

First Things First (Spiritual Life)

David Halbrook

Just as it is impossible to understanding the “first things” of physical life without God, so it is with spiritual life.

What is spiritual life? Spiritual life is more than consciousness, for even the most rebellious sinner is conscious. “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12). Who has the Son? “He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9). Spiritual life is unity with God which is lost by sin (Ezekiel 18:20; Romans 6:23).

Spiritual life, lost by sin, requires blood Hebrews 9:22 says “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” Jesus came to earth to die so spiritual life would be available.

Spiritual life is regained when sin is forgiven (Rom. 6:6, 11) God offers forgiveness and life to sinners by Christ’s death. These verses show us when God forgives sin: Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9-10; 6:3 (Christ’s death includes His blood). Did any verse teach forgiveness without faith, by faith alone, by prayer, or by submission to man-made religion?

These “first things” of spiritual life are essential to unity with God. Send us your comments or questions.

Editor’s Note: Some of you learned these things long ago and some of you recently learned them, but all of you know someone who needs you to teach them these “first things.” Use our *Arkansas Weekly* article, or find some way, to teach them this week.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Ed & Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, and new Christians among us.

Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*
church of Christ--Quail Valley

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“In The Midst of a Crooked and Perverse Generation” Bill Hall

"Do all things without murmurings and questions; that ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:14-15).

The Philippian Christians had to serve God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. They were neither the first nor the last to find themselves under such circumstances. In fact, every person who ever served God did so "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," and so must we.

Surely no-one would question the perverseness of the generation in which we live. We are surrounded by indecency. Moral filth lines the shelves of the neighborhood store and video shop. Drug scandals rock the sports and entertainment worlds. Christians working in factories are exposed to bad language, filthy stories, and rumors of immorality among their fellow employees. Our children attend schools that are filled with wickedness. We are not overstating the case - this is the world as it really is, a crooked and perverse generation indeed.

We face two possible choices as Christians: (1) try to clean up the society in which we live, so that we and our children can serve God without the pressures and evil influences that presently exist. We would not discourage reasonable effort on the part of individual Christians along these lines, but success in any such efforts will be on a small scale. It matters not how hard we work at it, by and large, the world will still be a corrupt world when we die: evil will still exist on TV and in the movies; pornography will still be a problem; corruption will still exist in government; and schools will still have their ungodly influences. Our purpose as Christians is to call people out of darkness through the gospel and into light. We can do that, but efforts to eradicate darkness will for the most part be futile. Fortunately, we have another choice: (2) make up our minds to serve God faithfully in whatever environment we find ourselves. This is the only viable choice for the Christian.

It can be done. Consider Noah's generation when "every imagination of the thoughts of (man's) heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5); or Lot's generation when ten righteous souls could not be found in all of Sodom; or Elijah's generation when wicked Ahab served as king in the wicked nation of Israel; or Daniel's generation when as a young man he found himself in a foreign land facing pressures to eat the king's meats and drink his wines (Dan. 1:8); or the apostles' generation when Rome ruled the world and the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees dominated the religious scene. What were these men doing in such crooked and perverse circumstances? They were serving God! That's what they were doing!

The point is this: if these could serve God in the midst of the crooked and perverse circumstances in which they found themselves, and if the Philippians could shine "as lights in the world" in the midst of their crooked and perverse generation, so can we. Our eternal destiny is not determined by the environment in which we live, but by our own determination to be what we ought to be in whatever environment we find ourselves. We must lay aside our excuses, both for ourselves and our children, and make up our minds to say with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). This we shall do, and with God's help we shall overcome.

The Promises Of God: Yea, Amen

Jim McDonald

“For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea, wherefore through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us” (2 Cor. 1:20).

Paul addressed, in earlier verses, the sarcasm of some in Corinth who implied that his word could not be depended upon. They said that at one time his word would be “yea”; the next instant, it would be “nay”. He showed that not only his word was dependable, but much more so that the Word of God was dependable — trustworthy; that however many promises God made, they could be depended upon. Peter wrote of God’s promise and said, “Whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises” (2 Pet. 1:4). God promises are precious and exceeding great because:

OF THE NATURE OF HIS PROMISES. We know, of course, that God has given many personal promises to various folk through the ages — to Abraham, Jacob, David, Hezekiah, et al. Those promises were of great comfort to the persons who received them but have little value to us because they were not made to us. But there are many promises that God has given (although not unconditionally) that affects the whole of mankind. Consider just a few: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be

as white as snow ...” (Isa. 1:18); “and ye shall seek for me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13); “He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37); “I will in no wise leave thee nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). To these could many more be added. God’s promises are precious because of the nature of them!

THEY ARE CERTAIN. While there may be conditions to be met on man’s part, the promises given by God are clear, definite and certain: no “reneging” on God’s part of the promises He makes to man. Thus we are told “to hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end ... for he is faithful that promised” (Heb. 10:23).

WHATEVER GOD PROMISES TO DO, HE IS ABLE TO DO. The Ephesians writer said of God that “He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20). It is said of Abraham that when God promised that Sarah would bear him a son, that despite all evidence to the contrary that such a likelihood would occur (he was faced with the barrenness of Sarah’s womb and the old age of them both) that “he wavered not through unbelief but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Rom. 4:20f). Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall never pass away” (Mt. 24:35). This statement not only asserted God’s faithfulness to keep His word, but also His ability to do what He promised.

God’s precious and exceeding great promises are not unconditional. In 2 Corinthians 6 Paul cites some of God’s promises: He will receive us; we will be His sons and daughters; He will be our God. Yet in 2 Cor. 7:1 Paul wrote, “Wherefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves of all defilements of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” To receive God’s promises, we must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.

The Hebrew writer wrote, “that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience, inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:11). The appeal of this writer is that his readers be not sluggish nor sluggards. Paul wrote the Galatians: “and let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9). This passage implies that if we faint we shall not reap; in perfect accord with the Hebrew letter which warns against sluggishness. Through faith and patience (steadfastness, persistence) we shall inherit the promises. This statement is set in contrast with sluggishness. Thus through patience and steadfastness we inherit God’s promises. Through sluggishness we will not.

Thus, if we remain faithful, we shall find that in Christ all God’s promises are “yea” and “Amen”.