

Fourth Quarter Strategies - Saturday, September 26, 2015

Over the past three decades I've observed many who claim Christ as their Savior to be quite comfortable in their faith journey. On the flip side I don't believe I've ever become comfortable in my walk with Christ nor do I intend to. You see, my relationship with Christ is the most awesome experience in the world! My desire is to please God in all I do and in all I can possibly be for His glory. He's Number One in my life and I'm just delighted to know Him as my Father in Heaven. He's my comforter. He's my Rock. He's my Salvation. He's my reason for living an abundant and purposeful life. The rest of this discussion may not be comfortable to consider, but I challenge you to stay with me to the end.

Can you say unequivocally that Christ is the most significant influence in your life? Do you truly consider Him Number One in your life? When life seems almost unbearable can you turn to Him and trust He will bring you through the fiery furnace like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? And when things are going famously, do you give Him the glory or do you find yourself glorying in what you consider to be your accomplishments? And when it comes to priorities in life, do you place others before self and Christ before all? I know these are challenging questions, but if we truly are followers of Christ we need to answer them honestly and reflect on those answers.

Christ needs to be our example in all aspects of life. He did His Father's will even going to the cross for our sake. He gave His life so that we might have eternal life. We don't have to go to the cross, but we need to be aware of His gift to us. If we truly understand what He has done for us, I don't see why any true believer would have trouble answering these questions affirmatively. Perhaps that's the real question. Many who attend church on a regular basis may not be "true believers" in Christ's eyes. I'm not pointing fingers or judging my fellow church attenders, but I suggest that each person needs to take a hard look at their relationship with Christ.

The reason I can confidently talk about my personal relationship the way I do is that day by day I've grown to love Him more and more. If you find yourself comfortable in your Christianity and satisfied with just going to church, being a good person and doing good works, I believe you'd be wise to take a hard look at the depth of your faith and your relationship with Christ. It's quite easy to become complacent. There will come a day when we'll all have to come before God and many will be turned away and He'll say "I never knew you." Yes, Christ did the work on the cross, but we must *realize* our need for a Savior, *repent* of our sinful ways, and *receive* His gift of eternal salvation.

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Daniel 3:16-18; Matthew 7:7-29; Galatians 3:28; Philippians 2:5

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Passages to Ponder: Daniel 3:16-18; Matthew 7:7-29; Galatians 3:28; Philippians 2:5

Daniel 3:16-18 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

Matthew 7:7-29 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! ¹² Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

²⁴ "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

²⁶ "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

²⁸ And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, ²⁹ for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Galatians 3:28 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2:1-5 New King James Version (NKJV)

2 Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³ *Let* nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,