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Flesh Profits Nothing

“What’s necessary to have a powerful church body life?” The question of the ages!

The church isn’t a social club. “Body life” can’t be energized using the same methods a dying social club might use to increase club activity. The church is the true living body of the Almighty God! If we get lined up with Him, the life will naturally flow from Him. Remember the oil that ran down Aaron’s beard over his whole body (Psalm 133:2)? In a similar way, with Christ as the proper head who has already received the anointing (Christ means “anointed”), the oil will flow over the whole body that’s properly under the Head.

The Starting Point of Recovery

Where do we *start* the point of recovery? On the personal level! Each of us, as members of the body, must know that whatever comes from our natural ability is dead. Why is this so critical? Consider that if we use wood, hay or stubble to build on the house of God (1 Corinthians 3:11-15), it won’t be accepted in the time of accounting. If we ignorantly utilize our natural fleshly “good abilities”, we will energize the church with flesh. The

result may look good at first, but the end will be more of what we're seeing across America today.

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As Jesus said:

63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. *John 6:63*

Jesus said it profited "**NOTHING**"! Not, "a little". These words are critical. Unless we see those great natural talents we contribute to the church are from the natural man, flesh will permeate the body.

Consider this example: If a man's a great musician, then becomes a Christian, we usually encourage him to redirect his skills to religious pursuits. Without the touch of God upon that part of his self-life, that would be flesh redirected to spiritual activity. Not all flesh is necessarily evil, it's just void of God's life. We find it hard to accept God's verdict on the flesh as "profiting nothing". We think, "surely we can use our natural talents and God will be glorified". That isn't God's way. In fact, our natural strengths and abilities tend to be areas we love. Our usage for God tends to be natural pride and self-ability coming through.

Another profitless way we go about Christianizing our life, is seen in the usage of our mind. Don't misunderstand this to be saying we're to be dopes after becoming Christians. That isn't the way either. Redirecting the natural mind is something we tend to do. We used our minds to study history, politics, etc., before we were believers, then we redirect that natural mental aptitude to spiritual studies, such as Bible topics, when we become Christians. We utilize the "flesh" we were born with, without realizing the importance of Jesus' words, "*profiteth nothing*".

We find it hard, nay, almost impossible to believe these good things of the flesh truly profit nothing. If we don't come to this realization, we will naturally find the body filled with the fervent works of the flesh on God's behalf. That's why seeing the natural man for what he is, is the necessary starting point.

Tree of Knowledge

Christians easily accept bad behavior as wrong, but accept the good behavior as being “the Christian way”. This isn’t so. In fact, “good behavior” can be classified as law. Christians readily accept trying to be saved by law as bad, but don’t realize that law is a life principal. It goes much further than trying to merit salvation.

Law began in the garden of Eden. Remember the choices of Adam and Eve? The “Tree of Life” and the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil”. The “Tree of Knowledge” is that self-life of self-ability and self-decision, instead of trusting to the leading of the Spirit of God, which the “Tree of Life” would have provided. Adam and Eve chose the wrong tree, and we’ve been living by that principal of our own knowing the right and the wrong ever since. We know we fail to follow our knowledge, but often fail to know we walk by a power of self-determination as our life principal. We become Christians, then use that fallen pathway of “knowledge of good and evil” to try to live Christian lives. We utilize our talents, born of the flesh, for the decided good. We feel that must be the way of life. The problem is, it’s still working after the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil” and not the one of life. (Genesis 2:9,16,17)

Repentance From Good Works

Read the following, paying attention to the foundational point of conversion:

1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

Hebrews 6:1

I hope you caught it - “*dead works*”. Before we became Christians, we may have tried to live moral lives, figuring God would accept us. Eventually, we saw our sinfulness and accepted Christ as Saviour. We came, understanding we were sinful failures. This verse gives a stout warning which is, “we need to repent

of the good we're trying to do to merit God's reward". They are works that God calls "dead". The repentance isn't only from our worst sins, but also from our best righteousness!

6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. Isaiah 64:6

The words of Isaiah show how our best is despicable.

Look at another on "dead works" from Hebrews:

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Hebrews 9:14

We need to have our conscience purged from this whole way of living. Both verses called them "dead" instead of "good", because that's what they truly are. We see them as "good", but God tells us they're profitless.

Look at all good charities of man. God can make use of them, just as He used Babylon to punish Judah, but that doesn't make them the product of life. Hebrews tells us they're clearly not THAT!

The Principle of Real Life

Another verse in Hebrews mentions works, but in the good sense:

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:21

In our understanding of acceptable good works, we have to start with the source. This is an important verse! The source is His working the good in and through us. NOT our using Him to accomplish the good we decide we want to do. That's back under the self-propelled Tree of Knowledge again! This verse says "He" is doing the working and it's in "His" sight. The realization of this truth should humble us.

