

Vessels

Growing in God's Gifts

We have discussed on numerous occasions the term “vessels” and how we may be considered a vessel for containing God’s Holy Spirit. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (on-line), a vessel is defined as: a person who has a particular quality or who is used for a particular purpose. It can also be defined as a container (there are several other uses for the word as well). The combination of these two meanings illustrates a fairly clear image of the vessel we are to become. We have been chosen for God’s purpose and we are with filled His Holy Spirit, His Word and His Truth. Being a worthy vessel includes using the spiritual gifts we’ve been given. How can we know and use what gifts we’ve been given? In most cases, our gifts are self-evident. God enhances our gifts by the power of His Holy Spirit. With our walk with God, it is possible to cultivate our spiritual gifts through becoming a better vessel for the infilling of His Holy Spirit.

We have all made the conscious choice to believe God’s Word and live His way of life. We believe in the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ our Savior and have been baptized into His death with the hope and promise of the Resurrection to come. We received God’s Holy Spirit at baptism when we had hands laid upon us.

Acts 19:5-6- “And after hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Now when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with other languages and prophesied.”

The gift of God’s Holy Spirit began our new journey towards God’s Kingdom. It gives us new revelation and understanding of His Word

Acts 2:38- “Then Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

With this Gift, we have greater clarity of His Word and His way of life.

Ezekiel 36:26-27- “And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My ordinances and do *them*.”

Is this infilling something that can be increased? If so, how? How are we able to do the things the Apostles did? They, like Jesus did nothing in and of themselves but to fulfill the will of God The Father and He empowered them through His Spirit.

We will take a look at a few foundational scriptures that may help us in patching our current “vessels” and be worthy to receive more of God’s Holy Spirit.

Certainly not for our glory but to become a better servant to Him, for His purpose and His flock among us.

John 5:30-31- “I have no power to do anything of Myself; but as I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father, Who sent Me. If I bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true.”

John 6:38- “For I did not come down from heaven to do My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me.”

John 8:28-29- “Then Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you yourselves shall know that I AM, and that I do nothing of Myself. But as the Father taught Me, these things I speak. And He Who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone because I always do the things that please Him.”

Jesus did not preach “Jesus” nor boast of Himself. **John 14:8-10**- “Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and that will be sufficient for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long a time, and you have not known Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father; why then do you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The

words that I speak to you, I do not speak from My own self; but the Father Himself, Who dwells in Me, does the works.”

The works and miracles were accomplished by the faith of Christ Jesus and the will of God The Father through His Holy Spirit. This is the same Spirit we received at baptism. How did Christ accomplish such miracles? His love for God The Father. His faith in God The Father. His desire to glorify God. His personal relationship with His Father in Heaven. Is not the love of God The Father, faith, a desire to see God glorified and a personal relationship with Him all part of our walk with God? Jesus was and is the perfect vessel to carry the Spirit of God.

Jesus told His disciples that they would do greater works than these. **John 14:12-**

“Truly, truly I say to you, the one who believes in Me shall also do the works that I do; and greater works than these shall he do because I am going to the Father.”

Did they?

Acts 5:15- “Insomuch that the people were bringing out the sick into the streets and putting them on beds and stretchers, so that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.” Wow! Can you imagine? How solid must your vessel be to have God’s Holy Spirit overflowing from you? God will not pour out His precious Spirit to have it spilled all over the ground.

One of the biggest cracks to fill in our vessel is to love God first. **Matthew 22:37-38**- “And Jesus said to him,” ‘You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is *the* first and greatest commandment;”

Luke 10:27- “Then he answered and said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”

This is the foundation on which we build our relationship with God The Father. If He is first and foremost in our hearts, He will also be in our lives.

Part of this love will be our coming to The Father with a contrite heart. **Isaiah 57:15**- “For thus says the high and lofty One Who inhabits eternity; Whose name *is* Holy; “I dwell in the high and holy place, even with the one who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones,” A contrite heart is one filled with sorrow, a sense of guilt and penitent. We have been forgiven our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We must always remember what price He paid for our salvation.

Isaiah 66:1-2- “Thus says the LORD, “The heaven *is* My throne, and the earth *is* My footstool. Where, then, *is* the house that you build for Me? And where *is* the place of My rest? For all these things My hand has made, and these things came to

be,” says the LORD. “But to this one I will look, to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit and who trembles at My Word.”

