**RECEIVE: text**

Decisions that Encourage Discipleship

Choosing to intentionally grow into Christlikeness.

*“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” Hosea 4:6*

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**Unit 101 Choosing to leave the place where Jesus finds me.**

*(Luke 9:23a) “if anyone will come after me…”*

**Unit 102 Choosing to Serve Jesus where He Leads me.**

*(Luke 9:23b) “…let him deny himself…”*

We are approaching the end of unit 102 with only one more lesson after this one. I want to remind the class that after lesson 6 in this unit, we will take a break until September when I hope the next mailing will be on 9/11/23, and class on 9/13/23.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***Looking Again at the Grace Diagram**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

As we approach the end of this section on “deny yourself” and coming to the second circle, entire Sanctification, it is important to see that what we are now trying to address is not the penalty of sin, but the pollution of sin that is in our lives and in our world. Notice in the diagram that holiness is started in circle 1 but it continues on through the rest of the Christian’s life as they follow Christ.

Again, each of us are different. Some do not struggle as much with self as others do. Some think they have conquered self-orientation only to find out in the events of life that the battle continues. This new creature that God creates when old things pass away has a lot to learn!!! The crisis of Entire Sanctification is that decision and commitment to give ourselves in every way to Christ and the leading of His Spirit. But when we encounter different tests in our life to that commitment, the battle again must be won, and it is best won through the power of the Spirit.

**102-5 Initial Sanctification, Levels of Commitment & The Important “I”**

The use of the term sanctification, or being made holy, is a confusing term for many, especially those who believe that this is completed in the moment of salvation, and any further pursuit of holiness is futile. To say that holiness is found in Christ does not exclude the concept of growth and maturity in holiness and Christlikeness, which is a concept that can be found throughout Scripture. The Wesleyan movement believes that after a person is born again and receives salvation, a second decision is made in people’s lives—how entirely are you going to allow that presence of Christ to be in your life, and His holiness to reign.

One could compare the concept to becoming engaged to be married, and the new commitment to a person that is made, but then the days up to the finalization of that commitment in the wedding ceremony. And the challenge of that commitment does not end at the wedding altar—but all the events of life either cause that commitment to be strengthened, or to be diminished. Psychologists call that the “braiding of the hair,” as we take the good and bad of life and fold it over to make a stronger bond.

The earth will always struggle with the Spirit. Sanctification that is entire is a commitment to entirely pursue His Spirit in our living and choices. It is the testimony of many mature Christians that there is unusual power that comes into our lives when that complete decision of entire pursuit is made. Even though it may be a struggle at time, it surely helps us that we have already made up our minds no matter what the cost to us might be.

**John 12:42-43 *“Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.”***

\*\*Rulers believed but did not confess because of this world’s rewards

\*\*Rulers were more concerned with temporary approval rather than eternity.

The problem of mankind and the need for such a commitment is revealed in this Scripture from John 12. Some say believing in Christ is all that is needed and there is nothing beyond that. I ask, “What about these rulers who believed?” If “believing” doesn’t issue into a life of following and obeying, **what will be the result?** I think Scripture says that the result will not be favorable. Do we really believe in Christ if we don’t follow Him as our **Master and Lord**? Not to love God with all our heart, mind and soul is surely going to fall short of what God expects of us. The approval of others, and the compromise of our lives with our culture are poor excuses for not fully committing to Christ and following Him.

**\*\*\*\*\*FUNCTIONAL TRICHOTOMY\*\*\*\*\***

(Try to print out the picture (002) and have it before you while you read 001)

I know that this is a difficult concept to comprehend, but it is very valuable to your understanding when you do grasp it and start to look at Scripture through this concept. I hope you will take time not just to read this material, but also to try to think about it and discover it for yourself.

