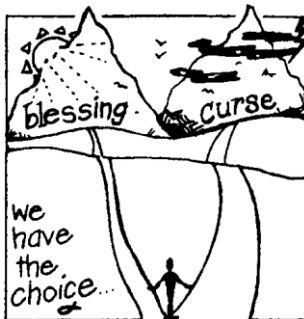


The Second Most Important Thing

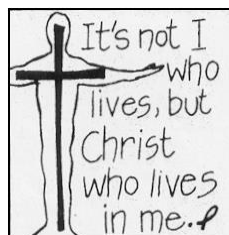
The most important thing, of course, is being saved—receiving the gift of salvation, of eternal life with God, rather than the punishment your sins deserve. If you are saved, thank God with prayers of thanksgiving and praise, because there is great cause for joy. If you are not—if you haven't said yes to Jesus, or if you've said it but have not meant it with all your heart, be afraid! Because when this life is over, God must either take you into Heaven to be with Him forever, or destroy you in Hell. There is no third possibility.



Jesus said, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt. 10:28) "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. 9:10) Anyone who is not afraid of God's wrath is a fool.

Dear friend, make sure of Heaven. If you have not done so, do it now. Turn away from the old life of serving only yourself, which is sin and death. Commit to the new life in Jesus. **If there is any question about it, get on your knees before God, confess your sins, ask forgiveness, and accept Jesus into your heart as your Savior and Lord. Do it today.**

What is the second most important thing? It goes by several different names—abiding in the Vine, walking the walk of faith, living for Jesus, and so on. St. Paul put it this way: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20)



I suppose thousands of books have been written about living the life of faith in Jesus. Many of them are excellent. One I heartily recommend is *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, by a dear Quaker lady named Hannah Whitall Smith. It is still being reprinted. Get a copy if you can.

I don't intend to write another such book here, but I want to give you some scriptures that will help you understand a little better what it means to "go on with God."

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom. 8:1-2)

Here is the key, of course, to the walk of faith. We cannot do it without help, so God has sent us a Helper—the Holy Spirit. *"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."* (John 14:26) As we walk with Jesus, we are not to be guided by our own mind, our own wants and needs. We are to walk "according to the Spirit"—that is, being guided by the Spirit of God.

Paul gets more emphatic about this a few verses later. *"Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ... those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."* (Rom. 8:5-9,14)

How does one "enter in" to this belonging to Christ, this total immersion of self into the will of God? Well, as I've said before, it isn't necessarily easy, but it is pretty simple. All you have to do is show up; God does all the work. Paul put it this

way: *“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”* (1 Thess. 5:23), and also, *“... he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”* (Phil. 1:6) It’s a process that begins the day we say “Yes” to God, and ends with our entry into the joy of His embrace in Heaven. But we can’t just turn it all over to God; we have to participate, we have to cooperate. Paul also says, *“continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”* (Phil. 2:12-13) Or, as he says in Romans 12:1-2, *“I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”* Our part is to offer ourselves to God as living sacrifices, to do with as He will. His part is to transform us into the likeness of His Son, Jesus, so that we may enter into the eternal joy of close communion with Him.

God isn’t looking for converts, though He wants us to be converted. He isn’t looking for servants or slaves, though He wants us to obey Him without reservation and serve Him with our whole being. No, He’s looking for sons and daughters. He is the King of the universe, the Lord of all that there is, or ever will be, and *it is His delight to give us the kingdom!* (Luke 12:32)

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2) For the joy that God sets before you, will you put yourself into His hands? Will you give up lying, and gossiping, and all the other garbage that He despises, and let Him make you into a beautiful replica of Jesus Christ?

Truly, what more could anyone want than to be like Jesus? To be one with the Father, to reign eternally in Heaven with the triune God? This is what He offers you, and asks you to enter into it today.

