

GROWING IN GRACE LETTERS! – Calling saints in Christ, (in our homes and with one another in Church), to walk in the Steps of Jesus! (1 Peter 2:15-25) Edited by James Bell, a servant of Jesus Christ!

3 10 26 V1n44 Preparation for the LORD'S TABLE

This BIBLE STUDY is sent forth to help prepare SAINTS in CHRIST for worship at the LORD'S TABLE. For Southsiders, our next opportunity will be this coming Sunday Morning, March 15. THEREFORE:

1. Let us come to HIS TABLE, fully embracing our BIBLICAL PREDESTINATION!

The Bible is clear: "... He, [GOD], chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, **that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love**, having **PREDESTINED us to adoption as sons** by Jesus Christ to Himself, *according to the good pleasure of His will* ..." (Ephesians 1:4-5)— **HE PREDESTINED us to be** "adopted" as His own children (Ephesians 1:5); **HE PREDESTINED us according to His own purpose** (Eph. 1:11); and **HE PREDESTINED us to the goal of Christ likeness!** (Romans 8:28-29)

ALL SAINTS, (chosen IN CHRIST before the foundation of the world), were given to JESUS by the Father, (John 6:35-40; John 17); and are PREDESTINED to be conformed into the likeness of Christ! HOW did He accomplish this amazing feat?

(FOUNDATIONALLY, OF COURSE, BY HIS SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE ... but that is the subject for a different study!)

BUT THE ABOVE QUESTION, IS IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE SCRIPTURES, and the answer is: ***He has, by the Holy Spirit, FLOODED OUR HEARTS with His love, (Romans 5:5). OUR BODIES ARE NOW HIS TEMPLE:*** 1 Cor. 6:19-20) O WHAT A GLORIOUS WONDER: “Predestined to be conformed INTO HIS LIKENESS! ***HOW? Additionally, by BEHOLDING Jesus we are changed, more and more, into His likeness!*** (2 Corinthians 3:18) **THUS, BEHOLDING JESUS MUST BE OUR FOCUS AT HIS TABLE; and in all BIBLE STUDY!**

Thus, — let us BEHOLD JESUS!

BEHOLDING JESUS in the Word of God and at the LORD’S TABLE, WE SEE THAT IN JESUS, there was no resentment; no plans for revenge; no bitterness; no grudges; no self-pity. He never demanded His rights; there was no anger, no depression; He never threatened to quit because of the way He was treated! Stress had no power over Him! **BEHOLDING JESUS, WE FIND THAT HE Has Set Before Us An Extraordinary Example of** Silence in Suffering; Non-resistance; Returning Good for Evil; Love; Forgiveness; Abiding Trust in His Father; and SUBMISSION to His Father. His silence in suffering was not a SECRET PITY PARTY, nor a state of Passivity! **GLORIOUSLY, JESUS** was anointed with the oil of GLADNESS above all others who have ever lived. ***And He graces every saint with***

POWER to walk in His steps by the supernatural indwelling Holy Spirit! THEREFORE:

LET US BEHOLD JESUS AS WE regularly come to the LORD'S TABLE — AS WE DO, we will experience FRESH GRATITUDE and a fresh DESIRE to walk with Jesus, (IN HIS STEPS!), ... in our divine calling of PREDESTINATION into more and more of His likeness! **AFTER ALL, THIS** is the Real Essence of what it means to be a Genuine Christian — Following JESUS, IN HIS STEPS, being conformed more and more into His LIKENESS! (John 10:26-30; 1 Peter 2:18-21)

AS WE COME TO THE LORD'S TABLE, WE ARE REMINDED THAT JESUS HIMSELF WAS WALKING IN HIS FATHER'S DIVINELY DESIGNED PATH! Thus, Jesus only did what His Father said to do; and only said what His Father told Him to say! OUR PATH IS ALSO DIVINELY DESIGNED! WE ARE PREDESTINED TO CHRISTLIKENESS!

