

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, March 24, 2018

As we once again come to that time of year when we observe Passover and Easter, I felt compelled to reflect on what those events mean to me personally. Paul beautifully describes how we are to look at Christ in Philippians 2:5-8: *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped. But made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross."* That pretty well sums up how Christians observe Holy Week.

Now, I do my best to be obedient to my Father in Heaven, but I'm not so sure about this being *obedient unto death!* If confronted by someone wanting to take my life since I confess Christ as my Lord and Savior, I honestly don't know how I would react to such a confrontation. What's important is that my Lord knows exactly how I will react, if that happens to be His plan for my life. More importantly, I know His present purpose for me – to simply share my thoughts and writings with those who will listen. I find great joy in sharing what I learn through these discussions and occasional talks He allows me to give. Enough about me. How about you?

Do you have a handle on your purpose in life? We're all God's children, yet many have not come to grips with that reality. I was forty before I had any understanding of the special relationship available with the Creator of the Universe and the fact that I was made in His image. In Genesis 1:26-27 we're informed *"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them."* I find it gratifying to know that My Father in Heaven created us in His image and I know He has a special purpose for each person He has created.

We're all here as His ambassadors whether we know it or not. Since we've all been created in God's wonderful image, we inherently are designed to be like Him. Unfortunately, the free will He has so graciously given us causes many to gravitate away from Him and become consumed by the world in which we live. It's quite easy to get caught up in our human nature and distance ourselves from our Maker. In fact, it's a daily battle to stay close to God and not get consumed in the ways of this world.

Here's some helpful scripture to hang onto as you strive to remain in God's will. In 1 John 2:15-16 we're instructed *"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world."* In verse 17 John continues *"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."* And that's what our Heavenly Father wants for all His creation. If you find this discussion contrary to the way you presently live, I trust you will seek God's will for your life this day forward.

For most who follow Christ, our opportunity to be *obedient unto death* will come at the eventual end of our earthly existence. I'm prepared to remain faithful to that day when God takes me home even though I doubt it will be soon. Yes, with age there will be numerous trials, but my love for God only increases as my life goes on.

I trust you'll join me in loving God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and all your strength and loving others as we love ourselves. To God be the glory!

Passages to Ponder: 1 Samuel 15:22-23; Isaiah 1:18-20; Jeremiah 26:13; Romans 5:19-20; Titus 1:15-16; 1 Peter 4:16-17

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1 Samuel 15:22-23 New International Version (NIV)

²² But Samuel replied:

“Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
as much as in obeying the LORD?

To obey is better than sacrifice,
and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

²³ For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
he has rejected you as king.”

Isaiah 1:18-20 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁸ “Come now, let us settle the matter,”
says the LORD.

“Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.

¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the good things of the land;

²⁰ but if you resist and rebel,
you will be devoured by the sword.”

For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Jeremiah 26:13 New International Version (NIV)

¹³ Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you.

Romans 5:19-20 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

²⁰ The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,

Titus 1:15-16 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. ¹⁶ They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

1 Peter 4:16-17 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?