I have included in the mailings a Word file trying to explain the concept of “Functional Trichotomy which was taught by Denver First Church of the Nazarene in the ‘70’s. It basically affirms the “dichotomy” between the flesh and the Spirit as taught in Romans 8 but **inserts the concept of the soul** in between the two polarities, pulling the soul in one direction or the other. The idea is that we will either glance at one (the flesh or the spirit) while we gaze at the other. Jesus affirmed that when He said that no one can serve two masters. (Matthew 6:24)

**I Thessalonians 5:23-24 *“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will do it.***

Perhaps that clearest teaching of Scripture in this reality is the above verse, calling us to entirety and completeness in our holiness or sanctification, and specifically mentioning **the three dimensions of the spirit, soul, and body**. What is powerful to me is the idea that God will be faithful not only to call us to this entire holiness in our lives, **but also will be faithful to help us achieve it!!!**

I think one of the best illustrations to understand this crisis and process is that we make a decision to have this entire commitment, but as we live, we discover that we have to apply that commitment to our choices over and over. We call that the “peeling of the onion.” You get one layer off and discover that there is another one to confront. The crisis is the decision to make that commitment for entire holiness in our lives, but the process is in applying that decision throughout our lifetime. And notice that idea of being “kept complete.” You could also understand this experience as the challenges of life continuing to pull on us and try to diminish our commitment to completeness in our holiness. He calls us to that ownership of our mind, emotions, and will, and He will be faithful to do it. But it is a mistake to think it will happen without our continual reliance on His Spirit in us.

**Initial Sanctification**

**I Corinthians 3:1-4 *“And I, brothers and sisters, could not speak to you as spiritual people, but only as fleshly, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to consume it. But even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like ordinary people? For when one person says, ‘I am with Paul,’ and another, ‘I am with Apollos,’ are you not ordinary people?”***

\*\* Called sanctified in Christ Jesus (I Corinthians 3:1)

\*\* Called Holy Ones (I Corinthians 3:1)

\*\* Yet divisions (Chapter 3), immorality (Chapter 5), lawsuits (Chapter 6),

…marriage issues…drunkenness…chaotic worship services, etc…

For me, this Scripture is an illustration of our need for God’s help in the arenas of life, and our necessary co-operation with the Spirit. The rest of I Corinthians and II Corinthians continue to illustrate that need for help. The city of Corinth was completely secular and known for its immorality. **To be called a “Corinthian” in the first century was to be called an immoral person.** It is not far from how some people view Southern California where I live, or Las Vegas, or New Orleans, etc. There may be some good people in all these cities and areas, but they are known for “loose living,” and for life choices that do not honor God.

This living apparently had influenced the church, and you have listed above the brief review of I Corinthians, that though they were called sanctified in Jesus, and “holy ones,” they had what most of us would call a Christian experience well below what Christ would expect of a church and his followers. For me, that was especially true in chapter five with an immoral leader that all seemed to be aware of his sins, but he was allowed to continue as a leader in the church without any repentance or change of life. Wesleyan theology would say that the church had individually decided to follow Christ, but they had not made the tough decisions to apply Christ’s teaching to the various areas of their lives and their church.

**I Cor. 16:13 *“Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”***

It is that toughness that the Apostle calls them to embrace at the end of this letter. He is concerned that they take action and stand firm in the faith, not comply to what is convenient or acceptable by their culture. Others in Corinth may not think that these issues are of any consequence, but it is not the teaching of Christ. I think it took a lot of spiritual concern from Paul to write this letter, and it could well qualify the letter to be the “sorrowful letter” Paul refers to in II Corinthians 2:4. It always takes spiritual strength to confront wrongdoing, and it usually is more difficult for the one confronting, than even for the ones being confronted.

**Levels of Commitment**

**Luke 14:26-27, 33*****"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple...."So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.***

\*\* To ignore this teaching is to disregard the level of commitment God asks.

\*\* To blindly follow this teaching is to disregard the leadership of the Spirit.

\*\* To embrace this teaching causes us to be utterly dependent upon God.

