

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE VICTORIOUSLY

PART 2 – HOW DO WE RECEIVE ETERNAL LIFE?

Some might say that this is a trick question, for when we learn what the scriptures say, we may very well discover that many are being misled by ill informed teachers.

As always, I want to turn to the Scriptures to get at the truth regarding the answer to the question, “How do we receive eternal life?”

There are numerous scriptures that point the way, let’s look at some:

Mark 16:16

He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

Acts 16:31

So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

So what do we learn from these verses? Well conventional wisdom would have us glean from these verses that we need only believe in Jesus, be baptized, and thereby gain entrance to Christ thus becoming a new creation. Sounds simple, right?

So, let’s run out and tell our friends and neighbors, “Look if you believe in Jesus, let’s run down to the Santa Fe and get you baptized so that you too will be in Christ and be a new creation and have eternal life.”

Does this ring true to you?

It should NOT! Yet, we need only to go down the road just a short distance and we can hear this very thing preached and see the multitudes come to hear. Who wouldn’t be enticed by such a simple process; after all it doesn’t affect my life at all, I merely have to admit that I know Jesus, and then be baptized. What could be simpler?

Well you see there is a bit more to what you have read than what you can get from a casual reading. If it were not so, the divorce rate among Christians would not be approximately the same for non-Christians. The abortion rate among Christians would not parallel the abortion rate of non-Christians. So where have we gone wrong in our thinking and our Christian teaching?

Turn to Revelation 3:1-3, and let's read that together:

¹ “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write,
‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works,
that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.” ² Be watchful, and strengthen the
things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. ³
Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you
will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come
upon you.””

We who attend church and worship and praise God and His son Jesus are called by a name, are we not? What is that name?

CHRISTIAN!

This is a name that is ALIVE! Christ is indeed alive, but just as the Church at Sardis was filled with Christians, God said, “I know your works, that you have a name, “Christian,” that you are alive, but you are dead.”

This is very much like many churches today that have a name that would indicate that they are alive; BUT, they are DEAD!

Why do you suppose that they are dead?

Look at verse 3, we can find the answer there.

Have we remembered HOW the church received and heard?

Has the church held fast to how and what it received? Has the church repented? Has the church been watchful?

Lets look at each question and come up with an answer for CAF.

Does CAF remember HOW the church received and heard the Gospel? Any volunteers?

Let's turn to Acts Chapter 2. I'm going to read verses 1-4 and then skip down to 40-42, and 46-47.

¹ When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*. ⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

How then did the church receive the Gospel?

The Church received the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost when God sent the *parakletos* and the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

Have we held fast to how the Gospel was received?

One might say that we have in so far as we do remember the day of Pentecost in our church calendar; plus, the longest season in the church calendar is the season of Pentecost.

But have we truly clung to the How?

How many of us come to church expecting to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit?

I’m not speaking merely of that good feeling we may experience during a service when the liturgy, music, and prayers combine to make a special heartfelt spiritual moment; while that may seem powerful, and surely it is a powerful moment, it is but a fleeting moment.

I am speaking of being filled with such spiritual power that we lose our inhibitions and fears and rise, ready to stand as did Peter and declare to the world that Jesus died, and was raised from the dead to redeem us of our sins.

I am speaking of the in-filling of the Holy Spirit that will transform a person who in his own power would deny Jesus three times, yet after being transformed by the Holy Spirit boldly proclaim the resurrection power of Jesus, the Messiah.

How many have clung to that expectancy of being filled with the *dounamis* power, the dynamite power of the Holy Spirit?

When we come to church out of obligation, and sit through what might for some be tedious standing, sitting, kneeling praying, listening, singing, sleeping, etc., we are far from clinging to How the church received the Gospel.

If we are to cling to this understanding that we are to receive the Gospel with the *dounamis* power of the Holy Spirit, and we have failed to do so, what do you think we need to do?

Again the answer is provided in verse 3 of the reading from Revelation. We need to repent of this failure along with our other failures to live a righteous life!

Beloved, repenting is not merely having a sorrowful feeling, it is a turning away from the ways of the unregenerate man and turning to the ways of Our Lord.

Can we turn together and empty ourselves of self?

Can we turn together and seek forgiveness of our sins?

And can we turn together and embrace the expectancy that when we invite the Holy Spirit to come and dwell within us, that He will respond and we will be filled with power from on high?

And when we have repented and embraced the infilling of the Holy Spirit, can we covenant one to another to be ever watchful to ensure that we do not return to the old ways; the way of acting under our own power instead of under the power of the Holy Spirit?

Being watchful entails being accountable one to another, and part of that accountability is that we must endeavor to be in communion one to another regularly.

Accountability is a two-way street. When I wake up on a Sunday morning and are too tired, or I ache too much, I am too depressed, or any other of hundreds of potential excuses, I succumb to the temptation to talk myself out of making the effort to attend church, what have I done?

To begin with, I have denied the presence of the Holy Spirit in me, I have failed in my watchfulness, I have failed to stay alert on my watch.

You might say, "So what, it's my life, it only affects me and my relationship!"

Au contraire mon ami. You see, by my ignoring the call of the Holy Spirit to come be in fellowship, there are numerous impacts to the Body of Christ:

- I have robbed you of the opportunity to receive blessings from me,
- I have robbed myself of the blessings you might have for me,
- I have failed in my accountability, and
- I have failed in honoring the Holy Spirit in me.

You see, in these situations, it is not God the Holy Spirit that removes Himself from our presence, rather it is through our own selfish desires and motives that we remove ourselves from His presence.

Some of you have had the opportunity to attend a Cursillo or Anglican 4th Day weekend, most have not. At the weekend, there are several talks given by both lay and clergy, and before each talk, the group stands in prayer and prays for the Holy Spirit to come and fill the hearts of the faithful.

Most of us have heard this prayer, it has been said here in our service. I would like each of you to have a copy of this prayer. You will find a copy of the prayer in the inside front cover of the

service booklets. I would like for us to include this prayer in our call to worship, and as we pray in unison I would ask that you do so with the expectancy that this prayer will be answered in each of our lives and that each one present will indeed receive power from on high, the power of the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Let this be a heartfelt prayer, a prayer of expectancy that the Holy Spirit will arrive in power and embolden our hearts to God's purposes in our lives. For as we yield our wills to His and continue daily with one accord in the church, and the breaking of bread, praising God and having favor with all the people, it is then that we can expect the Lord to add to the church daily those who are being saved.

Brothers and Sisters, please open your Service Bulletins and take out the insert and pray with me. Let us pray:

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love; Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created and you shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructs the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolations, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen