

SOME BENEFITS OF A MATURING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

MARK 2:18-20 - A MINISTRY OF JOY

1. REVIEW:

- A. **LEGALISM/RELIGION IS OBEYING A SET OF RULES. IT KEEPS MANY CHRISTIANS AND ALL NON-CHRISTIANS FROM A MATURING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD... THE MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP OF ALL!**

2. EIGHT BENEFITS OF A MATURING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST:

- A. **Romans 5:1-11 (NASB)** Therefore, **having been justified by faith**, we have (1) **peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**, through whom also we have obtained our **introduction** (2) (**ACCESS**) by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in (3) **hope of the glory of God**. And not only this, but we also **exult in our** (4) **tribulations**, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the (5) **love of God** has been poured out within our hearts through (6) **the Holy Spirit** who was given to us. For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be (7) **saved from the wrath of God** through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also (8) **exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ**, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

- B. **ONE: PEACE** — **Romans 5:1** Therefore, **since we have been made right in God's sight by faith**, we have **peace with God** because of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

1. NOTICE: PAUL DOES **NOT** SAY THAT AS CHRISTIANS WE HAVE THE PEACE **OF** GOD, **BUT** PEACE **WITH** GOD.

- a. THEY ARE **TWO DIFFERENT THINGS**: THE PEACE "**OF**" GOD IS **TEMPORARY**, IT **COMES AND GOES**, DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH WE'RE **WILLING TO TRUST** GOD IN OUR **PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES**.

- b. PEACE "**WITH**" GOD IS AN **ENTIRELY DIFFERENT SITUATION**.

1) SOMEONE MIGHT SAY, "I'VE **MADE** MY PEACE "**WITH**" GOD."

2) **HOWEVER**, PEACE "**WITH**" GOD DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY... IT IS A **GIFT**.

3) WE **DON'T MAKE** IT... IT IS A **GIFT** FROM **GOD** AT THE **MOMENT** WE **RECEIVE** CHRIST AS OUR **SAVIOR**.

4) PEACE "**WITH**" GOD IS **PERMANENT**, A FIXED **CHANGE** IN OUR **POSITION** FROM **SINNER** TO **SAVED**.

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- C. **TWO: ACCESS** — Romans 5:2 (NASB) through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

1. THE ORIGINAL GREEK SUGGESTS TWO DEFINITIONS FOR THE WORD "INTRODUCTION":
 - a. FIRST, IT MEANS INTRODUCTION INTO THE PRESENCE OF ROYALTY.
 - b. SECOND, IT IMPLIES THE TRANSFORMATION WHEN A SHIP, WHICH HAS BEEN OUT ON THE STORM-TOSSED SEA, ARRIVES SAFELY IN THE HARBOR WHERE THE IT RESTS IN CALM AND PEACEFUL WATER.
2. NON-BELIEVERS ARE LIKE SHIPS THAT ARE BANTERED AND BUFFETED BY THE RAGING WINDS AND VICIOUS WAVES OF THIS WORLD.
 - a. HOWEVER, CHRISTIANS CAN BE IN A POSITION OF SAFETY, LIKE SHIPS IN A HARBOR THAT ARE SAFE FROM STORMS... OR BE IN A POSITION TO GROW SPIRITUALLY FROM THE STORMS OF LIFE.
 - 1) WE MAY BE KNOCKED AROUND BY THE WINDS AND WAVES OF LIFE: WE'LL LOSE OUR JOBS, BURY OUR LOVED ONES, SUFFER ILLNESS, BUT WE HAVE ACCESS TO PEACE OF GOD.
 - i. NOT ONLY THAT BUT OUR ULTIMATE DESTINATION IN HEAVEN IS THE SAFEST HARBOR IMAGINABLE!

- D. **THREE: HOPE** — Romans 5:2b (NASB) and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

1. FOR BELIEVERS "HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD" IS THE ETERNAL CONTINUATION OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IN HEAVEN THAT BEGAN IN FAITH ON EARTH.

- E. **FOUR: TRIBULATION/TRIALS** — Romans 5:3-4 (NASB) And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

1. James 1:2-4 (NASB) Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result (SANCTIFICATION), so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

2. "THROUGH IT ALL" - ANDRE CROUCH

- a. "I thank God for the mountains,
and I thank Him for the valleys,
I thank Him for the storms He brought me through.
For if I'd never had a problem,
I wouldn't know God could solve them,
I'd never know what faith in God could do."