Another favorite of mine is:

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20

This is a well known verse. It shows the real life. It also shows the place of the flesh. We're not free from it, but it can have a new power running the machinery. We must choose to walk in this way. Being a Christian doesn't simply make it a given. The "how" is addressed. The how is, "faith". Just as we're saved, simply by believing, so we walk lives pleasing to God and doing His work by that same principle. Real faith is so powerful it enables God to override the strength of the flesh and truly live the principle of life.

The verse starts with "crucified". That means the power of our bodies has to be dead. The body continues to physically live, as the verse says, but the empowerment for life and fruit must be from a totally different source.

There are a number of verses telling this important message, which are too important to be unfamiliar with. Another from Paul is:

29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. Colossians 1:29

Paul did great work for God. You'll notice the term, "labour" is used. In this we find the reference of the service we do for God. Paul was a gifted leader in Israel before his conversion (Galatians 1:14). He commented he had excelled over many. After his conversion, he changed his whole method of working. His new source resulted in his abandoning the abilities of his flesh for the power of God through a humbled vessel. Paul chose to work for God, but in a totally different manner to the natural man. Even understanding something as deep as Paul is saying here, isn't apprehended by the intellect of the natural man. Just look at another verse from Paul commenting on this:

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit

of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Corinthians 2:14

This verse *doesn't say*:

- The natural man can't understand Bible facts.
- He can't understand and appreciate the love Christians are to show.
- The Christian who walks by the strength of the natural man is unable to understand truths.

This verse *does indicate*:

- True spiritual knowledge has another level of activity in us we can only imitate in the capacity of our natural man.

See that the term “natural man” is used, not “flesh” or anything else denoting clear-cut wickedness. The “natural man” is a part of us that Adam had before he sinned. Before his sin, he was simply a natural man. It's that natural man that cannot make contact with spirit. It's also that natural man that can perform excellent musical performances or anything else for God. Not being of the Spirit, though, is enough for it to be cut off from acceptability for the service of God. In our living for God, only spirit profits. The flesh, which includes the natural man, PROF-ITS NOTHING!

Having laid the foundation, I would just quote a few more verses for you to meditate upon:

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Philippians 2:13

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Philippians 4:13

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather

them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

John 15:4-8

It's Choice, Not Accident

Serving God the right way doesn't automatically happen for the Christian. It comes through seeing ourselves as we really are before Him. When that true humility comes, not being impressed with what we can do for God, we're ready to allow Him to live through us.

The following passage was written to Christians:

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. Ephesians 3:16-21

Notice the, "*That he would grant you.*" If it was automatic for the Christian, that phrase would be meaningless. This passage is a real gem that I can only just touch here. This whole passage shouts out our necessity to seek His life and Him as the source. Meditate carefully on this passage.

Another well-known passage from Romans shows that walking after the spirit isn't automatic. As Christians we have to choose the walk in the spirit:

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Romans 8:11-13

We read this and tend to tie it to a deliverance from doing bad, but as we've already seen, such encompasses our whole empowerment for life.

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Romans 13:14

This verse directly addresses sinful living, but the part I wanted to note is how the overcoming is accomplished: "*put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*". The imagery is being clothed with Him, *not imitating*. It's Him living through us, not our striving to live our best for Him.

Black and White

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. John 3:6

I thought a clean simple verse a good way to finish this section. This one couldn't make it clearer. Hearken to the words.

Is the talent/ability/gift something we're born with of our parents? An ability of the flesh is flesh. Recognize that glory for its source. Can that ability be used for the Kingdom of God? With the modification of death and resurrection it can, but not until. That comes with a breaking and humbling and His direct leading after we've given it over to never be used, if that would delight Him. It comes with realizing and seeing the corruption that's intrinsically there. As we saw in 1 Corinthians 2:14, the "*receiving*" is something beyond "understanding", it speaks of revelation (Ephesians 1:17). A knowledge deeper than the brain is capable of. Once you've crossed that barrier, you will begin to understand only what spirit can see.

Putting the Blocks Together

After seeing the building blocks of the Church are standing

on a proper foundation in their service before God, the blocks (us) are ready to be assembled into the church building for the habitation of God. When we see we're part of a true body, the head should be directing, we allow the head to direct the usage of His life to His glory. This is the heart of a powerful church body life.

A powerful church body isn't a collection of different organs sewn together. THAT'S FRANKENSTEIN! It's a "corporation", as it were, that's put together according to the layout only the Maker has the ability to successfully create. To have a successful living body can still only be made by the Creator. We cannot afford to make our own creation, energize it, and call it a living body. It may exist like some business, but it will be unable to have the corporate life it should. You may see sparks of life, in this man-made organization, because it's composed of many building blocks that personally possess their own life. That isolated life will be seen, but that corporate greatness of a true body, won't. See the multiplication factor in the unity:

30 How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?
Deuteronomy 32:30

This speaks of a judgment, but the principle of multiplication is clearly seen. This holds up for the church being truly united, not just in appearances.

This brings us to a close look at that true, living body. What are we looking for? Why does it matter? What is its functional form? Let's begin the journey . . .