

GETTING IN SHAPE FOR YOUR NEW LIFE

Galatians 4:19 “My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you”

Are we in shape for the new life God has provided us? By his mercy and grace God through Christ has redeemed his people from the kingdom of Satan, Sin and Death and delivered us into the Kingdom of his Son and his righteousness and life. Col 1:13-14 God has given us a new position and a new identity in Christ.

But we also see that salvation is more than sins forgiven and righteousness credited, as amazing and wonderful as that is. It is more than life in heaven after death on this planet. Salvation is us being united to Christ now in such an intimate and powerful way that his life, by his Spirit, lives in us and moves us. 1Jn 5:11-12, Joh 10:10, Rom 5:10

Salvation is a life where God forms and shapes us into people fit for His kingdom. People who reflect his glory in all that we do. Salvation begins now in this life and this body. It's an eternal life here and now in the sense that it is forever united with our eternal God the moment we believe and are made alive by his powerful spirit. We have been redeemed and set free now to actually BECOME holy and righteous by God's grace and power. God intends that we display the power and character of God by how we live.

Why is it that so many don't experience this life? Why do we end up disappointed with our lack of Christ-likeness? Do we really believe the Gospel, this good news that we can be different—that we could actually be like Jesus and follow in his ways?

How does God shape us into His image? Scripture tells us that it is the result of both God's work and OUR work. Rom. 13:14, Phil. 2:12-15.

The Bible describes a process that has been called the Golden Triangle of Spiritual Growth because there are three essential aspects, all of which are inseparable from the others:

- 1) Trusting in and interacting with the Holy Spirit - This is opening our lives to the interaction with the Spirit of God living in us. Gal 5:25, Joh 14:16-17, Joh 14:26 The Holy Spirit gently waits for our invitation to him to act upon us, with us, and for us. You can always recognize Him by the way he moves us toward what Jesus would be and do as we face the circumstances and decisions in our lives. Joh 16:13-15

- 2) Testing of our faith through trials and every day problems - By enduring trials and everyday problems with patience, we gain assurance that God is ruling in our hearts. Jas 1:2-4 James doesn't say "if" you face trials, but "when." They're going to come! There is no doubt that James learned this from his brother, Jesus, as everything Jesus taught us to do was something that he had to practice daily in circumstances just like ours. In the trials of daily existence, in family and village life, he verified the sufficiency of God's care to those who simply trust and obey him.
- 3) Training in the disciplines of Christ-likeness or spiritual disciplines –
 - a. There is no complete list because they could be any activity that we engage in by our direct effort and power now that will ENABLE us to do in the future what is currently beyond our power and ability.
 - b. This is the difference between trying harder and training to be stronger. 1Ti 4:7-10 , 2Pe 1:5-10 , 1Co 9:24-27.
 - c. Disciplines for the spiritual life are a means to our goal of becoming people that naturally live and act as Jesus would. They are not holy and righteous activities in and of themselves. They are only a means to the grace and power God gives us to become righteous people, shaped and fit for His kingdom.
 - d. Disciplines of Abstinence help with the Sins of Commission and Disciplines of Engagement help with the Sins of Omission.
 - e. Spiritual growth requires our effort as well as God's. Grace is not opposed to effort—grace is opposed to earning.

NEWCOMER PARTY

Friday, January 20th 7pm

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