God desires mercy over sacrifice. **Psalm 51:16-17-** “For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”

Matthew 5:3-4- “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed *are* those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” These are not necessarily those who mourn the loss of a loved one but rather those who are spiritually broken, the humble before God.

Having a contrite and humble heart will have us in the right frame of mind when we come before God. It opens the door for us to grow our relationship with Him.

Another consideration we must keep in mind and strive for is to have discernment. Discernment is a fruit of God’s Spirit that should progress with our spiritual growth in God’s way of life. **Hebrews 5:13-14-** “For everyone who is partaking of milk *is* unskilled in *the* word of righteousness because he is an infant. But solid food is for those who are fully grown, who through repeated practice have had their senses trained to discern between good and evil.” The further along we get in

our Bible studies and fellowship, our ability to discern right from wrong, coupled with wisdom should become refined to higher levels of understanding.

Philippians 1:9-11- “And this I pray: that your love may abound yet more and more in all knowledge and understanding. In order that you may approve the things that are excellent, so that you may be pure and without offense unto *the* day of Christ, Being filled with *the* fruits of righteousness, which *are* by Jesus Christ, unto *the* praise and glory of God.” Discernment can be defined as the ability judge well or have clear observations. Our spiritual discernment is separated from other types of discernment because the decisions we make are to be subjected to the Will of God. Our decision making with this reflection being in alignment with the Will of God will yield wisdom and correct decisions.

With our growth in the Word and wisdom, we cannot lose touch with keeping a contrite heart. New knowledge, while it can be exciting and we can become over-zealous, we must not become prideful or puffed up.

1 Corinthians 4:6-7- “Now these things, brethren, I have applied to Apollos and myself for your sakes; that in us you may learn not to think *of men* beyond what is written, so that no one among you is puffed up on behalf of one *of us* against the other. For what makes you superior *to others*? And what do you have that you

did not receive? But if you also received *it*, why are you boasting as if you did not receive *it*?”

1 Corinthians 8:1-2- “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. But if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet to the degree that he ought to know.” Remember, edify one another. Remember, we are last in line. If anyone seeks to throw their arm out of socket for acknowledgement, better think twice.

James 4:6- “But He gives greater grace. This is *the* reason it says, “God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble.” God will give you all the recognition He wants you to have.

Luke 18:13-14- “And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat himself on the chest, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner.’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled; and the one who humbles himself shall be exalted.”

1 Peter 5:5- “In the same manner, *you* younger men be subject to *the* older men; and all *of you* be subject to one another, being clothed with humility because God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble. Be humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in due time;”

It's been said "we must learn from the mistakes of others as we'll never live long enough to make them all ourselves." The Apostle Paul warned the Corinthians about becoming vain in their individual attitudes and abilities and lose sight of love.

1 Corinthians 13:1-8- "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. If I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give away all my goods, and if I deliver up my body that I may be burned, but do not have love, I have gained nothing. Love is patient *and* is kind; love envies not, does not brag about itself, is not puffed up. *Love* does not behave disgracefully, does not seek its own things, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. *Love* bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether *there be* prophecies, they shall cease; whether *there be* languages, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away." Apparently, the Corinthians were overly excited and proud with their new found spiritual knowledge. Misuse of our spiritual knowledge can be detrimental to those about us and it will not please God.

Romans 8:8- “But those who are in *the* flesh cannot please God.” Proudful knowledge used without the wisdom and discernment can offend and even hurt those around us. We must have our brain loaded before we shoot our mouth off. If we seek recognition or self-elevation and forget our God given spiritual gift(s), we can lose what we’ve been given. We won’t be repairing any cracks in our vessel. God will not pour out any additional portions of His Spirit.

Godly love for one another must be foremost ahead of any desire for one’s personal standing or reputation. God doesn’t care how many degrees you have, how many books you’ve read or any other act out of the flesh you may believe is serving Him. He knows the heart, the contrite heart. If we love God first as commanded in Matthew 22:37-38, things will fall into their proper alignment. Our spiritual gifts will grow. We will develop that personal “One on one” relationship He desires of us all. Our cracked vessels will be ready to receive the pouring in of God’s Holy Spirit. Will our shadows ever heal someone as did Peter’s? All things are possible if we become a solid vessel for God’s use. Amen.

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