

CHRISTIAN PASSIVITY

by Don Rogers

I have noticed throughout nearly forty years of ministry a passive approach to the Christian walk that many Christians adopt without realizing it.

When I speak of “passivity” I mean the lack of engaging the scriptural truths that God has provided in His Word and working them out in everyday experiences.

Too often, Christians are satisfied to fill up on knowledge and do very little with it. Many seem to believe that acquiring the knowledge is sufficient concerning their obedience to God. But in reality, it is only the beginning of the process that God has called us to partake. We are told to study the Word (2 Tim. 2:15 KJV - “*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*”), meditate on the Word (Psa. 119:97 “*O how I love Thy law! It is my all the day.*” NAS), and work out the Word daily in our lives. (Phil. 2:12-13 “*... work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*” NAS)

There used to be a saying, “let go and let God.” My, how that expression has been misused. It became a spiritual excuse to not be actively engaged in the Christian struggle; just wait on the Lord to intervene. If He doesn't, it must be His will.

Christian passivity is extremely detrimental to personal accountability in our living for God. So many Christians today lack personal commitment and a submissive attitude. It is quite apparent on the local church level.

I have noticed in the last fifteen years how many Christians migrate continually to a host of special meetings and conferences. So many that I have talked to seem to be searching for the “magic formula of truth” that will turn their lives around to victory. Yet, after many such meetings, they are just as empty as before. They have acquired information, but there is little apparent change in their lives. Many have become bewildered and confused as to why this is happening to them. Some even get angry at God for not doing something to change their lives.

It is quite apparent that numerous Christians are waiting for God to do something for them and are not taking responsibility to begin applying His truths to their lives, or yielding to the Holy Spirit, or trusting Him to help them work out their salvation daily, or depend on the cooperative relationship God desires us to have.

Fewer Christians are making the time to daily study their Bible and then spend time meditating on what they have read. If this is not done, it is like gulping food down without chewing it. This does not help the digestion process.

It is not enough to do your duty and read a bit of scripture each day. Have you noticed how little of it you retain? God wants us to desire His Word like food, and chew on it and digest it with the enlightenment that the Holy Spirit provides. When we hunger and thirst for the riches of the Word, it will be opened up to us. A superficial reading of the Word will not cut it, as far as spiritual growth is concerned. It is also very disrespectful of the wonderful revelation that God has provided us.

There are other reasons why passivity has crept into the lives of Christians. One has to do with “wrong priorities.” We live in a fast paced society where there are many demands upon ourselves and our family members. There will be little time for our spiritual lives unless they are given a place high on the list of our priorities. If we just hope to find time after we have taken care of other responsibilities, we will never have a consistent time with God, His Word, His people or for His service. Trying to squeeze everything in to a given day does not work either. We have to take inventory of our lives and start pruning away the non-essentials. God has to be first, the marriage second, the family third, work and then other things. Setting right priorities is often painful at first, but in the end it is liberating. The enemy will provide you with many reasons why you should continue to hang on to some things in your life.

I have a tendency to hold on to every little thing that has any value. I hate to throw anything away. Needless to say, I have multitudes of shelves in my cellar that are completely full as well as the aisles between them. I have not used these things for years, but I still hold on to them. It is almost impossible to find anything when I decide I want it.

In reality, I have wasted valuable space with things I may never use. That is what we are doing with our daily lives; letting a lot of insignificant things clutter our day and rob us of the benefit of the more important things.

Jesus pinpointed the problem in his interpretation of his Parable of the Sower in Luke 8:14 *“The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.”*

Another symptom of passivity is evident when it comes to the biblical teaching of spiritual warfare. The apostle Paul is very clear in Ephesians 6 that Christians are in a struggle with spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. There are many Christians who choose to let God fight the battle rather than get involved. It is clear that they feel ill equipped to deal with such a battle and they are not eager to find out. But all through scripture we are commanded to resist our enemy.

Ephesians 6:13 “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”

James 4:7 “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

1 Peter 5:8-9 “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”

Throughout the body of Christ there is a fear of aggressively resisting the enemy who seeks to rob us and hinder us from attaining what God has called us to be. Part of fulfilling the Great Commission is setting the captives free. In order to do that, we must often confront the enemy in the power and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Warfare is about having a biblical world view which includes the reality of an ongoing battle with the forces of evil for the souls of mankind. To join this battle one must have faith in the sovereign power of our God, assurance of our identity in Christ and faith in the promises of God.

God uses the struggle to strengthen His people in their faith and teaches them to not depend on their own strength or understanding. We learn to be led by the Holy Spirit who indwells us.

Passivity can be all encompassing. It affects people mentally, emotionally and their wills.

Mentally, we do not challenge the thoughts that come to us that are inconsistent to the Word of God. Many of our thoughts have their source in the enemy. We are told to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” 2 Cor. 10:5

Emotionally, we let our feelings have undue influence in our lives, even at times having more weight than the Word of God. The enemy is very effective in stirring up our emotions with his intimidating suggestions.

The will is powerless to take any action or stand firm against what is being experienced. The enemy likes to suggest the hopelessness of our situation and that God will not be there when we need Him. As a result, people get into a fatalistic acceptance of the inevitable. These are some of the dangerous outcomes when passivity is allowed to become a way of life for the Christian. God has called each of His children to an active relationship with Himself and with others. The enemy wants to isolate us into passivity, but we must resist this. Our faith is about an intimate relationship with our Savior and a daily resisting of the temptations of the world and our enemy.

Passivity in and of itself can provide an opportunity for the enemy. First, we are living in disobedience and lacking in faith. Second, we are not prepared to stand against temptations and persevere during trials. We are not trusting in the omnipotent power of God to enable us and to protect us. We have allowed the enemy to become as big as God in our lives by blaming everything that happens in our lives on demonic activity. That is exactly what Satan wants you to believe. We allow ourselves to become easy prey to fear and stop trusting in the promises of God, the victorious finished work of our Savior, Jesus Christ, on the cross and His triumphant victory over the enemy through the resurrection.

"Put yourselves to the test to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize regarding yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you - unless, indeed, you fail the test!" 2 Corinthians 13:5 NET

I hope none of you have been trying to live your lives on the basis of an emotional religious experience you once had, but have never really experienced the fruits of inner transformation by the Spirit of God in your lives. Head knowledge of religious truth is never an adequate substitute for heart knowledge that brings about inner joy and faith in God despite the circumstances you experience. Such an experience brings freedom from fear and the desire to glorify God through your lives.

Put yourselves to the test! ?

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