

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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From Expectation to Frustration

Introduction

We have all been through this process. We have great anticipation to see our expectations fulfilled only to have things not work out as planned. Nothing is more frustrating than having our expectations fall apart. While we would normally think of this as a human frailty have we ever considered that the Lord may have expectations of us? In our times of overemphasis on grace, it is easy to forget that the Lord has a plan and purpose for us that includes His expectation of our involvement in His maturing process with the end result that we produce much fruit.

Fruit

Why do you think that we were chosen by the Lord? He extended grace to us so that He might appoint us to go and bear fruit.

"You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. (John 15:16 NASB)

He anticipated that we would bear fruit when He chose us. He expected us to bear fruit when He appointed us to go and bear fruit. Jesus makes it clear that He expects our fruit to be permanent. The end result is that a fruit producer is able to ask anything of the Father in Jesus Name and He will give it.

This is how God expressed this process with Israel under the Old Covenant:

Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. He dug it all around, removed its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it And also hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected it to produce good grapes, But it produced only worthless ones. (Isaiah 5:1-2 NASB)

With anticipation and expectation, God tended His vineyard. However, the vineyard didn't meet His expectations of good grapes. It produced worthless grapes.

"What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones? (Isaiah 5:4 NASB)

In this verse do you see God's exasperation and frustration? God did all that He needed to do to fulfill His expectations. His frustration is with the vine that didn't do what it needed to do in order to produce good grapes.

We read in the next few verses that the consequence of not meeting the expectations of God is the devastation of the vineyard as He withholds His protection and His provision. Hebrews tells us that these things happened to Israel as examples to us [*Hebrews 4:11*].

But that was Old Testament you say. We live under grace now and God would not do that. Really? Here is what Jesus said:

"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (*John 15:5-7 NASB*)

Notice that Jesus anticipates that we abide in Him. If we do so, He expects us to bear much fruit. If we don't abide in Him we are thrown away. If we do abide we become fruit bearers that can ask anything and it will be done. This is the same process that was described in Isaiah concerning Israel.

We have forgotten that grace was received "in order that" we might bear fruit for God.

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. (*Romans 7:4 NASB*)

That is God's expectation of every believer. My prayer is that none of us disappoint Him or frustrate His grace.

Our Responsibility

What do you think the final all-purpose fruit is that God is expecting? That we be conformed to the image of His Son.

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; (*Romans 8:29 NASB*)

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. (*1 John 3:2 NASB*)

This is the ultimate fruit. It is God's expectation of us. He has done all that is necessary for us to become like Him. However, we still have to do our part.

And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (*1 John 3:3 NASB*)

Who does the purifying? We do. Of course, it is with the help of the Holy Spirit but we have to initiate the process. Grace does not eliminate our part of the responsibility to be conformed to the image of the Son. This means we are to become like Jesus in our thought processes, our character, and our behavior.

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; (1 Peter 1:14-15 NASB)

The Lord helps our motivation by supplying circumstances that help us develop the proper kind of fruit.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4 NASB)

Notice that it is us who have to “let endurance” finish its work so that we may be complete. Peter gives more detail of the process.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Peter 1:5-11 NASB)

Notice that it is our responsibility to apply diligence to the working of the process. It is our responsibility to “practice these things”.

Does God expect us to complete the process? Of course, He does. Do our stubbornness and lack of understanding cause us to frustrate God's expectations? Yes, they do. However, what we don't want is our stubbornness and rebellion to exasperate the Lord. That is not good for us.

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:31 NASB)

*For further study of this process see
The Process of Change Series, especially
lesson 4: “[How the Process Works](#)”.*

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