

Principles of Spiritual Growth - 1/29/14

TEXT - Eph 1:5-6

INTRO - God has a plan for our spiritual growth. It is important they we determine - does God fully accept me? If so, on what basis does He do so?

I. Acceptance

A. Do you believe God has fully accepted you?

Many people struggle through life without certainty that God does accept them.

Eph 1:5-6 *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

So what has God predestined? Harry Ironside once said: "People have had it drilled into them that away in the past God foreordained that certain people should be lost and certain others should be saved. I would like to get that out of your minds this morning. [That teaching] is not found in the Bible. God's predestination is not to salvation. **God's predestination is that those who receive the Lord shall be like the Lord Jesus. That is predestination and nothing else is.**"

The rest of Scripture proves this. In the only two places Scripture speaks of predestination here in Ephesians 1 and also in Romans 8-9 there is never any mention of God predestinating some to heaven and others to hell. Rather, He predestined He decided beforehand not that some would be saved and others be condemned, but that those who placed faith in Christ would be adopted as God's sons would be eternally secure, would make it finally to heaven, and would be conformed to the image of His Son. Predestination has to do with the believer's future, not with our past.

Rom 5:1 *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

Col 1:20-21 *And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. 21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*

B. Are you conscious of sins?

He accepts us not on the basis of our righteousness, but of the cross of Christ God is fully satisfied by the death of His Son and on that basis we are accepted.

C. You cannot find acceptance by your own righteousness.

William Newell states:

"To believe and to consent to be loved while unworthy, is the great secret."

"To refuse to make resolutions and vows for that is trust in the flesh."

"To expect to be blessed, though realizing more and more lack of worth."

"To rely on God's chastening hand as a mark of His kindness."

"To hope to be better (Hence acceptable) is to fail to see yourself in Christ only."

"To be disappointed in yourself is to have believed in yourself."

"To be discouraged is unbelief - as to God's purpose and plan of blessing for you."

"To be proud is to be blind! We have no standing before God in ourselves."

"The lack of divine blessing, therefore, comes from unbelief, and not from failure of devotion."

D. Our highest motivation should be love and not fear

"Fear produces the obedience of slaves, but love engenders the obedience of sons." **J. W. Sanderson**

The Law made man's blessing depend on devotion;

Grace confers undeserved, unconditional blessing;

our devotion may follow, but it doesn't always do so in proper measure.

2 Th 2:16-17 *Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, 17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.*

II. Purpose

A. God wants His image revealed on the earth.

Col 1:16 *For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*

Eph 4:24 *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

God made man in His image. Gen. 1:26

Fallen man gave birth to a son after his image. Gen. 5:2

God sent His Son to reveal His image again on this earth Heb. 1:3

B. Man can reveal God's glory only after being Born Again.

1 Co 15:45-47 *And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. 46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. 47 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.*

True spiritual growth involves pain as well as joy, suffering as well as happiness, failure as well as success, inactivity as well as service, death as well as life. The temptation to take a shortcut is especially strong unless we see the value of and submit to the necessity of the time element.

Php 1:6 *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

All growth is progressive: It is from measure to measure- thirty-fold, sixty-fold, hundred-fold. It is from stage to stage- first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear.

It is from day to day.

Php 3:14 *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Php 3:10 *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;*

Exo 23:29-30 *I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. 30 By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.*

CONCL- Through the means of time the Lord enlarges our capacity to accept his plan for our lives and that we might receive His blessings.