

The Just shall live by Faith

Volume 1 - Study 24 Galatians 1:10 **‘...do I now persuade men, or [does] God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.’**

C. Ronald Johnson, Christian Wilderness Press: Revelation 3:8 **‘I know thy works: I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. ...I will make them...to know that I loved thee.’**

These are brief studies, not “teachings” or “doctrines”.

Volume 1, Study 24

In the final analysis: The personal, thus faithful, relationship with God is that one most rewarded. The Lord Jesus promised it and we shall get to a wonderful passage of promise for it. But first we shall focus on how this kind of relationship is *individual*.

Individual Relationship with God

We have already studied in Galatians (Volume 1, Study 5 being one) which is an interesting epistle. We shall work in the first chapter, but shall only focus on Paul's *individuality* among the apostles; thus we shall pass over many truths. Bear with me, then, as we work exclusively on *individuality*.

Galatians 1:1) Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

Beginning here and throughout this chapter Paul emphasizes his individual relationship with Jesus Christ and God the Father. He does so by first pointing out how he received his ministry, which would lead into all that he would say, teach, and do in his ministry; for he received it ‘**not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead**’.

Paul does not infer that he is the only one among the apostles to have such a relationship. Both the Gospels and the epistles by the other apostles clearly reveal the individuality with Jesus Christ and God the Father of each apostle.

And we shall see how important it is for each child of God to take advantage of his or her own individuality in Jesus Christ and in a walk before the Father.

We shall skip over most of the verses to focus on *individuality*.

1:6,7) I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the [original true] gospel of Christ.

Paul, in his many writings, taught many things dealing with how Christians should walk righteously before God and how church meetings should function and how Christians should deal with the gifts of the spirit, etc. Such teachings however, were separate from the pure and plain and simple gospel message of Jesus Christ *coming as the Messiah and suffering and dying and resurrecting to sit at the right hand of the Father*.

The message is so simple that we take it for granted among Christians to concentrate much more on Paul's other teachings (we shall come back to this concept in just a bit). So much was this the case in Paul's day that at least on one occasion he stated that *the reality of the cross was no longer argued among Christians*.

1:8,9) But though we [i.e. Paul and other apostles and the men who worked with them], or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you [and by which you became a child of God], let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again [to emphasize it], If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have [at first] received, let him be accursed.

Paul has strongly emphasized *the individuality of the pure and simple gospel message*. He does not say ‘**accursed**’ to a teacher who teaches differently on the *gifts* or on how to *run a church service* or how to *witness* or on any other of the topics about which

Christians differ and even squabble. The gospel message is truth; and there are many other teachings of Paul and the apostles that also are truth; yet each is *individual* within the whole truth of God. Paul cursed only those who modify the simple truth of the gospel.

1:10) For do I now persuade men, or [does] God? or do I seek to please men [by teaching what they want to hear]? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Here is the dilemma of the church. A preacher cannot long preach to folks who do not want to hear his message, or his style, or dislike his personality, etc. The preacher, if he is going to preach to the same folks on a regular basis, must in some fashion (if not several fashions) be acceptable to the people for them to want to listen. We see this in the first chapter of 1 Corinthians; it is a natural thing among humans, among Christians.

Different denominations, independent large churches, dissatisfied Bible study groups, etc., are but manifestations of the desires of God's people to hear what they want to hear. It has always been so. It will always be so until Jesus comes and sets up his kingdom.

1:11) But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

Paul speaks here of himself to a church which God started through Paul's ministry; therefore, he speaks for himself. Yet, Paul would say the same for each apostle and for Apollos and other Spirit-led teachers.

1:15) But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal [to others] his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Regarding 'To reveal his Son in me', the word 'in' denotes a 'fixed position' or 'settled rest'. Jesus was 'fixed' to Paul. Jesus was 'settled' upon Paul so that Paul could speak nothing else but the pure simple gospel. Paul understood the individuality of his calling and future walk with Jesus; therefore 'immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood'. He concentrated upon what the Spirit spoke to him and did not want initially to mix in with it what men would speak to him; that would come later.

The last words of this chapter are 'glorified God in [i.e. 'fixed' or 'settled upon'] me'. Paul pointed out that the gospel-in-him (i.e. Jesus is the Gospel) worked its work, and some Gentiles responded to it. Therefore, when the responding Gentiles glorified God for their salvation they were glorifying the very God who was 'fixed' in Paul.

When Paul received Jesus and was ordained by him to preach to the Gentiles, he 'conferred not with flesh and blood'. This is entirely akin to when Elizabeth became pregnant with the babe, John (John the Baptist). **Luke 1:24,25) And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.** Elizabeth was entirely wrapped up in the amazing thing that God was doing in her. So it was with Paul. Remember that there was a great early reproach upon Paul because he had fiercely persecuted Christians. Each wanted to receive every possible thing from God before mixing again with God's influential people. Dear reader, a walk with God is an *individual* thing.

