



Embracing The Difference

As we walk in the freedom Christ gives us, our perspective of ourselves and the activities in our life will change. There comes a point in each of our life where we will want to put away our old ways and lean more into our new ways. Walking in Christ freedom we will not only find ourselves becoming different, we will find ourselves wanting to embrace that difference.

“One thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.”
Philippians 3:13

“What lies behind” refers both to his religious credentials, now counted as “loss”, and to his past Christian achievements and successes. In ever pursuing his goal to know Christ, he refuses to let past guilt pull him down, or to rest on past laurels. Either could spell spiritual disaster.

“What lies ahead” refers to his goal of knowing Christ, with all that implies: Experiencing His power, participating in His suffering, becoming more like Him in death, and experiencing the resurrected life.

What things are you willing to leave behind for Christ? What things lies ahead for you?



Going Forward

Committing our *hearts* and our *ways* to the teachings of Christ is what signifies our reliance to Jesus as believers. When we face difficult times we will want to be able to fall back on his teachings. Doing so by laying a good foundation by not only hearing his message but also applying it in our life decisions.

We will need to avoid covetousness because being coveted to our possessions will at some point come in between our relationship with Christ. Once we give up these attachments then Jesus will truly be Lord in all aspects of our life. Even though a disciple is not “perfect” we want to continue in our walk with absolute loyalty.

Our freedom comes from our reliance upon Christ righteousness. Once we are able to give our whole selves to Christ then we can truly die to self and be freed from our sin. Because we are not freed by our mouth’s confession alone, but rather our confession of the heart.

In your spiritual journal write about what God is saying on your heart. Write about what He is saying to you about your reliance upon Christ righteousness and why it is important for you.

In Short:

- Discipleship comes at a cost
- Freedom comes from reliance upon Christ righteousness
- Salvation comes through the heart.

Who Is A Believer

Have you considered what it means to be a believer? Often people will claim to be believers while overlooking the requirements it takes to be believers.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

John 3:16

In The New Strong’s Concordance it states that the Greek word used here for “believes” is “*Pistēuō, pist-yoó-o*; ... This word does not mean just to believe, but also to be persuaded of; and hence, to place confidence in, to trust, and signifies, in the sense of the word, reliance upon, not mere credence, hence it is translated “commit onto”, “commit to one’s trust”, “be committed unto.” (Strong, 2010, pg. 202)

What good are instructions if we do not apply them? As believers our belief will not only reflect in our hearts but also in every aspect of our life. We will be committing our *hearts* and our *ways* to his teachings and this is what signifies our reliance to Jesus as believers.

Have you considered what it means to be a believer? What does it mean to you?



A Firm Foundation

“And why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?”
Luke 6:46

The parable of the unwilling workers.

“There was once an owner of a field who wanted to send some workers out, to work in his field. So he says to the workers “Workers go work in my field.” But the workers reply “We believe your our boss but were not going to do anything you say.” The week then goes by and no work gets done in the field. At the end of the week the workers come back and say to the boss “Okay today is our pay day and we believe your our boss so pay us.” The boss then replies “Why would I pay you? You didn’t do anything I said.”

If you believed someone was your boss wouldn’t you do what they say? To hear what Jesus teaches and to not respond afterwards is as foolish as building a house with no thought for its foundation.

“...every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be like a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”
Matthew 7:26-27

Jesus teaching is a foundation we can always fall back to when we are troubled. He is reminding us that simply hearing his message is not enough to change our life. We must be able to do both. *Hear* and *do* what he says.

Do you have a firm foundation? What is that foundation? Why is “hearing and doing” seen as laying a firm foundation?



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References:
 “Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible,” by James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., *The New Strong’s* (2010) by Thomas Nelson Publishers)

The Cost of Discipleship

When it comes to being a disciple; there should be absolute loyalty. This does not mean that the disciple will need to be “perfect.” For we all fall short. It simply means that Jesus is to be Lord in all aspects of our life.

Because of Christ’s authority his power of influence should out rank all others. During our decision making process on day to day functions; he is to be chief of importance with the most impact in those decisions.

Before a follower is to become a disciple they will need to first take the time to choose to allow this kind of lordship over their life.

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first, and count the cost, whether he has sufficient to finish it? Otherwise, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build, and was not able to finish.”

Luke 14:28-30

Discipleship comes at a high cost when it comes time to forsake our attachments to our possessions. As disciples we must live in constant readiness to put our means at the disposal of the Lord’s ends.

In Luke our Lord sums up the cost of discipleship.

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsakes not all that he has, he cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 14:33

In The New Strong’s Concordance it says the Greek word used here for “forsakes” is *apōtassōmai*, *ap-ot-as-som-ahee*; ...This word primarily means “to set apart, separate, to forsake, renounce.” (Strong, 2010 pg. 39)

We are not being told to sell all our possessions and live off the kindness of others.

“And he said unto them, ‘Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consist not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.’”

Luke 12:15

Our Lord is telling us to not covet our possessions. Because we should be willing to give them up if that’s what he is calling us to do.

What are some things one will attain by renouncing their worldly possessions?



What covetousness has to do with being free from sin.

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

Matthew 6:24

With covetousness a persons heart is coveted to his possession and not to the Lord alone. How can one be free when they are enslaved to their own corruption? Our loyalty cannot be divided between God and our material possessions.

“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves servants to obey, his servant you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.”

Romans 6:16

Saint Paul says to the Philippians that he has willingly renounced all his earthly advantages as a means to draw closer to Christ.

“And what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.”

Philippians 3:7-8

He had to abandon his “gains” that he might “gain” a more fulfilled relationship with Christ. One cannot truly be freed as long as he confides in his own efforts and accomplishments.

Freedom comes from reliance upon Christ righteousness. Not our own. When we limit ourselves to our own limitations we will only be able to receive what little we can provide. But when we are willing to give up ourselves and rely upon Christ we will receive the freedom that Christ is able to provide for us. Before we can truly die to self and be freed from our sin we must be willing to give our whole selves to Christ.

Are you struggling to give up attachments to your possessions? Do you rely upon Christ righteousness? If so why?



Confessing Christ

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name? And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” Matthew 7:21-23

In these readings Christ is pointing out that one is not freed by his mouth’s confession alone, but rather their confession of the heart. To where their mouth will then testify readily of the grace of God in Christ which has been received by faith.

Saint Paul tells us

“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Romans 10:9-10

These scriptures point out to us that our freedom comes tied with our belief in our hearts.

“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to god must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

Hebrews 11:6

Saint Paul speaks of God’s initiative in grace and man’s humble obedience to it. He applies this to the gospel of Christ. He and Christ are both pointing out that confession and our salvation comes through the heart.

Why is confession of the mouth alone not enough? Why is belief in our hearts so important?