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3. REMEMBER: GOD ALLOWS TROUBLE/TRIALS SO CHRISTIANS CAN MATURE SPIRITUALLY = SANCTIFICATION.
 - a. HE DOES NOT CAUSE TROUBLE/TRIALS, BUT HE OBVIOUSLY ALLOWS THEM.
- F. FIVE: LOVE — Romans 5:5 (NASB) and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
 1. GOD'S LOVE IS THE FIFTH RESULT OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.
 - a. Romans 5:8 (NASB) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
 2. IF YOU'RE A CHRISTIAN WHO IS MATURING IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD'S ABIDING LOVE FOR YOU.
 - a. 1 John 4:16 (NASB) "And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him"
- G. SIX: THE HOLY SPIRIT — Romans 5:5 (NASB) and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
 1. SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:
 - a. THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS ENABLE CHRISTIANS WITH SPIRITUAL GIFTS... LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, AND SELF CONTROL.
 - b. THE HOLY SPIRIT ACTS AS A SEAL GUARANTEEING CHRISTIANS ETERNAL LIFE.
 - c. THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS CHRISTIANS UNDERSTAND GOD'S WORD.
 - d. INTERCEDES WITH GOD ON BEHALF OF CHRISTIANS.
 - e. THE HOLY SPIRIT ACTS AS A HELPER, COMFORTER, AND COUNSELOR FOR CHRISTIANS.
- H. SEVEN: SAFETY — Romans 5:9 (NASB) Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.
 1. SAFETY IS THE SEVENTH RESULT OF HAVING A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.
 2. NO MATTER HOW BAD IT GETS IN THIS WORLD, BELIEVERS ARE IN A POSITION OF SAFETY... WE'LL BE SAVED FROM THE "WRATH" THAT IS TO COME.

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1. REVELATION 6–19 DESCRIBES THE TRIBULATION AS A TIME OF ECONOMIC COLLAPSE, FAMINE, BLOODSHED, AND COSMIC UPHEAVAL. IT WILL BE THE “WRATH OF GOD” POURED OUT FOR SIN.
 - a. BUT AS BELIEVERS, WE’LL BE SAVED/SAFE FROM GOD’S “WRATH” FOR OUR SINS BECAUSE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM THROUGH JESUS CHRIST AS OUR SUBSTITUTE!
 - b. IN THE WORDS OF THE POET:
 - c. “ON HIM ALMIGHTY VENGEANCE FELL
THAT WOULD HAVE SUNK A WORLD TO HELL.
HE BORE IT FOR A CHOSEN RACE,
AND THUS BECOMES OUR HIDING PLACE.”
- I. EIGHT: JOY BECAUSE OF OUR RECONCILIATION TO GOD— Romans 5:10-11 (NASB) For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.
 1. PEACE, ACCESS, HOPE, SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH TRIBULATION, LOVE, THE HOLY SPIRIT, SAFETY FROM WRATH, AND JOY... EACH OF THOSE ARE A RESULT OF THE MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP IN LIFE, BOTH NOW AND FOREVER.
 2. THE FINAL RESULT OF GROWING IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS THE JOY WE SHOULD FEEL JUST KNOWING THAT BECAUSE OF JESUS CHRIST WE ARE RECONCILED TO GOD.
 3. CHRISTIANS SHOULD EXPERIENCE JOY AS WE CONSIDER WHO GOD IS, WHAT HE HAS DONE, WHAT HE IS DOING, AND HOPE FOR WHAT HE IS GOING TO DO BECAUSE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.
 4. REMEMBER: HAPPINESS DEPENDS ON OUR CIRCUMSTANCES... JOY DEPENDS ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.
3. JESUS’ MINISTRY OF JOY
 - A. Mark 2:18-20 (NASB) John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. “But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.”
 - B. “ONCE THE POT OF CONTROVERSY BEGINS TO BOIL, EVERY MEETING BETWEEN JESUS AND THE PHARISEES TURNS UP THE HEAT.” – David McKenna