This verse in Luke 14 causes many who consider themselves to be followers of Christ great problems. The commitment here to follow Christ at any cost is not in the thinking of too many who profess His Name. And it doesn’t help that God seems to require more of some than others. I will never forget as pastor being a part of several tearful “goodbyes” to the family of the missionary to the jungles of Peru, Addie Garman, on deputation farewells. They all knew it was likely that if Addie died, they would not see her again, and if one of them died, she would not be able to come home to grieve with the family. Over a twenty-year period, I attended four of these “goodbyes.”

What would it take for you **to willingly** say “good-bye” to those you love thinking that it would be likely never to be together again until heaven? I agree with those who interpret this passage as stating that unless our love for Christ makes our love for family seem like hate, our love is not in the proper perspective. We are creatures of this world, and the normal, natural loves of our lives are not what Jesus is trying to address, but **it is the controlling** of that normal, natural love over us that needs to be conquered for the cause of Christ. The same can certainly be said for our own comforts and possessions.

**Mark 10:21-23 *“Looking at him, Jesus showed love to him and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But he was deeply dismayed by these words, and he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property. And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, ‘How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!”***

\*\* We need to recognize that the same commitment is not required of all!

I think the preacher I heard recently say that this passage was not about money had it understood correctly. What Jesus is saying to this rich, young ruler is that these things will not make your life meaningful when you can follow Christ at any cost. Riches and advantages have an attraction, but they also have a bondage to our time and energy. As one asked recently in a seminar, “Do you own the things that you have, or do they own you?” He illustrated that with a man who owned a car but spent all of his time maintaining and polishing that car. This Scripture should cause us to pause and ask ourselves, what things in our life might we hesitate to give up if Christ clearly asked us to leave them behind and follow Him?

**The Important “I”**

**II Corinthians 6:14-7:1 *“Do not be mismatched with unbelievers; for what do righteousness and lawlessness share together, or what does light have in common with darkness? Or what harmony does Christ have with Belial, or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? Or what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I will dwell among them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘And do not touch what is unclean;  
and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,’ says the Lord Almighty.* *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let’s cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”***

…I believe that this Scripture is the best and clearest call to holiness in Scripture!

Just as I think the 13th chapter of I Corinthians was Paul’s first solution for this church, so I think this portion of Scripture calling them to a life of holiness is the solution the Apostle Paul offers in the second letter. Just as a wife separates her life from others to be close to her husband, so we separate our lives to be close to Him.

\*\* The Precious Promise—being His child, He as our Father

The intimacy offered by choosing to come out and be separate is significant. Of all the promises God gives us in Scripture, this is the most important one. To have Him is to have everything. To have everything and not Him is not a happy life now or in eternity. The **joys of intimacy** with the Father cannot be underestimated.

\*\* The Purity Possible—cleansing ourselves! (John 17:17-19)

**John 17:17-19 *“…Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. Just as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.***

Notice in this verse as well as in John 17, it is we who cleanse ourselves. He guides us, but we willingly obey His instructions. As the “old-timers” used to say as they referred to Elijah on Mount Carmel, **“We build the altar, but God sends the fire!!!”** I am afraid that we too often build organizations and buildings today and then ask God to bless them, rather than follow His directions for our lives.

Cleansing ourselves in this passage “let us cleanse” is in the aorist, subjective tense, meaning it is a one-time event…one that dramatically changes things for your life, much like cutting of the chicken’s head. Once you have done that, there is no need to look for eggs in the hen house the next morning.

\*\* The Perfection Process—in the fear (worship/awe) of God.

It is interesting to me that this word, perfecting, is a present, active, participle, giving witness to the on-going reality of making the perfection ever more vital throughout our lives. The perfection here is the Jewish idea of perfection—fulfilling the purpose for which we were made. It is not the Greek idea of perfection that comes from Plato’s “shadow on a wall,” thinking of a perfect horse or a perfect man. It is “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done…” translated into our lives and daily witness.

HAVE YOU INVITED THE SPIRIT OF GOD INTO YOUR LIFE?

**GO FOLLOW JESUS THIS WEEK!!!**