

Are We Alive Physically Yet Laying Down Asleep In A Spiritual Grave?

Has our life got into a rut, day after day, with little change?

Remember that a rut is only a grave with the ends kicked out!

Churches get into ruts only because individuals in that church fellowship have got themselves in a rut.

1 Corinthians 10:1-5, 11 [NIV] *“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.” ... “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come.”*

Deuteronomy 1:6-8 [NIV] *“The LORD our God said to us at Horeb, “**You have stayed long enough at this mountain.** Break camp and advance into the hill country of the Amorites; go to all the neighbouring peoples in the Arabah, in the mountains, in the western foothills, in the Negev and along the coast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the Euphrates. See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore he would give to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to their descendants after them.”*

Matthew 28:18-20 [NIV] *“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Therefore go and make disciples** of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

It is impossible for any church fellowship to make progress in fulfilling the commission given to us by Jesus unless we as individuals in that church fellowship climb out of the rut we are walking in and change our lifestyle.

There are certain signs that will tell us we are in a rut, already asleep in our graves spiritually.

a) **We realise that we are getting older but not getting any holier!**

Time is our enemy not our friend.

We trusted that the passing of time would change us.

We looked at some *“good old saints”* and said to ourselves *“we will be like that when we get to their age.”* Time will help me, purify and revive me.

We said that the year before last. But are we better now than we were 12 months ago? Or has time betrayed us!!

We may right now be saying, *“This year will be different; I really will get out of this rut I am in and make progress.”*

Time will tell!!

b) **The passing of time can increase our indifference to spiritual things.**

We need to ask ourselves, “are we still as excited about Bible study and spending time in prayer as we were when we were first converted?”

Revelation 2:4-5 [NIV] “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”

The church at Ephesus had with the passing of time become indifferent to spiritual things, lost their “first love”. Have we?

Are the words that God is speaking to us becoming fainter and fading away?

Has the “double edged” sword of God, His Word, become blunt as far as we are concerned? Or does it at times “cut us to the quick” as we read it?

Have we moved so far away from the special presence of the Holy Spirit as to no longer hear His prompting?

The more indifferent we become to the spiritual aspect of our life, the duller will become our hearing of God’s Word and the harder it will become to change.

Change is one of the most important ingredients of Christian living.

If we cannot change, the gospel message is absolutely meaningless. The message is “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent [change] and believe [what Jesus has done for us].”

The fact that we can change [repent], get out of our rut of indifference, is the only hope we have.

c) **If we find it is harder to make changes in our lives we are in a circular rut, moving but getting nowhere.**

Now is the time we must make changes: if we don’t do it now we never will.

James 4:13-14 [NIV] “Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”

Future plans for change may not happen, time may run out.

We have been given a certain number of days by our Creator.

We do not know how many days we have got left because we do not know how many we had to start with.

One poet put it this way: “The leaves of life keep falling one by one.”

People in a rut never know when the last leaves are falling for them.

One autumn storm in our lives may find us without any more leaves left.

Reasons for our getting in a spiritual rut.

a) **We may never have been truly converted at all.**

If we have been in a Church Fellowship for years and we are not maturing spiritually we need to ask ourselves, “have I experienced real conversion?”

True conversion means:-

- a) Radical changes in our lives [repentance].
- b) The consciousness of forgiveness of sins.
- c) A spiritual re-birth; we become as teachable as little children.

Mark 10:15 [NIV] *“I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”*

We are united with the Holy Spirit and a new being begins to grow within us, full of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. In the same way an unborn child in the mother’s womb develops the physical characteristics of the father that caused the new life to begin to grow within the mother.

1 Corinthians 11:27-32 [NIV] *“Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.”*

We as protestants are too much inclined to take things for granted, and this can lead to a lack of reverence.

We lack the sense of His Holy Presence when we assemble before Him to praise and worship Him or symbolically accept the blood of His Son as atonement for our sins.

Sin the cause we find ourself in a rut.

Hebrews 3:12-13 [NIV] *“See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”*

Sin is extremely deceitful, it can be present doing its deadly work while we may not be aware of it at all until it is brought to our attention.