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- C. ACCORDING TO BIBLICAL LAW, THE JEWS ARE REQUIRED TO FAST ONLY ONE TIME A YEAR, ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.
1. SEE: Leviticus 16:30-31 AND Isaiah 58:3 FOR "HUMBLE YOUR SOULS" AND "FASTING".
- D. THE PHARISEES, HOWEVER, OVEREXTEND AND OVEREXERCISED THE LAW AND THEY DEMANDED THAT THE PEOPLE FAST TWO DAYS A WEEK.
1. IN ORDER TO LEAD THAT RITUAL, THE PHARISEES WHITEN THEIR FACES AND SHRED THEIR ROBES AS PROOF OF THEIR PENANCE.
 2. THE RESULT: OVER TIME FASTING LOSES ITS MEANING AND THE PHARISEES RELIGION LOSES ITS JOY.
- E. NOTE: FASTING IS THE ISSUE THAT THE PHARISEES USE TO CONCOCT A SCHEME TO TRAP JESUS.
- F. THEIR CONFRONTATION COMES IN THE FORM OF A RELATIVELY INNOCENT QUESTION... John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they (the Pharisees) came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" (V. 18).
1. THEIR STRATEGY IS OBVIOUS:
 - a. THEY WANT TO SPLIT THE INFANT MOVEMENT INTO FACTIONS THAT THEY CAN CONTROL.
- G. UH-OH: BY THIS TIME, THE PHARISEES SHOULD KNOW BETTER!!
1. JESUS ANSWERS WITH ANOTHER OF HIS SKILLED COUNTERQUESTIONS.
 2. NOTE: THAT HE POSES HIS COUNTERQUESTION IN THE VERY TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST HIMSELF.
 - a. JUST BEFORE JOHN THE BAPTIST WENT TO PRISON, HIS DISCIPLES HAD COME TO HIM WITH AN ENVIOUS REPORT:
 - b. John 3:25-26 (NASB) Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him."
 3. HOWEVER, RATHER THAN BEING UPSET, JOHN THE BAPTIST REBUKES HIS DISCIPLES WITH THE REMINDER THAT HE IS NOT THE CHRIST... IN FACT, HE IS GLAD, NOT SAD, TO HEAR ABOUT JESUS' SUCCES.
 - a. AND TO ILLUSTRATE HIS POINT, JOHN USES THE ANALOGY OF A BRIDEGROOM:

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- b. John 3:29-30 (NASB) "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this **joy** of mine has been made full. "He must increase, but I must decrease.

H. TO REFRESH THE MEMORIES OF THE PHARISEES AS WELL AS JOHN'S DISCIPLES, JESUS EMPLOYS THE ANALOGY OF THE BRIDEGROOM THAT WAS USED BY JOHN IN ORDER TO CONFIRM HIS MINISTRY OF JOY AS A GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

1. NOTE: AFTER A JEWISH WEDDING, THE BRIDE AND THE BRIDEGROOM DO NOT MAKE A FAST EXIT FOR A HONEYMOON.

a. THEY WAIT FOR A WEEK SO THAT THEY CAN CELEBRATE THE JOY OF THEIR MARRIAGE WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

1) DURING THIS WEEK OF FEASTING, ALL OF THE RULES FOR FASTING ARE LIFTED... JOY REIGNS SUPREME!

2. JOHN THE BAPTIST PICTURES HIMSELF AS A FRIEND OF CHRIST, THE BRIDEGROOM, DURING HIS WEDDING WEEK.

a. AND, BY HIS OWN WORDS, HIS JOY IS FULFILLED.

3. FACT: JESUS TURNS THE PHARISEES' CRITICISM INTO AN OPPORTUNITY TO ANNOUNCE THAT JOY IS A QUALITY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD THAT THE PHARISEES HAVE LOST!

4. CONCLUSION:

A. CONTRARY TO SOME OPINIONS, JESUS DOES NOT DESTROY THE DISCIPLINE OF FASTING.

B. AFTER QUOTING JOHN'S WORDS THAT SPEAK OF JOY, HE EXTENDS THE WEDDING ANALOGY TO REMIND HIS HEARERS THAT THE TIME WILL COME WHEN THE BRIDEGROOM IS TAKEN AWAY... AND THAT FASTING WILL BE APPROPRIATE THEN.

1. JESUS IS SAYING TO THE PHARISEES THAT THEIR RELIGION HAS CAUSED THEN TO LOSE THEIR SENSE OF TIMING:

a. THERE IS A TIME FOR JOY; THERE IS A TIME FOR SORROW.

b. THERE IS A TIME FOR FEASTING; THERE IS A TIME FOR FASTING.

c. TRUTH: THE PHARISEES TAKE THEMSELVES TOO SERIOUSLY!

C. IN PSYCHIATRIC TERMS, THE PHARISEES ARE SPIRITUALLY NEUROTIC.

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1. THEIR EXPECTATIONS HAVE BEEN BUILT SO HIGH THAT NEITHER THEY NOR THEIR FOLLOWERS CAN EVER MEET THEM.
 2. THEREFORE... THERE IS AN EVER-WIDENING GAP BETWEEN THEIR SPIRITUAL EXPECTATIONS AND THEIR RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCE, SO BOTH THE PHARISEES AND THEIR FOLLOWERS GO ROUND AND ROUND IN A HOPELESS CYCLE OF GUILT.
 3. THE GOOD NEWS: JESUS CAME TO BREAK THAT HOPELESS CYCLE... UNFORTUNATELY, THE PHARISEES' DEFENSES ARE TOO HIGH AND TOO MUCH OF THEIR EGOS ARE AT STAKE TO UNDERSTAND.
- D. TRUTH: THE COMMON PEOPLE HEAR JESUS GLADLY, HOWEVER... THE PHARISEES CHOOSE TO LIVE IN DENIAL AND NEED A SHOCK TREATMENT!!