be for them.

That is the way God works with us by allowing trials and temptations to come into our life. And there is no greater proof outside of the Bible teaching, that there is a Lake of Fire, and it is the most terrible place there could be. The trouble to come on this world at the end is a final and stern warning, and really a loving warning, of the fate which awaits people, and it lies just ahead if a person does not repent. It is also an object lesson, or a proof to mankind, that he cannot make himself nor the world to go right.

Again, if we are wise, we will consider these signs, and we will not want to do anything that will hinder our preparation for Eternal Life, by the grace of God.

So, we want to thoroughly understand, that all of God's warnings in the Bible, the trials one has to go through (and the circumstances or red-lights in one's life), are for just one reason to convince people that they can't go through life without God; they simply cannot ignore Him. To convince people that it is futile for them to try to make this life what it should be, by trying to find perfect happiness, all by their own human efforts.

The apostle Paul had to learn this same lesson, by what he called his thorn in the flesh,

but he came to realize that God's grace was sufficient for him.

And that is what we need to know, because it is the same in individual lives. We start out aiming to make our own way in the world, with ambitions, goals, and objects that we are seeking (which fail in most cases). When we realize that spiritually (and in every other way), we are an utter failure, and that we are hopeless and helpless (without allowing God to control us), then God can get into our life, and help us to progress spiritually.

Thus, when we have learned to "acknowledge God in all of our ways," instead of following our own plans (or one of the multitude of the devil's plans in this world), we can make rapid progress in what the true Christian life of faith and trust is in reality.

When we are 'willing give up the self-life' and to 'follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit', then God can help us to progress, and as said, He has to work rapidly in preparing us to be ready to meet His Son when He returns to take those who are found to be trusting in Him.

When the Holy Spirit can enter our heart, we will dress and act respectably, not dressing in the latest styles, way out designs, or worrying about what's in (as they say in the world). The Holy Spirit will cause us to practice moderation in all things.

On the contrary, we should not dress as some religious cults and holiness people, with odd clothing or long robes. That would only be an outward show of religion to bring the world's attention.

With the Holy Spirit in our heart, we will act just opposite to the way our natural heart would want us to, (at first). We will not look to any human being or human plan for answers to our problems. We will hold no resentment against people who would wrong us, and we will give to those who ask of us, whether it be of our money or our time. We will live by faith under the control of the Holy Spirit, and we will not lay up money for a time when we might need it.

When we are allowing God to perfect our character spiritually, we want to consider things that happen to us to be God's hand in His trying to perfect our Christian character. We want to take the warnings seriously and learn from them.

In areas where we need perfecting, we will continue to be tested with trials, until that area is corrected.

We will learn that what the real Truth teaches, is getting prepared for Salvation and Eternal Life while we are here and not worrying about things that have no spiritual value. Our whole emphasis under the Spirit's control will be on HOW TO MAKE HEAVEN through allowing the Holy Spirit into our heart, to lead us along in a life of FAITH AND TRUST!

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