In effect, Jesus is warning us against trying to separate these two phases from one another. The only entrance into the narrow way is by the strait gate. Without being born again we cannot even begin to lead the Christian life. On the other hand, the purpose of entering through the gate is to walk in the way. The fullness of life to which Jesus invites us comes not merely by entering the gate, but by walking thereafter in the way to which the gate gives access.

**THE WAY**

It is most important that we do not view the Christian life as merely a static condition of “being saved” or “being a Christian.” In the early beginnings of the Church the word **Christianity** had not yet been coined. What we nowadays call Christianity was then referred to as “the Way.” For instance, when Saul of Tarsus set out for Damascus, he asked for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that “if he found any who were of the Way, ... he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:2). Later, after Paul had preached for some time in Ephesus, two statements are made about the results: “Some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude” and “There arose a great commotion about the Way” (Acts 19:9, 23). (For other instances where Christianity is described as “the Way,” see Acts 22:4, 24:14, 22.)

The same thought is presented in many other passages of Scripture. For instance, Paul said to the men of Athens, “In Him [God] we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). If we...
“live,” we will “move.” Life is never static or motionless. It always implies growth, motion, development, progress. Proverbs 4:18 tells us, “But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.” In this path of the Christian way we are continually moving forward to a fuller light. As we take each step along the path, the light becomes brighter. Yesterday’s light is never enough for today. There is no room for standing still, much less for turning back. No matter how bright the past may have been, the future is brighter still.

This challenge to move continually forward along the Christian way sound difficult and demanding? Let me give you a word of blessed assurance: We are never asked to walk this path alone. The Lord Himself will be with us each step that we take. Under the Old Covenant He gave His people this solemn promise:

“I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will give you a word of blessed assurance: We are never

The basic issue that Paul here deals with is that of ownership. As Christians, we can no longer claim to own ourselves. “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). The “price” with which we have been bought is “the precious blood of Christ” (see 1 Peter 1:18–19).

We learn from Jesus’ pattern prayer in Matthew 6:9–13 that the objective for this lifestyle is “Your kingdom come” and the motive is “for (God’s) … glory forever”. Once the questions of objective and motive are settled, we face the question of means: How can I live so as to promote God’s kingdom and God’s glory? Scripture teaches, and our own experience confirms, that no effort or ability of our own is sufficient. We need some answer to this need, and that answer is found in Zechariah 4:6: “Not by might, nor by power [not by natural strength or will power], but by My Spirit,” says the LORD.” The only power that will suffice is the power of the Holy Spirit.

Walking by Faith

Early in human history, we are presented with a picture of a man, who learned how to walk with God: Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (Genesis 5:24). In this continuing walk, Enoch developed such an intimacy with God that in the end it was more natural for him to maintain an unbroken fellowship with God than to turn back to his own earthly home. Hebrews 11:5–6 reveals the secret of Enoch’s walk with God: “By faith Enoch was taken away [translated] so that he did not see death, ‘and was not found, because God had taken him’; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him.” The key word, repeated for emphasis, is faith. Faith is the essential, basic requirement for a walk with God that pleases Him.

What is faith? Hebrews 11:1 tells us: “Now faith is the assurance [underlying substance] of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (NASB). It is a spiritual “sense” by which we discern things that are not revealed to our natural senses. It relates us to two unseen realities: God Himself and God’s Word.

As Christians, Paul tells us, “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Sight here stands for sense knowledge generally. It is presented as the opposite of faith. Faith renounces trust in the senses. Trust in the senses rejects faith. Thus each of us is faced with the question: Which is more real to me—God and His Word, or my own soulish impressions and sense knowledge? True faith clings unwaveringly to God and His Word, rejecting the impressions of the senses whenever these disagree with God’s Word. The great scriptural pattern of this kind of faith is Abraham. Indeed, Abraham is called “the father of all them that believe,” and we are challenged to “follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham” (Romans 4:12). Paul’s language here confirms what has already been said about the Christian life. It is not a static position, but a “walk” in which we continually progress by one step of faith after another.

For further study we recommend the CD Progressive Commitment (#4076, $8 INCL. P&H). To order these products, email admin@dpm.co.nz, call 0508 88 88 99 or visit our website...
condition of himself and Sarah. “He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He [God] had promised He was also able to perform” (Romans 4:20–21).

In this walk of faith, we are simultaneously in contact with two worlds. Through our senses we are in contact with the natural, physical world around us; through our faith we are in contact with the unseen, eternal world of God and His Word. In 2 Corinthians 4:18, Paul sets these two worlds in contrast. He says that God’s purposes are worked out in our lives, even through affliction, “while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” There is a deliberate paradox in the words that Paul here uses. How can we look at things which are not seen? The answer is: by faith. Faith is the spiritual “sense” by which we discern the realities of the unseen, eternal world.

It is important to evaluate correctly the evidence of our senses. God does not ask us to close our eyes and ears and walk about as though the physical, material world around us did not exist. Faith is not mysticism. We do not question the reality of what our senses reveal, but we do question its finality.

Abraham is the perfect example of this. His senses told him that he was physically incapable of begetting a child. Yet God had promised him a son. Abraham did not pretend that what his senses revealed to him about his own body was not real. He simply refused to accept it as final. Where God’s Word promised him one thing and his senses told him another, he clung tenaciously to God’s promise, without letting his senses cause him to doubt that promise. Finally, after his faith had been tested, the physical condition of his body was brought into line with what God had promised, and he became actually, physically capable of begetting a child.

Faith, in turn, is closely related to humility. In Romans 3:27, Paul tells us that boasting is excluded by the law of faith. In Habakkuk 2:4, boastful self-confidence and humble faith are set forth as opposites that mutually exclude each other: “Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.” The proud soul which is lifted up describes the person who trusts in his own natural ability and sense knowledge. The just who lives by his faith is the person who, like Abraham, renounces confidence in his own ability and what his senses reveal, choosing rather to trust in the unseen, but eternal, realities of God and His Word.

In Micah 6:8, humility is presented as a decision we are required to make in order to walk with God: “He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly and to love kindness and mercy, and to humble yourself and walk humbly with your God?” (Amplified). The phrase, “humble yourself,” which accurately reflects the original Hebrew, indicates a decision which each of us needs to make: “Lord, I renounce confidence in my own ability and sense knowledge; I choose rather to trust in You and in Your Word. By Your grace I will walk by faith, not by sight.” This attitude of self-humbling dependence upon God opens the way for a close, continuing walk with Him.

In our next letter, we will talk about some extremely practical ways by which we can cultivate a close walk with the Lord.

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