

Monday, 21 January 2019 Colossians 1:7-9

just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Two elements of this passage jumped out to me. The first is the faithfulness of Epaphras in letting others know that the congregation in Colossi is an obedient congregation and expresses the love of the LORD to others. Do I take Epaphras as an example and spread the examples of others to those who need to know that their witness has borne fruit?

Secondly, as I hear these stories from others, am I faithful in lifting up those congregations in praise and thanksgiving? I need to be a Barnabas, especially in prayer.

Tuesday, 22 January 2019 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

Does all my preaching, teaching, and conversation reflect the power, the full conviction that comes only from the Holy Spirit? Are there times when I temporize and tone the message down because I'm too unsure of how the message will be received? I need always to remember that the LORD did not give me a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and sound judgment (2 Tim. 1:7, paraphrased)

Wednesday, 23 January 2019 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

I have never read this passage and noted that Paul uses "affliction" to describe the challenges faced by the saints in Thessalonica. I checked Strongs, and yes, all variations of the Greek word carry a note of stress, even persecution being given as a possible alternative. How can that be? They didn't have to deal with Facebook or a political system driven by innuendo and lies. Or did they face a culture that was as intolerant to the Faith given once for all (Jude 1:3) as we face today?

I suspect the answer is yes and the solution is the same. They received the Word...with the joy of the Holy Spirit. May I do the same.

Thursday, 24 January 2019 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

There are many passages throughout Paul's letters which detail the various behaviors that are offensive to the LORD, God, the Almighty, perhaps the most complete list is in Romans 1. For someone who claims to be a Christian to knowingly and deliberately participate in one of these sins is offensive to the Godhead. It is expected, even definitive, for those outside the pale. How can I claim to love and honor my LORD if I cherrypick my way through His commandments? John 14:23 speaks directly to this point.

Friday, 25 January 2019 1 Thessalonians 5:19

Do not quench the Spirit.

One of my jobs in college was as an orderly in a small county hospital in western Illinois. As the only male on staff in the evenings or during the night, I got pressed into service whenever necessary. I won't go into details, but one night my help was needed in dealing with a situation so horrific that it is still burned into my mind. 60 years later! The stench! The terror! The awfulness of the situation as I and others attended to a man for whom there was no hope — nothing we could do to save his life.

What's the connection? If I am living a life of deliberate sin, even if I've said the sinner's prayer, how can the Holy Spirit minister when I am that man, but refusing His guidance and help? My experience in that ER is nothing compared to the stench of my sin. Of course, the Spirit is quenched by my chosen disobedience. I am asking the Holiest to participate in a situation where I am behaving in a manner that is abhorrent to Him. A situation where I need to repent and seek His guidance, not approve of my feeble attempts to justify my disobedience.

Saturday, 26 January 2019 2 Thessalonians 2:13

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

A cooperative venture between Ford and Volkswagen was reported by Reuters this morning, estimated to save both companies billions of dollars. Chump change compared to the value of the project supervised by the Holy Spirit and assisted by me. The Spirit provides the leadership in the process of sanctification, and I'm responsible for implementation through the Belief cycle. To believe is to trust, to trust is to commit, to commit is to obey, to obey is to be faithful, to be faithful is to believe and on and on we go.

Lord's Day, 27 January 2019 Psalm 119:37

Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.

Worthless things, lack of understanding, selfish gain—all part of what separates me from You. Lord, strengthen my belief and rid me of this unbelief and lack of trust. I want to see You; I want to see Jesus!

VOICES TOGETHER

Daily Meditations from the Scriptures



January 21-27, 2019

Prayer of the week, based on Paul's prayer in: Colossians 4:2-4

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

LORD, we pray for our [Congregation] that we would become men and women who are devoted to prayer. Devoted to prayer for the advancement of the Kingdom, for our ministries, for our families, for all in our Personal Mission Field.

We pray that we would become those who pray without ceasing that our message would be true to You, that it would declare that awesome and incomprehensible mystery that Your love for Your creation would bring You to the Cross for our redemption.

We pray that our proclamation of the message of grace and mercy would be clearly heard and understood by all to whom we are called to minister. *Amen*

To fear or not to fear, that is the question.

The fear of the Lord, an expression that occurs many times in Scripture, 142 in the ESV in various forms, is not well understood in the Church today. For many, the phrase represents a weak and flabby description of an overly saccharine spiritual being of some sort. It certainly does not include the concept of the LORD, God the Almighty who spoke all things into being and who controls all things.

Join with me in examining the fear of the LORD and seeking an understanding of life in the Kingdom of Heaven in the here and now as guided by that fear.

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