The gospel message is uniquely individual from all other Christian teachings. Moreover, the true gospel message is uniquely individual from all modifications of the true gospel message. To many Jews, Jesus pointed out that a True Law of Moses had been given to Israel, but that many Jews lived by a law that had been modified over the centuries. The modified law looked like (and sounded like when it was preached) the True Law. Yet, through the ages of Israel, in trying to improve Moses' Law so as to better adapt it to modern conditions in Israel, the "thing preached" had become *the Jews' law* and not Moses' Law. Paul spoke of it on many occasions.

This very thing, in the very first generation of the church, was already happening regarding modification-teachings of church things, of gifts, of holy days, etc. But also, modifications were

being made to the pure simple gospel message. That is, small beginnings of denominations had begun, and these would carry over into varied-teachings of healings, gifts, sacrifices, and other apostolic teachings. We see Jesus speak of this very thing in most of the letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation...as written down for us by the Apostle John.

Thus, it is important that we catch Paul's spirit as he stresses the *individuality* of the gospel message and his unique *individuality* among the other apostles (each unique in his own way). In the normal life of the early Christians (meeting together in churches, discussing and learning and teaching and working) we see (in scripture) the modifications that naturally came into the early churches. Such modifications have been coming into denominations, churches, etc. ever since. Therefore, *individual study* of the word (God determined that we have it in an essentially correct form) is extremely important so as to *individualize God's truth* to each Christian.

In this study, I am not speaking of argumentations among the denominations, among churches, and among Bible study groups about doctrines that each considers "truth". As we meet in worship with the brethren we should not be arguing among ourselves. Nonetheless, each Christian needs to focus all the more in his or her private life upon the *individual walk* with God as well as the *individual responsibility* before Him in faith to always seek His "truth" for you and for me. Since '**we are not to forsake the gathering ourselves together**', we must always respect each individual, each church, each denomination, and/or each Bible study group...as we worship and fellowship where the Lord wants us.



The personal and therefore faithful relationship with God is the relationship most rewarded in the Father's kingdom and in Christ's coming kingdom. The Lord Jesus promised it in this letter to the Philadelphia church. A great deal of truth can be examined and considered in the letter, but we will focus upon the individuality of this man, the '**angel**', i.e. the messenger of God in the leadership of this church. The church was probably large and split up into many groups meeting in many places at various times throughout the city.

Letter to the Leader of the Philadelphia Church

Revelation 3:7) And to the angel [i.e. bishop or priest or pastor] of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he [i.e. Jesus Christ] that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

The letter's introductory verse describes Jesus in terms of the Mighty King who shall sit on the throne of David in new Jerusalem when he comes to establish his kingdom. Christ through-the-Ages is the center of God's Plan of the Ages. His power for his kingdom (the kingdom yet in the future) includes '**opening and shutting**' upon the earth. Ah, but his powers toward earth *have been fully active since the time of creation*, even though presently he sits by the Father in the Father's kingdom... 'the kingdom of heaven'.

Therefore, within God's Plan of the Ages (continually working), Jesus wonderfully focused (i.e. applied) the Plan onto this man and his life (i.e. Jesus applied his unlimited power of the Plan of the Ages onto this very limited, but faithful, man).

3:8) I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

Compared to the other letters: Jesus had nothing but complimentary things to say to this man and to his church. Jesus set before this man an '**open door**' for the work. His '**little strength**' (given of Jesus) was founded upon the '**keeping of Jesus' word**' and '**not denying Jesus' name**' as he worked amid the squabbling church members who were carrying a very difficult load inflicted upon them by outsiders. This man was faithful to his Lord, to his position, and to the brethren. And he *pleased* the Father and the Son.

3:9) Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

(Regarding these ‘Jews’ see volume 1, studies 3 and 4.) The Jews believed that they were the protectors of God and of His word; therefore, they consider this man and his work in this church as an enemy of God...therefore an enemy of Jews. The Jews were very serious in their working for God.

When shall Jesus make these Jews ‘**come and worship before the feet**’ of this man that they will come to know that Jesus ‘**loved**’ (passed tense) this man? See it below.

3:10) Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

We Christians know about the word of God and its many truths and the preaching of that word regarding Jesus. However, this ‘word’ is *the word of Jesus’ Patience*. I do not know the full meaning of this verse...but in Jesus’ work on earth he was greatly ‘**patient**’ as he walked before the Father in the Father’s Will. Here Jesus implied that this man had been walking in a similar ‘**patient**’ fashion in his work for Jesus and for the Father.

Sometimes the patience that is required (i.e. *this kind of patience*) is the most difficult thing to affect the flesh of a child of God in service to the Master.