AS WE COME TO THE LORD'S TABLE, IT IS A GRAND TIME TO REMEMBER that God has personally designed our own 'PREDESTINED PATH' for His glory and for our good! (Romans 8:28; Genesis 45:8; 50:19-20)

SITTING at the feet of JESUS, behold the CHRIST OF CALVARY, as we come to His table, we are reminded that — **LOVE** is better than hate; **FORGIVENESS** is better than bitterness; **FAITH** is better than unbelief; **TRUST IN GOD** is better than despair; **OBEDIENCE TO GOD** is better than rebellion;

AND that IT IS IN THE STEPS OF JESUS that I experience anointing from God, with CUPS RUNNING OVER! (Meditate upon **Psalm 23!**) **YES! 'THE STEPS OF JESUS' — IS OUR GOD ORDAINED PREDESTINATION!**

EVEN SO, reality is that at one time or another — genuine Christians find themselves (OUR-SELVES!) OUT OF STEP WITH JESUS! We PUSH FORWARD in the wrong direction, desperately needing to TURN AROUND!

Have you ever been wrong, but too proud to admit it? We all tend to underestimate the depth of our pride, and/or the blinding power of anger, and other sins. **How can you or I get TURNED AROUND RIGHT, when we are pushing forward in the wrong direction?**

GOOD NEWS: The good news is that if we will confess **our own sin**, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness! (1 John 1:9) **BAD NEWS:** Unless we are **in Christ** and walking with Him, we will love darkness more than light.

When we have done wrong— unless we are truly in Christ and thus walking with Him, **we will hate the light** and we will not come to the light because we do not want the reality of our dark hearts exposed. (John 3:20)

Ever notice how slithery we can be? Instead of confessing the truth, we say things like:

“I’m just unhappy. I’m hurt. I’m stressed. I’m misunderstood. I’m under extreme pressure. ‘They’ are to blame... etc.” **Or, we will seek to cover up reality by saying things like:**

“I just blew up! I lost my head. I broke down. He got under my skin. My blood is boiling. He made me mad.”

These and many more **are culturally acceptable terms** to use to describe our dealings with situations and people. We focus on our feelings and on real or imagined words or actions of others— and we blame them. We will even lie and slander others **as we seek to hide the stink** of our own hearts. [MOREOVER, WE WILL STAY AWAY FROM BIBLICAL PREACHING/TEACHING WHERE WE WILL BE CONFRONTED WITH OUR SIN!] However, such responses and choices do not find acceptance with God.

We must either judge our own sins or face chastisement from God: *“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. (1 Cor. 11:31-32)*

IT IS a wonderful day when we FACE UP TO and confess OUR OWN sins and NOT the sins - (real or imagined) - of others!

***** Grand freedom confessions:** “I am sorry. I am wrong. Please forgive me. Cleanse me, O God! Empower me, O Holy Spirit! I am wrong because I have sinned against God’s holy standard!” (Meditate on Psalm 32 and Psalm 51)

***** Why is it such a battle to confess OUR OWN sin?**

When faced with the crisis of having our own frailty or sin exposed, it is common for us humans to put up a 'smoke-screen' or try to 'blame-shift'... hoping that our sin or failure will be forgotten, pushed in the background, or even excused. ***In pride we choose darkness over light, because our deeds are evil.***

Jesus exposed the Pharisees, and this is a huge warning to all of us: "You are those who justify your selves before men, but God knows your hearts." (Luke 16:15) *"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. **For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.** But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."* (John 3:19-21)

O the wickedness of our hearts! BEWARE: I can go so far as to confess that I have said or done something sinful and yet not be the least bit repentant! **One sign of such is that we mix our confessions with excuses!** However, if we are to be free, then WHEN confessing our sin there is no place for excuses or alibis! **GODLY SORROW is the need! HERE IS THE CONFESION OF FREEDOM: "O God, I have sinned against you!"**

The kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation [deliverance from the

bondages of sin]. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death. Just see what godly sorrow produces in us! Such earnestness, such alarm, such zeal, and such a readiness to deal with my own heart BY THESE I show that I am seeking to have done everything necessary to make things right." (2 Cor. 7:9-11) **[AGAIN, mediate deeply upon Psalm 51!]**

Reality: It is common when confronted with sin that we put up smoke-screens: "Look what they did to me. Did you hear what they said about me? Can't you see that I am depressed? O, I hate myself."