Perhaps the hardest lesson we humans ever have to learn is that God is God, and we’re not. We’re made in His image, but so far below Him in every way that no comparison is even possible. And yet we want to run things, to be in charge. Even when we come to know Him and trust Him to save us, we still have a hard time letting Him be

God. “Father, please do this for me. Father, please take care of that for me. Heal my sister. Save my son and daughter. Don’t let anything bad happen.” We spend a lot more time and effort asking God to do our bidding than we do offering to do His bidding.

God tolerates that, and even does many of the things we ask Him to do, because He loves us and He delights to bless us. **But oh, how He longs for us to come to Him in other ways than with our petitions. How He wants to bless us with the sheer joy of being near Him. How He longs for us to obey Him, but then to go beyond that and begin to appreciate Him for who He is. How He yearns to fill us to overflowing with the Holy Spirit, so that we might begin to be fountains of living water, with life flowing out from us to bless those around us.**

The relationship God wants to have with us is closer and more intimate than any marriage. Jesus prayed “... for those who will believe in me ... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:20-23)



You know God loves you, and sent His Son to die for your sins. You have received salvation, and that’s the most important thing. The second most important thing is to walk closely with the Lord, so that He can transform you into a new human being who will delight to live and reign with Him eternally.

And, of course, the third most important thing is to do what you can to extend the same blessing to others—family, friends, neighbors, casual acquaintances, people God sends your way. If you are truly walking the walk, and if you are alert for opportunities that God will provide, you will be able to help someone else say “Yes” to Jesus. And that is the greatest thrill there is, short of Heaven, especially when it’s someone you love.

Have a blessed late summer and autumn, walking with the King and being a blessing to others.

Brother Roland

Words to Walk and Live By

... that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our [or your] joy may be complete.

Walking in the Light

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Christ Our Advocate

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.



The New Commandment

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Do Not Love the World

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 desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 1:3–2:17 ESV)

The Power to Walk With God

God's Word, the Bible, teaches us everything we need to know—especially how we can be guided by the Holy Spirit each step of our way. Enjoy the puzzle.

Puzzle:

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 C O M E N E A R T O G O D L R E W N O I L A E K I L K M T Q Q
 G E N T L E A N D H U M B L E P P O H K N G K Q G H B V U B L
 S R E V E I L E B N U S D N I L B T P T D E U A I H E H V N I

Words:

The Devil

GOD OF THIS WORLD
 HAS POWER
 BLINDS UNBELIEVERS
 STEALS
 KILLS
 DESTROYS
 LIKE A LION
 DEVOURS THE LOST

But our GOD

THE FATHER OF LIGHTS
 GIVES EVERY GOOD GIFT
 DOES NOT CHANGE
 GAVE US HIS WORD
 THE MANUFACTURER'S
 HANDBOOK
 TEACHES AND TRAINS US

REBUKES AND CORRECTS
 EQUIPPING US WELL
 FOR EVERY GOOD WORK

JESUS, our LORD

GENTLE AND HUMBLE
 CALLS US TO HIMSELF
 GIVES US REST
 GIVES US AUTHORITY
 OVER EVIL THINGS
 PROTECTS US
 SENDS US THE COUNSELOR
 SPIRIT OF TRUTH

Therefore we must

WEAR GOD'S ARMOR
 STAND AGAINST EVIL
 BELT OF TRUTH
 BREASTPLATE OF
 RIGHTEOUSNESS

FEET PREPARED TO SHARE
 GOSPEL OF PEACE
 SHIELD OF FAITH
 HELMET OF SALVATION
 SWORD OF THE SPIRIT
 SUBMIT TO GOD
 RESIST THE DEVIL
 HE WILL FLEE
 COME NEAR TO GOD
 CLEAN UP OUR LIVES
 PURIFY OUR HEARTS
 RECEIVE HIS GIFTS
 AND HIS HOLY SPIRIT
 POWER FROM ON HIGH
 POWER TO WITNESS
 TO WALK IN LOVE
 AND BE CONTENT