

Fanning it into Flame
Sunday, February 07, 2010
Moving on to Maturity

The writer to the Hebrews lays out the most beautiful picture of Christ becoming a high priest on our behalf providing eternal salvation for those who obey him. He goes on to say in chapter 5 and verse 11, *We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.* The solid food that is mentioned is the teaching about righteousness or in other words, the grace of God. They were instructed to leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity. Babies in Christ can be more concerned with a continual effort to stay at square one, a step that cannot be missed, but need to see that there is more.

God is looking to impart his very life to us, transforming us into a new creation that soars above the earthly realm of self-limitation and into the glorious freedom of Christ. Only God's grace can liberate us and make us into the people he always intended us to be. In Colossians 1:6b Paul tells us *All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.* It was understanding God's grace in all its truth that enabled the fruit to be borne. In **Titus 2:11-14** *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.* Note that it is the grace of God that teaches us to say "NO" to the bad stuff. He adds that it produces people that are eager to do good. We are not slaves to a system of rules and regulations, but released into the glorious freedom of Christ.

If you are not living a self-controlled, upright and godly life you may be living under the condemnation of the law and hoping to get set free. God's kingdom is all based upon our relationship with him. Our justification comes by the free gift that God gave through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. I am not being soft on sin here. God cares about sin and wants us set free. That's why he personally paid such an awesome price for our redemption. **Galatians 5:13-16** *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. 14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. 16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.* We live by the Spirit by recognizing that Christ is our life and we are the righteousness of God in him.

Today is communion Sunday. In **1 Corinthians 11:17-34** The Apostle Paul rebukes the church for their inappropriate behavior at their Agape feast associated with their celebration of Holy Communion. He was appalled over their blatant disregard for each other. He exhorts them not to participate in an "unworthy manner" or they would find themselves drinking in their own judgment. They were instructed to properly recognize the Body of the Lord. Many of us have been taught that we were to take time to confess our sins so we would not be receiving communion in an unworthy manner. While there may be an element of truth there, that is not what Paul was addressing. You do not clean yourself up by your confession of sins. We are already clean in Christ. He alone is our righteousness. To think that you become worthy by your confession of sins is to enter into a legalistic framework of self-justification, even when we think we are doing it through Christ. I believe the "Body" he was talking about had a dual nature to it. Yes it is Christ and what he accomplished for us, but secondly, it is walking in right relationship to one another. A unique expression of God can be seen in each one of us. We are made in his image. We are the body of Christ. **1 Corinthians 10:16-17** *Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.* So the way Paul concludes his instruction brings this point home in chapter 11:33, 34 *So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. 34 If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.* God's grace is the key to godly living, freedom from sin, and right relationship with one another. If we are going to move into maturity, it will not come from the self-effort mode of trying to do better, but will be the by-product of a close intimate walk with God through Christ our Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.