

INTRODUCTION

This year, we have been revisiting some of the fundamental principles and doctrines which a Christian should follow now they have set course on a life with Christ. If you have chosen Him, then you cannot walk in ways which you previously did.

Thanks once again to the ladies for displaying a visual reminder of the trials which **“Christian”** faced on his journey as described in Bunyan’s tale of the Pilgrims Progress.

His journey is the same one we face too. It is fraught with danger and at times there are lonely and despairing challenges. You may feel that you’re all alone or walking with people who want to discourage you from following this journey. They will tell you to give up- turn back – live the life you formerly knew.

But Pilgrims Progress is also a great narrative of hope and the triumph of faith. You see, **“Christian”** eventually sheds his unbearable load (of sin) which was on his back and he finds his way to the Celestial City.

Talking about “doctrines” may be a little scary to some of us so let’s think of them as good guiding principles which will give us the framework for our walk with Christ as well as an understanding of the accountability which He requires.

So far, we’ve looked at

- The presence of God
- The existence of God
- The character of God
- The nature of God
- The living word of God
- Our adoption into son-ship and into the family of God
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification - being made holy and set apart.

Today I want to talk a little bit about the choices we can make and what God requires from us. (***“Walk before me and be blameless...”*** Gen 17 v 3)

WHAT DOES GOD REALLY WANT FROM EACH OF US?

We heard the answer last week from John Shergold.

What God wants from you – *What He craves and desires* – is our fellowship, an intimacy with Him.

The Bible describes Him *as a jealous God* and He wants you and me just for Himself. We're to have no one else; nothing else; Him first and foremost in our lives. ("I will serve no foreign god.....")

This is what you and I were created for – to be a pleasure to God

- **He made you in His likeness and image.** You and I are the crowning glory of His creation. Unlike other created things, you and I can choose between right and wrong because we have a conscience. Unlike His other created things, we can talk to God through prayer. – *"What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man that Thou dost care for him? Yet you made him a little lower than God, and dost crown him with glory and majesty!"* (Psalm 8v4-5)
- **God had a plan for your life before you were born.** David said in Psalm 139 v 13, *"For Thou didst form my inward parts: Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb"*. God said to Jeremiah, *"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you"* (Jer 1 v 5). You and I were not an accident. We were planned and much anticipated.
- **God made you for His good pleasure.** Revelation 4 v11 says, *"Worthy art Thou O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created"* – the AV says, - *"And for Thy pleasure they were created"*

KNOWING THAT HE MADE ME FOR HIMSELF, HOW SHOULD I WALK?

If Jan and I go out for a meal to a restaurant, she will invariably try something new whereas I won't be that adventurous in case I don't like it because you can't send it back and re-order at the restaurant's expense.

I'm also staggered by the vast choices on some menus – choices, choices, choices!!

The Christian life isn't about being confused by a vast array of choices. It's actually very precise and very clear.

Jesus simply said, "Follow Me"

So why is it that we find it hard to discern the right way and we get confused by competing choices?

Since I stopped working in Industry, I don't need so many suits, shirts and ties. I have given some away but I know I need to thin out my wardrobe.

We all gather *stuff* to support and underpin our lives. I don't just mean clothes.

We gather opinions, practices, fall-back positions to protect ourselves from the icy blast of the world.

The Bible says that, *"We are to live in the world, but we're not to be a part of it"*.

Too often what you see in Christians' lives is all together the wrong emphasis. Too much of the world; not enough of the lifestyle that says, your merely passing through and that this is not your final destination.

We can get obsessed with position; status; money; wealth; power; ambition; misplaced purpose. The list is endless.

But what does God want?

Just you and the closeness of your fellowship!

CAN WE ACHIEVE THIS?

I want to introduce you or remind you afresh of one of these fundamental principles or frameworks which help us live our lives in Christ.

And it is the concept of **APPROPRIATION**.

This means we take something or demonstrate something that is already in our possession but perhaps we didn't know we had it or we had forgotten about its existence.

"Appropriation does not necessarily mean to gain something new but to set aside for our practical possession something that already belongs to us." - Miles J Stanford.

So this aspect of our Christian walk requires an active faith and wise choices.

We are told to **Put off** or **Shake off** various things

- *"Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside (or put off) the old self with its evil practices" (Col. 3:9).*
- *"In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside (or put off) the old self which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit" (Eph 4 v 22)*

- *“Therefore, laying aside (or putting off) all falsehood, speak the truth...” (Eph 4 v 25)*
- *“Let us therefore lay aside (or put off) the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light” (Rom 13 v 12)*
- *“Let us lay aside (put off) every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us...” (Heb 12 v 1)*
- *“Putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness....” (James 1 v 21)*
- *“Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander...” (1Peter 2 v1)*

That’s a big list! It talks about taking off soiled and damaged clothes so that we can be dressed in fine robes of righteousness.

We all like to look our best. But the world will soon work out who is living the real deal. You cannot profess a changed lifestyle without changing your ways.

And God is wanting right now for you to make the first move.

God sees and knows all things.

He sees when we struggle with impure sexual thoughts or practices; He sees when we are weak and foolish and follow a pathway of hatred and lies: He sees when we spend our time unwisely with company which will corrupt us and lead us astray. He sees when we do not use our money and talents wisely.

But He doesn’t condemn us. He wants us to change and walk a different way. He will forgive us if we do this.

But it requires an active participation on our behalf.

This is where you must **APPROPRIATE** all of the blessings and benefits which are in Christ and walk in them or **put them on.**

We are told to **“Put on”**

- *“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed (or put on) yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3 v 27)*
- *“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh....(Rom 13 v 14)*
- *“..and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (Col 3 v 10)*
- *“and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph 4 v 24)*

- “Put on **the full armour of God**, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (Eph 6 v 11)
- “...put on a **heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience**” (Col 3 v 12)
- “ And beyond all these things, **put on love**, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Col 3 v14)

The Bible tells us that we have already been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus (Eph 1 v 3) so we need to believe them; claim them; appropriate them; wait for them to be manifested in our lives; and finally, walk in them.

We need to get ourselves away from a position where we either feel we are **desperately needy** all the time or one in which we **simply admire** what’s potentially attainable to one where we have a **sure and unswerving conviction** that what He has promised, that is what He will deliver in and through us.

It isn’t just a case of “name it and claim it”. In my experience, God’s ways require us to tread a pathway of denial and humility.

As one preacher said, “God is not interested in your comfort. He’s interested in your character”

T. Austin-Sparks said, “Every bit of truth we receive, if we receive it livingly, will take us into conflict and will be established through conflict. It will be worthless until there has been a battle over it..... You have taken a position—yes but you have not really got it yet, the real value of it has not been proved. You have not come into the real significance of it until there has been some sore conflict in relation to it...”

CONCLUSION

Are you and I willing to die to ourselves in order that we might live Godly and holy lives well pleasing to Him?

Jesus said, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”* (John 12 v 24)

Tomorrow we will bury our dear brother Bill Turpin who lived an exemplary life. We will grieve and mourn his passing. We will also celebrate a life well run.

Jesus is talking here about His own death to come. But I think this verse also talks about us and what he expects from us.

We will see hundreds at the church tomorrow because Bill learned to die to self and put on the new man created after Christ. And a result, Bill bore much fruit.

