

Becoming a living Sacrifice

12/27/2024

In last week's lesson we looked at a few of the many passages which speak of The Holy Spirit's work in God's plan of salvation for mankind.

We begin this morning with a review of a few of those verses.

In that lesson I presented two passages about John the Baptist and the things he was able to accomplish. Here are those passages again.

Consider the following concerning what the Angel Gabriel told Zechariah the father of John the Baptist about John - *"Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and **he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.** He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."* (Luke 1:11-17)

*"Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, and many people came to him. They said, **"Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true."** And in that place many believed in Jesus."* (John 10:40-42)

Here we are told that John the Baptist was filled with The Holy Spirit and yet never performed a sign. John simply told people the truth about Jesus. No need for signs and wonders. Just preaching Christ.

Jonah like John the Baptist preached the Word of God. But if you ask most people to tell you something about the book of Jonah they will likely tell you it is a story about a whale or big fish swallowing a man. Why because that would be miraculous! But consider this passage from Luke about Jonah.

Luke 11:29-32 -

*"As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom; and now something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, **for they repented at the preaching of Jonah;** and now something greater than Jonah is here."*

Scripture says Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, and people were Baptized by John because all that he said about Jesus was true. Both of these men were called to bring a message to people, and when they did people many responded.

I also included in last week's lesson these words recorded in John 16:7-11 where Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit's arrival and what The Spirit will accomplish or do when he gets here -

*"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will **convict** the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."*

Thus the Holy Spirit, we are told, was sent as an advocate, helper, comforter etc. to **convict** the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.

The KJV uses the word 'reprove' here where the ESV translates the word as 'convict'. The Greek word used by John in this passage is *elegchō* pronounced el-eng'-kho. It is defined as - I rebuke, expose, I reprove, discipline, I expose, show to be guilty.

Paul writes the following to Timothy - *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof (elegchos), for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."* (2nd Timothy 3:16-17)

Thus The Spirit's work involves the message (Word of God) that He will use and that can be used to do the things Paul writes to Timothy about.

And in Ephesians 6 when Paul is speaking of putting on the full armor of God says this - *"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"*

John informs us of this Word of God in the opening chapter of his account of the Gospel - *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* And in (John 1:1) - *"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."* (John 1:14). Thus the Spirit uses The Word as a sword in His role as an advocate or *paraklētos*. And 1st John 2:1-2 we read that Jesus is also an advocate or *parakletos* on our behalf. Thus the Message of The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are - one and the same - with each having their part in bringing salvation to mankind.

But what about our part as Christians in this sharing of the Gospel, or good news of salvation for mankind. Scripture has much to say on the subject but I would like to

begin with something that Paul addressed in both his letters to the Ephesians and Titus. In both of the following examples Paul is addressing the condition of mankind prior to God's grace entering their lives. This not only applied to those whom Paul was writing, but to all of mankind including you and I.

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

And

“Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:1-7)

Through God's loving kindness, Mercy and Grace we have been reborn, made a new!
As spoken of in the following passages -

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know

that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 6:3-12)

And

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

(2nd Corinthians 5:17-20)

Without the Grace, Mercy and loving kindness of God towards us we would be without hope. Completely ill prepared to be of use in this plan of salvation for mankind. And so we must respond and allow God’s power and Grace into our lives.

In the following passage from Paul’s letter to the Romans he urges the brothers and sisters in Christ to respond to what God has done for them. And to do so in view of this Mercy of God!

Romans 12:1-2 - *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 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.”*

Paul’s words *‘therefore in view of God’s mercy’* reminds us that we need to understand what God’s Mercy towards us means, involves and respond to it accordingly. We gain understanding of God through His Word, through His creation (What has been made - Romans 1), and by applying God’s Word to our lives. Doing this successfully will result in us being able to **test and approve** what God’s Will is.

The words translated as **test and approve** above is the Greek word dokimazō pronounced dok-im-ad'-zo. Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon defines this word as 1) to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as in metals. 2) to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy.

Here in Romans 12:1-2 Paul describes the steps in accomplishing this goal as follows -

1. Present your body a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God

Note* This is a proper thing to do. (Proper form of worship) (reasonable service)

2. Be no longer conformed to this world

Conform = *suschēmatizō* pronounced soos-khay-mat-id'-zo - 1) to conform one's self (i.e. one's mind and character) to another's pattern, (fashion one's self according to) (Thayer's Greek- English Lexicon).

3. But be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

The Greek word used by Paul here that is translated as 'Transform' is *metamorphōō* pronounced met-am-or-fo'-o. Meaning to transform (literally or figuratively,

"metamorphose"). Think in terms of a butterfly going through it's metamorphosis.

And *metamorphōō* in Greek here is - Tense-Present, Voice-Passive, Mood-Imperative

Tense-Present -

The present tense represents a simple statement of fact or reality viewed as occurring in actual time. In most cases this corresponds directly with the English present tense.

In other words it applies to us now.

Voice-Passive

The passive voice represents the subject as being the recipient of the action. E.g., in the sentence, "The boy was hit by the ball, " the boy receives the action.

In this passage it could be said we are the recipients of this metamorphosis.

Mood-Imperative

The imperative mood corresponds to the English imperative, and expresses a command to the hearer to perform a certain action

by the order and authority of the one commanding. Thus,

Jesus' phrase, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" Mark 1:15

is not at all an "invitation, " but an absolute command

requiring full obedience on the part of all hearers.

Thus we could say here it is imperative that we go through this metamorphosis. Or that it is necessary (imperative) that we allow God to transform us.

All this to say - The transforming (*metamorphōō*) or metamorphosis is done **to** us by

The Word of God. Not **by** us by trying to transform our own lives to meet God's expectation and approval of us. The power lies in The Word of God not us and our abilities.

Paul in his prayer for the Ephesians expresses this when he speaks of that power in his prayer -

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,"

That power is The Spirit doing His work helping to transform us through God's Word.

Or as we often sing -

Would you live for Jesus, and be always pure and good?
Would you walk with Him within the narrow road?
Would you have Him bear your burden, carry all your load?
Let Him have His way with thee.

Refrain:

His pow'r can make you what you ought to be;
His blood can cleanse your heart and make you free;
His love can fill your soul, and you will see
'Twas best for Him to have His way with thee.

Would you have Him make you free, and follow at His call?
Would you know the peace that comes by giving all?
Would you have Him save you, so that you can never fall?
Let Him have His way with thee. [Refrain]

Would you in His kingdom find a place of constant rest?
Would you prove Him true in providential test?
Would you in His service labor always at your best?
Let Him have His way with thee. [Refrain]

Are we ready to be a living sacrifice?