There are several kinds of sin that cause us to be in a rut.

a) The sin of omission

1 John 3:16-18 [NIV] *“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”*

Any act that should have been done that is left undone is a sin in God’s eyes. Such an omission is an abuse of the love of God we should have actively operating in our lives.

b) The sin of commission

Ephesians 4:30 [NIV] *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*

Any act that is contrary to the character of our Creator God is displeasing to God and to the Holy Spirit, causing Him to withdraw His Special Presence.

c) The sin of the flesh

1 John 2:15-17 [NIV] *“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. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever.”*

The world may accept or approve of sins of the flesh. Such sins may even be permitted by pastors of church denominations, but the Holy Spirit is grieved by such acts and thoughts.

The prompting and corrective voice of the Holy Spirit becomes faint in our ears, blocked by the noise of society all around us.

We need to come out of this society and find a quiet place where we can in the silence listen to God’s Words of correction and encouragement.

d) The sins of the mind

Proverbs 23:7 [Amplified Bible] *“For a he [any person] thinks in his heart, so is he.”*

Society prompted by Satan works on our minds in a conspiracy to persuade us to conform with the present ungodly world.

Sexual sins start in the mind

Matthew 5:27-28 [NIV] *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*

This is only one aspect of the assault on our mind.

The love of money and wrong ambitions

1 Timothy 6:10 [NIV] *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*

This starts in and is promoted by our thoughts.

The over-appreciation of earthly things

1 John 2:15-17 [NIV] *“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. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever.”*

We cannot love God and this society and what it offers us at the same time.

James 1:5-8 [NIV] *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.”*

We cannot expect to receive godly wisdom into our minds if we allow the spirit of the world to compete in our mind with the Spirit of God [the Greek word translated “double minded” is literally “two spirited”].

Within this web that Satan and society has set to capture our minds are also such things as jealousy and envy.

Satan and society are teaching us and conditioning our minds to think sinfully.

Godly thoughts only come with **much** prayer and study of God's Word.

Philippians 2:5 [King James] *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."*

We only begin to think and act like any person when we spend a great deal of time in their presence.

Communion with God involves prayer and study of [listening to] His Word.

If we do not pray much, we are not thinking God's thoughts.

If we do not read our Bible often and reverently, we are not thinking God's thoughts.

Without this discipline of prayer and study the thoughts that are buzzing around our head all day long and into the night are earthly thoughts, the thoughts of the fallen Adamic race.

Acts 13:22 [NIV] *"After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'"*

King David was a man with [at times] God's thoughts governing his actions in life.

Psalms 51:11 [NIV] *"Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me."*

King David had God's Holy Spirit in him.

Psalms 37:27 [NIV] *"Turn from evil and do good; then you will dwell in the land for ever."*

It was because God's Word was in King David's heart that he was a man after God's own heart.

Psalms 55:17 [NIV] *"Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice."*

Psalms 119:145-148 [NIV] *"I call with all my heart; answer me, O LORD, and I will obey your decrees. I call out to you; save me and I will keep your statutes. I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word. My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises."*

David's example of prayer study and meditation.

Philippians 2:5 [King James] *"Prayer, study and meditation is the only way we can fulfil the command."*

What should we do then?

Examine ourselves!!

Even the world's philosophers understood this basic principle.

"An unexamined life is not worth living." Socrates.

An unexamined Christian is like an untaught child.

Proverbs 22:6, 15 [NIV] *"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." ... "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him."*

An untaught and undisciplined child becomes a little savage, totally lacking concern for others, love or compassion.

Hebrews 12:4-11 [NIV] *“In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.” 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.”*

We are God’s children. If we do not examine and discipline ourselves God will have to use circumstances to bring such an examination and discipline to fruition, because He loves us.

1 John 1:9 [NIV] *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

Because Jesus the Christ died, because He was God as well as man, His atoning sacrifice was perfect and total.

All the attributes of God are on the side of the person who confesses his or her sins and turns and throws themselves at the feet of Jesus our Saviour.

1 John 2:1-2 [NIV] *“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”*

Here is the cure for a church or a person who has found themselves in a spiritual rut.

God the Father pardons and forgives us for His Son’s sake.

The Holy Spirit is available to us all to bring Jesus to us and make Him real to us.

1 John 1:5-10 [NIV] *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”*

When we become a confessing sinner there is nothing that can hinder our spiritual growth, not even the devil himself.

1 John 2:1-5 [NIV] *“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:”*

It is those who are “in Him” who will rise at the resurrection and meet Him, Jesus, in the clouds and then live with Him for eternity.