Beware: *The flesh is willing to do or say almost anything to avoid the sentence of crucifixion!*

FREEDOM: "Holy God, I not only own and confess my sins without excuse; but— O GOD, I REPENT... I TURN FROM the old sin paths ... and ... THANK YOU JESUS for YOUR FORGIVENESS!

YES, if I am already IN CHRIST, then with such a confession I am coming to the Throne of Grace as a child redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus; and **I am coming to enter into forgiveness that is already my birthright!** My sin has broken fellowship- not relationship- but fellowship. Thus, I flee to my heavenly Father in the name of JESUS and humbly own up to my rebellion and ask for restoration on the merits of my Savior, Jesus Christ, for: "... if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

IF I AM NOT YET A CHILD OF GOD— Conviction of my sin, (a gracious work of the Holy Spirit), brings me to cry out, like the tax collector Jesus spoke about— **“GOD, BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER!”** **FREEDOM: LORD GOD, I not only come confessing and repenting and asking for forgiveness— PLEASE CLEANSE ME from my sin!** (I must yield to the Holy Spirit’s revelations as to how sin got a stronghold in me in the first place!) **What ‘appearances’** of evil must I avoid? **What ‘provisions’** for the flesh and sin must be closed down? **What is the ‘secret leaven’** in my heart which must be ruthlessly removed? (Acts 19:18-20)

FREEDOM: LORD GOD, please Empower me! When we are truly in Christ, we have an ever present and inexhaustible resource: “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:19) And again, the good news is that if we will confess **our sin**, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness! (1 John 1:9)

Over and again in life we find ourselves needing a FRESH START. SO, AGAIN: It is a wonderful day when we confess our own sins and not the sins- real or imagined- of others! **THEREFORE: *I am sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me. Cleanse me, O God. Empower me, O Holy Spirit!*** (Psalm 32)

THE WAY HOME— the first FORWARD STEP is repentance! **As I repent of GOING MY OWN WAY, LEANING TO MY OWN UNDERSTANDING, DRINKING IN COUNSEL THAT**

HAS JUSTIFIED MY FLESH; and as I repent of finding fault with others; and repent of CONDEMNING OTHERS— **THEN** Floodgates of MERCY and GRACE will come open! (Proverbs 28:13)

ANOTHER FORWARD STEP is a Proclamation of Reception of my DIVINELY designed PREDESTINATION to **Christlikeness**. As a miracle of mercy and grace, every real Christian is predestined to adoption (Ephesians 1:5), so as to be molded into the image, the likeness of Jesus Christ! (Romans 8;28-29). Thus, it is the Divine design of God that we follow in the steps of Jesus! (1 Peter 2:19-23)

Till we get home! ... and yes, we come to the LORD'S TABLE... until HE comes! And at His TABLE ... We are reminded yet again to embrace our DIVINE PREDESTINATION— WE ARE PREDESTINED TO WALK IN THE STEPS OF JESUS; TO MANIFEST CHRISTLIKENESS!

Grace to one and all! James Bell

www.southsidegallatin.org

SUNDAY SERVICES: MARCH 15, 2026

[1] **Sunday School at 9:30am:** Nursery, Children's classes, Youth, and Adult classes. [2] **WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:45am!**

SPECIAL SERVICES ... MARCH 15, LORD'S SUPPER // HOME GROUPS!

EVERY SATURDAY * 8:00 AM,** — Men's Bible Study!
(Doors open by 7:30am... coffee, juice, donuts, and Hardee's Biscuits are available!) **MARCH 14 | Romans 7:14-25**

NEXT Ladies Bible Study, 3/17/26 @ 11:00 AM – Read Acts 6

*****TUESDAYS: LADIES PRAYER MEETING @ 10:00am**

Young Adults ... Tuesdays at 7:15pm at Jaden and Rhi's home!

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS @ 6:30pm, MEN'S Prayer Service // YOUNG FAMILIES SERVICE

LOVE OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD by MAIL or by ONLINE:

**BY MAIL (checks), make out to Southside Baptist) — MAIL TO:
Southside Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1594, Gallatin, TN 37066 /**

TO GIVE via ONLINE GIVING:

<https://southsidebaptist.breezechms.com/give/online>