

Build on His Word

By Senior Pastor Prince Guneratnam

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritually judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ. And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it; and even now you are not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” (1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3)

They tell me that you can divide people into three groups and the apostle Paul has a name for each one of them:

The Natural Men of the Spectators

They go to church because they know something good is happening. The bigger the crowd, the more keen they are to go. They have no desire to be involved or become like Jesus. We call them spectators. The apostle Paul calls them the natural men. The natural men do not know God. They live in sin. There is a void or vacuum in their live. They show neither commitment nor faith in God or His word.

The Carnal Men or Infants in Christ – The Emotional Ones

They go to church because they know something good is happening. The bigger the crowd, the more excited and emotional they are about what is happening. Everything they see simply excites them. They go to church for the excitement and the emotional thrills. They go to church faithfully for the good feeling that they receive. Paul calls them the carnal men or infants in Christ. There is nothing wrong in being infants. We all start from the infant stage and then we develop and grow into adults. The problem arises when we do not want to mature but stay on as infants. Paul calls them carnal – men who are born again, but refuse to grow up and mature.

They only feed on milk and not solid food. They can only digest the elementary teachings of the word of God. Thus they growth as Christians stagnates. This is indeed a sad state of affair.

The Spiritual Men or Men who are Committed

They go to church faithfully because they know what is happening and give thanks to God for it. They know that there was a price paid and are willing to be committed. They pray, they pay, they say and they obey. Paul calls them the spiritual men.

The spiritual men have the Spirit of Christ with them. They are men who love the Lord, know how to forgive and show love. They become more and more like Jesus day by day. They are men of faith who allow the gifts of the Holy Spirit to flow through their lives. They consistently study the word of God and allow it to transform their lives.

Be Born Again

The natural men as well as the carnal men seem to be heading towards destruction. The natural man needs to be saved from sin and the carnal men need to be willing to learn to grow and mature. God desires that both the natural and the carnal men become like the spiritual men. In order for the natural men to do so, first they must accept the Lord Jesus as their personal Saviour, that is, be born again. They must repent of their sins and receive the Lord into their hearts. When they do this, the word of God says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (II Corinthians 5:17). When they accept the Lord as their Savior, they will receive divine enablement to be renewed in their thoughts and conduct and therefore they can grow in their Christian lives.

Be Changed by His Word

There is hope for growth for both the natural and carnal men when they set aside time to read and put into practice the Word of God. We can grow spiritually only when we set aside time to read put into practice the Word of God. We can grow spiritually only when we spend sufficient time to study the word of God systematically. When we seek to grow in our faith by building upon the word of God daily, we will definitely be transformed from being natural and carnal men to being spiritual.

Can the word of God really do that? Yes. The word of God is God’s mirror to see ourselves so that we can make the necessary changes for the better. The apostle James in James 1:21-25, tells us that the word of God is likened to a mirror which will show us our real self with all our flaws: “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save our souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like the man observing his natural face in the mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

As we study the word of God, our flaws, weaknesses and shortcomings will be reveal to us. With such knowledge, we shall ask the Lord to help us make the necessary changes and adjustments in those specific areas of our lives. Thus when we build our Christian character and ministry upon the word of God, we can grow and mature spiritually and be better men and women of God.

Samson – A Lesson to Learn

The story of Samson (Judges 13-16) further illustrates to us the importance of building ourselves and growing in the knowledge of God's Word.

The birth of Samson (Judges 13) was a miracle. As he grew physically, God used him mightily on several occasions. Samson knew the power of the Spirit of God but he did not grow into a spiritual man. He did not allow the holiness and righteousness to be part of his lifestyle. He loved the power but did not see the wisdom of developing his character by the Word of God.

There are several points which could be a learning lesson from the life of Samson to provoke us to grow in godly character through the study and obedience of the Word of God. Let me point out some of them:

Do Not Be a Loner

Seek to develop wholesome and healthy Christian friendship. Desire Christian fellowship. Do not consider yourself so spiritual that you want to segregate yourself from others and be a loner. There should be no spiritual loners in God's kingdom because God has put all of us in a body. If we really desire to be a spiritual man and grow in Him, we ought not to be loners. We need to fellowship with godly Christian friends. Proverbs 11:14, "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety." Christian fellowship was also the pattern in the growth of the early church: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart" (Acts 2:42, 46). Samson lacked godly company. We must seek godly fellowship.

Separate Yourself from Worldliness

"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

We are in the world but not of this world. There are many warnings in Scripture that we should not be of this world. It is possible to be Christian and go to church, speak in tongues and have some ministry but still be of this world. Samson had spiritual power and ministry but he also had the world in him. He fell in love with a Philistine girl. The Philistines represented worldliness. They were ungodly, idolaters and lived after the patterns of the world. If anyone loves the world or the things in the world, Samson's choice of the Philistine girl showed the level of infancy in his godly character. The Bible tells us: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17). Then again II Corinthians 6:17, 18 says, "Therefore 'come out from among them and be separated, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.'" Samson failed in this area. We must be different and yet a testimony to those we live with.

Live to Please God and Not Self

"By faith Enoch was taken away 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" (Hebrews 11:5).

Samson did what pleased himself only. He was led by his emotions and his feelings go the better of him. Some of us want to go to church just to feel good or for selfish reasons. To do so leads only to destruction. Therefore, seek not to please the self and give in to desire of the flesh. But chose to walk in obedience of God's Word. Charisma without character is catastrophe.

Do Not Take God's Gifts and Blessings for Granted

If we want to grow, we must not take God's blessings and gifts for granted. We should not expect everything to happen automatically for us every time. Be thankful to God for everything. Do not take the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit for granted. Treasure them. They are gifts given to us. Samson took God's gift of miracles and the anointing for granted. However, one day he discovered the Spirit of God had left him and he no longer had the anointing upon his life. Let us be wary of such a lifestyle.

Learn from Your Mistakes

God wants us to grow and mature in our life physically and spiritually. It is important for us to shed childish thoughts and ways and mature in our knowledge, our vision and our lifestyle. Samson was a man who refused to learn from his own mistakes. After his mistake with Timnah, he went on to repeat the same thing with Delilah. Both the ladies used the same old trick but Samson did not learn from mistake and had pay dearly for it. Some of us can be like Samson. Though we know that certain things will bring us shame, misery, hurt and destruction, we will walk right into it with full knowledge of the consequences that will follow. Be wise. Learn from your mistakes.

Do Not Break Your Commitment or Promise with God

Everything that we receive from God comes to us in the form of promises. For instance, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from such unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9) and "As many received Him, to them He gave them the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1; 12). Another promise says, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

If we obey or keep our part of the promise of the word of God, God will be committed to keep His but if we withdraw ourselves from what God has called us to do and live in sin, God will withdraw His promises from us. This was what happened to Samson.

Samson had been a Nazirite to God since birth. As a Nazirite, he was not to take wine or strong drink, eat any unclean thing and shave his head. So, when Delilah shaved his hair, the presence of God left him. He had broken his commitment with God and God had the right to break His promise with Samson. We need to be serious and committed to obey God's Word. Then we will live a fulfilled and satisfying life. We will see Him when He comes for His church.

Determined to grow physically and spiritually by building yourselves upon the word of God with obedience. We ought to grow in maturity of character and be committed to the headship of Christ as men and women of God.

(All the above quotes are from New King James)

CALVARYNEWS

Issue 38, March – April 1996