Therefore, Jesus would see to it that this man would be free of the testing that shall come upon the world to try all men and women ‘**that dwell upon the earth**’.

Throughout the ages in differing parts of the earth, surely there have been many tests by God of world-systems and tests of the multitudes of people in and under those systems. Even as I write this there are tribulations both natural and man-made going on in the earth. An example: When Communism took over China, the churches of the free world thought that the church in China had ceased to exist under great persecution. Yet, when China to some extent began to open up to the rest of the world, it became apparent that the persecuted church in China had been ‘**kept**’ by the Father and the Son during those years and that the Chinese church in Jesus Christ had ‘**a little strength**’.

3:11) Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

This man had a crown reserved for him which matched the reward awaiting him, and God will not take his crown from him. Therefore, he must make sure that he does not allow men (Jews and men of the world and/or church members) to tempt him, test him, and befuddle him into defiling himself, his work, and his individual relationship with the Father and the Son.

Thus, it is possible that he can be denied the wearing of the crown and likely denied his position as a pillar in the new Jerusalem temple. On the other hand, I expect that the Lord will go a long way in helping him ‘**keep**’ what he has.

3:12) Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

In the great temple, there will be numerous large pillars...each unique...in that, each stands for some outstanding aspect of Jesus Christ, to which the attention of visitors will be drawn by the grandeur of the pillar and by the pillar’s ‘**fixed position**’ (i.e. among the other pillars). At the base of each pillar will be a place for inscriptions which will identify the pillar’s unique honor and its unique message pertaining to our Lord.

In the kingdom of Jesus Christ and in its temple, a pillar shall be erected for this man (actually, the pillar is the man). And upon him shall be inscribed *the name of Jesus’ God, the name of Jesus’ new city Jerusalem, and Jesus’ new name*. According to the essence of this letter, then, these inscriptions have to do with ‘**the word of Jesus’ patience**’, which has everything to do with Jesus *imploring the children of God to be ‘patient’ and faithful*

in waiting upon him.

Thus, we consider the Jews who thought they were the only ones (or the main and chosen ones) to serve God. In Jesus' kingdom, they will be kneeling before this man in the temple of the new Jerusalem. They had looked down upon him and his work. Yet, in the new Jerusalem when they shall enter to worship in the temple, they shall be made to bow down right at this pillar (this man) and they shall realize that in the days of his earthly work for Jesus that Jesus '**loved him**'. Dear reader, this is a Forever Thing... therefore, the faithful days of work on the earth is nothing in comparison.

Just as Jews today like to think that Christians likely will not be in the Messiah's kingdom, so Christians today like to think that Jews (non-Christian) shall not be in Jesus' kingdom. I will not argue the theological point, for such things are in the Father's hands. Yet, the Jews troubling the church at Philadelphia (of whom Jesus said '**the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews [i.e. keepers of God's holy things], and are not, but do lie**') shall '**come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee**'.

Likely this man, in his walk before the Lord, had *come in and gone out* of many things amid many circumstances...such that the eyes of men considered him foolish and/or not honorable. These Jews, then, shall *come in and go out* of the temple, but this pillar (this man) '**shall go no more out**'.

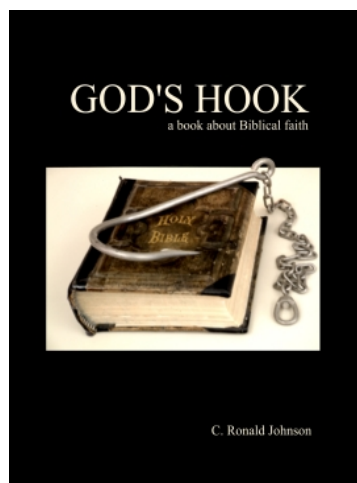
3:13) **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.**

We have focused upon this individual man, but here we see that the message is to each individual man, woman, and child in the churches...to those who have a heeding ear.

We have focused upon the *individuality* of the letter to this man because Jesus focused upon it. We have gone through much scripture and left out much scripture to focus upon the *individual relationship* of every child of God in Jesus Christ. Whatever is your position in God's church on earth...bishop, priest, pastor, lay worker, Sunday school worker, volunteer custodian, or occasional visitor to several churches...you have the opportunity to make the most of your relationship with God the Father because of His Son our Lord. Hebrews 11:6 mentions the way of success in the relationship. The man that we studied was pleasing to Jesus by being patient in faith and not allowing any man, woman, or child to test him enough for him to defile his position that his crown be taken from him.

Walk the walk in faith; by so doing, when you fall you will find that the Lord has you by the hand and you shall not fall headlong. Indeed, 'the just shall live by faith'.

These are short Bible studies by C. Ronald Johnson at Christian Wilderness Press



a book
about
Biblical
Faith

the life of
Moses
and the
Exodus

