

## SEEKING THE FACE OF GOD (Mark 10:27)

After having read the Scripture out of a sense of awe I am forced to ask myself: how did the people mentioned in the Bible get so close to God. I would love to get up one morning, drive to the nearest garden, sit on the bench and wait for God to arrive. Once He comes into the garden to have Him take me into His arms and tell and empower me to become holy. I often wonder how Enoch was able to walk so closely with God that he was taken to heaven and never tasted death. Truthfully, we must admit most of us are not like Enoch. We do not walk with God in His garden talking to Him on a daily basis. There are many times in our lives when we are distant from God and often go days, weeks, months and yes even years without hearing His voice. While it is true that sin separates us from a holy God, it is equally true that the blood of Christ can also restore our relationship with Him. The question is how do I seek the face of God and is it possible to see Him everywhere I go? Seeking the face of God and walking in His garden with Him requires that we take some specific steps: 1). We need to take time to be holy, 2). Accept the truth – Change is Painful but Necessary for Christian Maturity, 3. We cannot become holy without His guidance and power, and 4). We need a helping hand from other Christians to stay on the right path.

### 1) Take Time to be Holy

The things we are mostly likely to do are those things in which we feel are important enough to put effort into. If we believe seeking the eyes of Christ in all that we do is the most important thing that we can do in life, then we will adjust our activities in accordance with this belief. If we do not value God's presence above everything else, then we will not be motivated to remove the sin in our lives and in turn we will only get glimpses of Him; not the walk in the garden that we so desperately need. My motivation is transparent:

1. **Being Found Faithful when Jesus Returns** - Matthew 24:42 - Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. Wouldn't it be nice to be found reading His word when He returns? Wouldn't it be nice to be found praying on your knees? Wouldn't it be nice to be helping the poor when Jesus comes in the clouds? YES, it certainly would. But if we spend most of our time living for this world then what is the most likely activity that we are going to be doing when He returns? Watching TV, going to sports events, telling dirty jokes, swearing, ignoring Him ...
2. **Found Faithful at the Judgment Seat** - 2 Corinthians 5:10 - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Even if Christ does not return in our lifetime, we all must face Christ and give an account for every moment we lived our lives. Are you ready to give that account? Will there be more Hallelujahs come out of your mouth for the moments you were on the narrow path or move shame from living on the broad one?

Having passed from death (1 Corinthians 15:50) to life (2 Corinthians 5:17) we as Christians should overflow with joy to be given the opportunity to renew our minds on a daily basis (Romans 12:2). In practicality we are still way to worldly. Is Jesus more important to you than your family? Luke 14:26 states: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple." This does not mean that Scripture teaches we literally hate our families but only that we love God more than our families. Is Jesus more important than money or being entertained by the world? If we want to see the eyes of Christ, then we have to realize we have spent enough time living the ways of this world (1 Peter 4:3)! Christ has offered us something way better than putting our hope in a dying world! To seek and see the eyes of Christ we must want to trade the temporary happiness that this world has to offer for living waters that give unspeakable joy! With a genuine desire to no longer merely let life happen, we must seek Jesus with all our heart and He promises that He will draw close to us as we draw near to Him.

## **2) Accept the truth – Change is Painful but Necessary for Christian Maturity**

About six months ago I went to the doctor and she recommended that I exercise more. I laughed for even when I have a hang nail that is what she usually says will cure me. Getting a little older and a little heavier, I decided her advice was not far off the mark. So I purchased a bowflex and started to work out. At first, I was embraced at how few weights I could actually handle. The first session I must admit I was very thankful that I had not gone to the gym for I truly was a 200 lbs weakling! I hooked up the weights and began my workout. It was harder than I could ever imagine. I sweat as the muscles were torn all over my body. The next day I could barely get out of bed! It seemed like every part of my body was broken. But after a day or so my muscles for the most part healed. When I did my second work out it was much easier so I was able to lift more weights. The same is true for spiritual maturity. Conforming to the ways of this world and getting fat on SIN is easy. Anyone can become a 200 lbs fat sinner! But to exercise in God's kingdom is very painful. Every time we get close to God He demands we change. Each time we change it is very painful because we have to give up sins that used to give us great pleasure. The more we give up the sin though the more we can handle or His demands for further change.

Change is painful. It is painful for instance to love those inside the church who have different goals, expectation and dreams than you do! To make room in your life to love them is not easy, hence why unity inside the body of Christ is a rarity. It is also painful to spend more time with Go because that leaves less time to work and make money. It requires a focus shift from desiring earthly to desiring heavenly treasures. The most painful part though comes when God asks us to give up the freedom to choose our own path in life. John 3:20 states that whoever hates evil will not approach the light because their deeds will be exposed. As God shows us the evil desires we still have He commands us to stop doing them. It is truly hard to give up the pleasure of sinning but without a total surrender of our life how can we truly follow Him (Luke 9:23)?

### **3. We Cannot Become Holy Without His guidance and Power**

Mark 10:17-27 tells us a story of the rich young ruler. To understand this story, we first need to understand the culture of the time. In the Old Testament when a person followed God's commands He would bless them and when a person rejected His commands, God would punish them. One day a rich young ruler asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. By his own admission he believed he had kept the commands but still felt something was missing. When Jesus told him to sell all he had and give the money to the poor the rich young ruler left sad because he had much and would not give what he had back to God. The apostles asked Jesus if one so blessed as the young ruler will not make it into heaven then who could? Jesus responded by saying only by the power of God is it possible to be granted a relationship with Him! We as Christians simply cannot stop sinning without the power of God's Spirit living within us! But with God, like the Psalmist in 91:14-16 can be assured when we reach out to Him He will rescue, protect, answer, comfort and satisfy us with His love. Nothing is impossible for God!

Even when we are lost and confused on the dark path it is God who shines His light and places us on the right path. In a world that teaches absolute truth does not exist it is sometimes hard to know the difference between the right and wrong path. When we lack wisdom we are to ask God and without finding fault He will shine brightly that He wants us to take (James 1:5). Even when we don't ask God we have a comforter inside us who through wordless groans intercedes, asking God to provide answers to questions not even asked!

### **4. We Need a Helping Hand from other Christians to Stay on the Right Path**

Without the body of Christ, we are not whole! In 1 Corinthians 12:4-5 Paul states there are different kinds of gifts but the same Spirit and different kinds of service but the same Lord. Since one does not have all the spirit gifts, one cannot be the whole body of Christ. According to this passage, then we need each other! Instead of ostracizing and excluding those who are weak in the faith we are called to love, nurture and help them grow so that they in turn can help us! Unity is so important that James (5:16) tells us to confess our faults with each other so that through forgiveness unity might be maintained. The church is not to be a place of conflict but a place where Christians can build each other up in the faith!

### **Conclusion**

It is possible to seek and find the eyes of Christ. We need to no longer merely let life happen but take the time to be holy. During this time of seeking God one must brace oneself for the pain that comes from letting go of the fleeting pleasures of sin. One simply cannot become holy by oneself. Relying on He who created us and through the tender love of the body of Christ we can and are commanded to be holy in His sight!