



Lecture 6

Developing Maturity for Life

Becoming imitators of Jesus

Like Jesus, we are now not just humans with a spiritual experience, we are now spiritual beings with a human experience. This is the right position and perspective as new creations.

1 Peter 2:22-25

“For to this very thing were you called [namely, to patient endurance in the case of unjust punishment], because Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving behind for you a model to imitate, in order that by close application you might follow in His footprints; who never in a single instance committed a sin, and in whose mouth, after careful scrutiny, there was found not even craftiness; who when His heart was being wounded with an accursed sting, and when He was being made the object of harsh rebuke and biting, never retaliated, and who while suffering never threatened, but rather kept on delivering all into the keeping of the One who judges righteously; who himself carried up to the Cross our sins in His body and offered himself there as on an altar, doing this in order that we, having died with respect to our sins, might live with respect to righteousness, by means of whose bleeding stripe [the word "stripe" is in the singular here; a picture of our Lord's back after the scourging, one mass of raw, quivering flesh with no skin remaining, trickling with blood] you were healed, for you were as sheep that are going astray and are wandering about, but now have been turned back to the Shepherd and [spiritual] Overseer of your souls.”

EACH OFFENCE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMUNICATING GOD’S LOVE

No one was falsely accused more often than Jesus, the sinless One, who had every right to react to His accusers: but He didn't, He forgave them. He demonstrated that obeying His Father was more important than Himself. He denied Himself for the sake of His Father's mission. To save mankind from destruction was the target and nothing else mattered.

Our mission field

We all have different “mission fields,” but the message remains the same. The mission begins at home and expands in different areas of our lives, such as family, friends, work, church, community, etc. We are to display the divine sacrificial love of Jesus and His character, integrity and wisdom. When the Bible teaches us to imitate Jesus, it is because we can. God would never expect us to do anything that was impossible for us to achieve.

Fighting and arguing with people is destructive, it is the works of the devil, the flesh. In contrast, bearing the sins of others, brings healing, it is the unconditional love of God in action. We are to be peacemakers, not peacekeepers.

A peacekeeper is a person who wants to keep peace at any price, even to the extent of allowing ungodliness. A peacemaker will stand for righteousness and not push things “under the carpet”. We are to be merciful, humble, generous, compassionate but always standing for God's righteousness.

Jesus confronted the pharisees and exposed their hypocrisy as ‘wolves in sheep's clothing’. Jesus never defended Himself, but always defended His Father and righteousness.

Matthew 5:1-12

“And having seen the multitudes, He went up into the mountain. And when He had seated Himself, His pupils came to Him. And having opened His mouth He went to teaching them, saying, **Spiritually prosperous** are the destitute and helpless in the realm of the spirit, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **Spiritually prosperous** are those who are mourning, because they themselves shall be encouraged and strengthened by consolation. **Spiritually prosperous** are those who are meek, because they themselves shall inherit the earth. **Spiritually prosperous** are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness, because they themselves shall be filled so as to be completely satisfied. **Spiritually prosperous** are those who are merciful, because they themselves shall be the objects of mercy. **Spiritually prosperous** are those who are pure in the sphere of the heart, because they themselves shall see God. **Spiritually prosperous** are those who make peace, because they themselves shall be called sons of God. **Spiritually prosperous** are those who have been persecuted on account of righteousness, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **Spiritually prosperous** are you whenever they shall revile you and persecute you and say every pernicious thing against you, speaking deliberate falsehood on account of me. Be rejoicing and exult exceedingly because your reward is great in heaven. For in this manner they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

GOD IS LOOKING FOR CHRISTIANS TO UNCONDITIONALLY FORGIVE ALL OFFENCES OTHERS HAVE COMMITTED AGAINST THEM.

God is not our judge anymore. In the Old Testament, God was the judge. In the New Testament He is our Father. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ now have a Father, not a judge. In the same way, we are not to be the judge of others. Imagine: God does not judge a person, but we do.

AS LONG AS YOU JUDGE OTHERS, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FORGIVE, BECAUSE YOU PERCEIVE THE OTHER PERSON ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, AND THERE IS NO SPIRITUALITY.

We do not know the other person's heart and situation. We have to show the love of Jesus and leave the rest up to God. Resentment, unforgiveness and anger against another person shows our judgement of that person and our own spiritual immaturity.

SHORT-CUT YOUR AIM FOR SPIRITUAL MATURITY BY IMITATING JESUS. THIS ALONE WILL BRING HEALING AND MATURITY TO YOUR WHOLE BEING.

In relation to believers, we are to see Jesus in one another. This perspective would solve most problems. Our fight is spiritual. When somebody offends or attacks us, this is the flesh. We ought to respond spiritually, otherwise we are trapped by our own ungodliness.

John 13:34

“A commandment, a new one, I am giving you, that you should be constantly loving one another with a divine and self-sacrificial love; even as I loved you, you also be loving one another.”

Acting on the Word of God is actually exercising spiritual authority. Jesus has authority because He humbled Himself. He has given us power of attorney; His Name, His Word and His Holy Spirit.

Philippians 2:9 “Because of which voluntary act of supreme self-renunciation God also super eminently exalted Him to the highest rank and power, and graciously bestowed upon Him the Name, the name which is above every name.”

