

Fix Yourself First

As this is the Passover season, we have done our due diligence to share God's Word for self-reflection and prepare for our upcoming Covenant renewal. Issues of pride, self-control and sin and others have been included in the topics for several weeks now. Identifying our short-comings is crucial to our spiritual growth. Becoming spiritually whole can increase our service to God and to those in His family. In the matter of serving others, the title of this essay may seem a bit self-centered and selfish. I am in no way saying we are to esteem ourselves more important than someone else but can we sincerely help and benefit others in spiritual matters if we ourselves need serious repair?

“Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question.”- Thomas Jefferson

Essentially, Jefferson said “how can a man govern others if he cannot govern himself?” I'm sure there are dozens of examples of people we can come up with in today's society, government and even our own families. Those who have deceit and lies as their foundations or discord within their homes but always manage to put on a good front in public. It is like the “Rexalty” drug commercial on TV where the

woman holds up a mask with a smiley face to hide her depression. She puts on the air of being happy but in reality, she is a soup sandwich. There is no drug however to grow us spiritually. Ingesting the Word of God, the infilling of His Holy Spirit and sincerely emulating the character of Jesus Christ *in all we do* will guide us in the proper direction.

Jefferson certainly was not the first to come up with this epiphany.

Proverbs 16:32- “He who is slow to anger *is* better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit is better than he who takes a city.”

Proverbs 25:28- “He who *has* no rule over his own spirit *is like a* broken-down city without a wall.”

1 Timothy 3:1-7- “Faithful *is* the saying, “If any man aspires to *be* an overseer, he desires a good work.” Now then, it is obligatory *that* the overseer be blameless, *the* husband of one wife, vigilant, serious-minded, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching; Not given to much wine, not a bully, not greedy for selfish gain; but kind, not a quarreler, not a lover of money; One who rules his own house well, having *his* children in subjection with all respect; (For if a man does not know *how* to rule his own household, how will he take care of *the* church of God?) Not a novice, lest he become conceited *and* fall into *the same* condemnation as the

devil. It is mandatory that he also have a good report from those *who are* outside *the church*, lest he fall into reproach and *the* snare of the devil.”

When our cars break down, we need a tune up or perhaps even a major overhaul. If they do not perform properly, they are of no service. We want our engines running on “all eight.” When they are running correctly, they can get us from one destination to another safely. Our spiritual condition needs the same regular (daily) maintenance as our vehicles to avoid breakdowns. Our spiritual condition is by far more significant as is the destination is eternal.

We need to keep in mind that we were created in the image of God.

Genesis 1:26-27- “And God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of heaven and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that crawls upon the earth.” And God created man in His *own* image, in the image of God He created him. He created them male and female.”

From Creation, God is reproducing Himself in us. Jesus Christ is the Image of God. Would someone know our faith from the way we act?

2 Corinthians 4:4- “In whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is *the* image of God, should shine unto them.”

Colossians 1:14-15- “In Whom we have redemption through His own blood, *even* the remission of sins; Who is *the* image of the invisible God, *the* firstborn of all creation;”

It is our goal to strive and grow in the image and likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. Image includes His Character, His conduct and being an example that others may see Him in us.

Romans 8:29- “Because those whom He did foreknow, He also predestinated *to be* conformed to the image of His own Son, that He might be *the* firstborn among many brethren.”

1 Corinthians 15:48-49- “As *is* the one made of dust, so also *are all* those who are made of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *one*, so also *are all* those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the *one* made of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *One*.”

Colossians 3:9-10- “Do not lie to one another, *seeing that* you have put off the old man together with his deeds, And have put on the new man, who *is* being renewed in knowledge according to *the* image of Him Who created him;”

For those of us who have raised children to adulthood, I am sure there has been a time or two when they perhaps reached out for our assistance and intervention, usually through their poor choices and decisions. In most cases, any parent who loves their children would do anything for them, even when it is painful or unappreciated. But we do not reach out to help for glory, notoriety, or any sort of recognition. The Boy Scouts give out merit badges, the ones we will receive from God will come in the form of a crown.

James 1:12- “Blessed *is the* man who endures trials because, after he has been proved, he shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

Revelation 2:10- “Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast *some* of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.” Can we honestly expect them or anyone to believe we are an Ambassador for Christ if our conduct does not reflect His unconditional love?

Honoring their father and mother is on them. God will remind them when the time comes. Sometimes we must have the tough love for them that they may have a chance to grow. Maybe God is speaking to them? His lessons come in all forms

and methods. Watching them flounder or go through a storm can be a heartache and is never easy, but we must be cautious as not to enable them to continue in bad behavior or practices. If we are not in right standing with God, our intervening can actually be detrimental.

Perhaps a friend needs some emotional support? Can we truly offer it if we are not in spiritual alignment with the Will of God? Have you ever tried to share scripture and not know which one you need? If we are truly “walking the walk” we will be able to “talk the talk.”

Matthew 10:19- “Now when they deliver you up, do not be anxious *about* how or what you should speak; for in that hour it shall be given to you what you shall speak.”

Luke 12:11-12- “But when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how or what you should reply in defense, or what you should say; For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that same hour what needs to be said.” We must have that personal relationship with God the Father He so desires for all of His children. The Sabbath is a great day to have those conversations with Him.

As we labor toward spiritual development, we will grow according to how hard we work. We all know it takes *work*. Playing church once a week will gain nothing, except hearing The Lord tell us to “depart, I never knew you.” (**Matthew 7:23**). We will become better servants to those about us in God’s family and those around us if we are doing it for the glory of God (**1 Corinthians 10:31**).

Mark 9:35- “And after sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”

1 Corinthians 9:16-19- “For though I preach the gospel, there is no *reason* for me to boast because an obligation has been laid upon me. And woe to me, if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if I *do this* against my will, I have been entrusted with a ministry. What then is my reward? That in preaching the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without expense, so that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel. For although I am not under bondage to anyone, I have made myself a servant to all, so that I might gain the more.”

Our walk with God in obedience will produce the spiritual growth and transformation we seek.

2 Corinthians 3:18- “But we all, with uncovered faces beholding the glory of *the* Lord as in a mirror, are being transformed *into* the same image from glory to glory, even as by *the* Spirit of *the* Lord.”

Philippians 1:6- “Being confident of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will complete *it* until *the* day of Jesus Christ.”

1 John 3:2- “Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is.”

“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.”- Corrie Ten Boom.

We can be sure what the future holds according to the Word of God. One of the most important spiritual maintenance suggestions is always trust in God. A lack of trust in Him will cause your faith to get “poor mileage.” We need not be concerned of an uncertain future.

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 “But according as it is written, “The eye has not seen, nor *the* ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed *them* to us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things—even the deep things of God.”

The Bible is a repair manual for the self according to God’s Divine Master Plan for us. From Genesis to Revelation, the instructions are there for spiritual growth and transformation from the old sinful person we once were. The complete overhaul

will not occur until the sky cracks and the trumpet sounds and we will be raised to meet with Christ in the air.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18- “For this we say to you by *the* Word of *the* Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede those who have fallen asleep Because the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with *a* shout of command, with *the* voice of an archangel and with *the* trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in *the* clouds for *the* meeting with the Lord in *the* air; and so shall we always be with *the* Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words.”

When we keep ourselves in good spiritual repair, we can and *will* grow in God’s purpose. When we are spiritually sound and in alignment with God’s Word and Will, we can better serve Him, our families, and the brethren. Amen.