

Faith, Discipline And Holiness

Faith, discipline and holiness are the progressive pathway to our being acceptable to the Creator God as His created children, and to receive the gift of eternal life, [**Romans 6:23**].

Very few people in our Christian churches today are willing to consider what the Christian Bible teaches about discipline and chastening in preparing us for our eternal future.

Acts 16:31 [NIV] *“They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”*

It is an error to assume that being saved from our deserved death, [Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23**] by belief in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ automatically makes us ready for a place in the Kingdom of God, that is a created family of God.**

When we read this scripture in context we see that there is more than belief involved.

Acts 16:32-34 [NIV] *“Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptised. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God, he and his whole family.”*

The teaching of the words of Jesus Christ and baptism are mentioned.

Romans 6:3-8, 11-13 [NIV] *“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.” ... “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.”*

Baptism by total immersion is an outward sign of what has taken place within our minds and human spirit, [Job 32:6**] as the Holy Spirit began His work with them, [**John 14:17**].**

God’s objective is our holiness.

1 Peter 1:15-16 [NIV] *“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’”*

This call to holiness is in complete harmony with the original reason for the creation of human beings.

Genesis 1:26-27 [NIV] *“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 over all 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.”*

Note only “image” was created, **not** “likeness”.

Two different Hebrew words are used in this original statement of the Creator God.

“Image” – the Hebrew word “*tselem*” meaning resemblance, shadow, outward form.

“Likeness” – the Hebrew word “*demûwth*” meaning manner, attributes, model or character.

Holy character can **only** be formed over a period of time spent in the presence of the One whose character you wish to have.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews gave definite instruction to those who were potential created children of God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 12:7-11 [NIV] *“Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*

God, like any caring human father, uses discipline to prepare His children for future life.

Hebrews 12:14 [NIV] *“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no-one will see the Lord.”*

If we are to be holy we have to make a disciplined effort ourselves.

This in no way dismisses the essential starting point of faith in the sacrifice of our Saviour Jesus Christ, but that belief is just the starting point of our new life with Jesus Christ, Whose Holy character we are seeking to reflect in our own lives.

Hebrews 2:5 [NIV] *“It is not to angels [2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19] that He [Jesus Christ] has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking.”*

This present world is and has been subject to angels, [**Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:12-17**].

Hebrews 2:6-8 [NIV] *“But there is a place where someone has testified: ‘What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honour and put everything under his feet.’ In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him.”*

This is a quotation from **Psalms 8:4-8** and was the Creator God’s intention from the beginning, [**Genesis 1:26**].

But influenced by Satan to follow his example allowed pride to cause Adam and Eve to rebel against the Creator God, [**Genesis 3:1-20**].

Hebrews 2:9-10 [NIV] *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.”*

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the starting point for all humans to progress towards a life of holiness.

This was indicated by what Jesus Christ did to atone or cover the sinful rebellion of Adam and Eve, [**Genesis 3:21**]. These covering garments were most likely made from the skin of a sacrificed lamb, pointing towards the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, [**John 1:29, 35-36**].

Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, was made perfect as a physical human being by suffering and discipline, although as the divine Son of God He was already perfectly holy.

Now if we are truly created sons and daughters of God by faith in His Son Jesus Christ, we will respond to the wise discipline and the necessary rebukes aimed at bringing us to the full measure of spiritual maturity.

God encourages every Christian to make holiness our constant ambition.

Only God is holy absolutely, all other beings, including humans, can be holy only in relative degrees.

The angels in heaven do **not** possess God's holiness.

They are created beings and they are contented to reflect the glory of God, that is their holiness.

Holiness is **not** something to be terrified by.

It is amazing and wonderful that the Holy Triune God should want us to share in His nature.

Psalms 103:13-14 [NIV] *“As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.”*

It is encouraging that God remembers that human beings are created out of dust and could never be as holy as God is holy.

This call to be holy in everything we do in our lives, [**1 Peter 1:15-16**] is God's desire for us to become more like His Son Jesus Christ, every day we live, preparing us to receive the gift of eternal life, [**Romans 6:23**] and living an eternal life getting to know the Triune God more intimately, [**John 17:3**].

God's Holy nature is unique.

The Triune God is of a substance **not** shared by any other being.

Hence, God can be known only as He reveals Himself, [**Hebrews 1:1-3**].

There is **no** other way for us to know Him in any measure.

In Old Testament times, whenever the utterly Holy God revealed Himself in some way to humans, terror and amazement were the reaction.

Isaiah 6:1-5 [NIV] *“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.’”*

This was the reaction of the prophet of God, Isaiah.

Exodus 3:1-6 [NIV] *“Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, ‘I will go over and see this strange sight, why the bush does not burn up.’ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, ‘Moses! Moses!’ And Moses said, ‘Here I am.’ ‘Do not come any closer,’ God said. ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are*

standing is holy ground.’ Then he said, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.’ At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.”

Moses was struck with fear at the holiness of God.

The same reaction is recorded in New Testament times.

Revelation 1:10-18 [NIV] *“On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: ‘Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.’ I turned round to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone ‘like a son of man’, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash round his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.’”*

The apostle John had spent over three years with Jesus Christ as the human Son of Man, but when the risen glorified Jesus Christ appeared to him on the island of Patmos, John fell down in abject humility and fear.

Jesus had to reassure John **not** to be afraid, and did **not** condemn John, for He knew that John’s reaction was his sense of unworthiness to absolute holiness.

Along with John, every redeemed human being needs the humility of spirit that can **only** be brought about by the manifest presence of the Triune God.

The mysterious presence of God in our lives is both desirable, but it is essential, it alone changes our entire human and moral situation and outlook.

Knowing that the Creator God is unspeakably pure, holy, right in all He says and does, He is in total control and has all power and will never change, must be the basis of all we think about God.

Psalms 139:1-16 [NIV] *“O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. You hem me in, behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,’ even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”*

This same holy and all-powerful Creator God is also totally aware of all we think and do in this life that He has given us.

Psalms 139:17-18 [NIV] *“How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.”*

This should be our response to what God has revealed of Himself to us.

God is preparing us for eternal life with Him by making us disciples of Jesus Christ, [**Philippians 2:1-5; Ephesians 4:13**].

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is one who is in training, with day-by-day discipline, rebuke, correction and hardship, all part of God's plan to bring us to spiritual maturity.

God is planning to bring us into accord with the wisdom, power and holiness that flow eternally from Him.

God's loving motive is to bring us into total harmony with Himself so that moral power and holiness can be ours in this world as a positive witness to other human beings and our future the world to come, beginning with Jesus Christ's Second Coming.

Revelation 19:6-9 [NIV] *"Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.' (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, 'Write: "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"' And he added, 'These are the true words of God.'"*

This is where the present life of true Christians who are disciples of Jesus Christ will end, the very bride of Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God.

Just as Eve was a being who was a suitable helper for the first Adam, [Genesis 2:18-22] so the Christian Church will be a suitable helper for the Second Adam, Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:45-58 [NIV] *"So it is written: 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain."*

Keep this wonderful vision of our future in mind as our Creator God prepares us for it through faith and discipline to holiness.