

## AUTHENTIC DISCIPLESHIP – LONGEVITY PART 2

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**Scripture:** Psalm 27

We've been looking at what Authentic Discipleship looks like.

Week 1: Submission.

Week 2: Obedience.

Week 3: Fruitfulness.

Week 4: Longevity.

This week I'd like to pick up where we left off in looking at longevity. But before we do that, I once again want to stress that the whole idea of Authentic Discipleship must be one that looks to the end, to the time when we will stand before the Lord. There is no getting out of it, no taking time out. It's a constant walk behind the Lord.

As Paul said to Timothy, he has fought the good fight, he has finished the race and he has kept the faith. That is so important. So often, the fight gets lost and the faith is lost. And after some time, we kind of retreat into a lukewarm relationship with God. And we know as we read Revelation, what a lukewarm relationship seems like to the Lord. It's not something that He is happy with it.

And so we look at what Paul has said about pushing forward. We know that perseverance is the key. We need to be able to persevere against all odds to get to the goal. And Paul says, "Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Sometimes that's the place where we get entangled because we continue to focus on the things that we have done in the past, or the failures of the past, or the sins of the past, or even the behaviors of the past that didn't give justice to the kind of relationship that we are in. And it comes back to haunt us. Then what happens is we spend our time obsessing about it while forgetting that life continues to move on in the present. And by doing so, we lose everything that God has for us in the present.

We really need to understand that God doesn't remember it. He tells us in Hebrews 8:12 *"For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."* Or as the NLT puts it, *"and I will forgive their wickedness and I will never again remember their sins."* Or as The Message puts it as eloquently as they normally do, *"They'll get to know Me by being kindly forgiven with the slate of their sins forever wiped clean."*

And it begs the question: If God doesn't remember our sins, why on earth do we? Why do we let it pull us down? why do we let it impinge into our present and spoil our future? We need to understand that what God has done is something that is permanent. He says, "I put it out of My mind." In fact, in Isaiah 43:18-19 He says,

<sup>18</sup> *"Do not call to mind the former things,  
Or ponder things of the past.*

<sup>19</sup> *Behold, I will do something new,  
Now it will spring up;  
Will you not be aware of it?  
I will even make a roadway in the wilderness,  
Rivers in the desert.*

And I want to ask you beloved, what is it that you're pulling out from the past? What is it that you're pondering on, thinking and thinking and thinking about, when God is saying, "Put a full stop there and move on?" Because if you're only looking at the things of the past, you're not seeing the new things that I'm doing now. As disciples, we need to understand that even if we fall, we look to the Lord and say, "Lord, forgive me. I've messed up, but Lord, would You forgive me, cleanse me and then put me back on the road behind You, following after You."

I want to encourage each one of us today, if that's where you are, if the past is pulling you, taking the joy out of your present, then remind yourself of what God has done in your heart. remind yourself that His Word is true. if you confess your sins, then He says, I'm faithful and just and will forgive you your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Paul had lots in his past to remind him of what a terrible person he was. He was the one who led the persecution against the early Christians. He was the one who got the authority to go after the Christian Jews wherever they were, and take their lives. he was the one who stood and watched Stephen get stoned. He was the one who stood there and collected the cloaks of the people who were doing the stoning so that their arms would be freer to do the work. He had much in his past to bring it back and to jaunt him. And yet, he says, "Forgetting that which is past, let's strain ahead to what's in my future."

I want to encourage you, as we think about Authentic Discipleship, that if you have something that is threatening to take away your peace and your joy or make you forget that our God is a forgiving gracious God, then you need to let these scriptures just bring up those thoughts that you can walk confidently in the path that He has called you to walk.

We said that perseverance is the key in being able to do that, in not giving up, not giving in to the issues that surround us. We looked at many scriptures that invited us to persevere. And then we began to unpack it and say: How do we persevere? How do we have longevity as disciples? When you started your journey with the Lord, I wonder whether that was a question mark for you. I know it was for me. I thought to myself – can I continue on? Can I make it? Can I stay this steadfast behind the Lord? And very quickly in the journey, I realized that it had very little to do with me and everything to do with my trusting Him. It's the same for all of us, beloved. For us to persevere, we need to be in a trusting relationship with Him.

We looked at a couple of things on how to persevere, how to have longevity, and we said the first was to have a passionate relationship with the Master. How do we do that? By getting to know Him, and know Him well, by making sure that there was no sin that stood as a barrier between us and Him. And then we said that we needed to grow in our love relationship with Him. That was the first point.

The second point, and I think this is where we stopped, was that we said that we needed to be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led. I want to just open that up a little bit by saying that the indwelling of the Spirit is different from the infilling of the Spirit. The indwelling of the Spirit is open to everybody. In fact, if you look at scripture John 7:37-39

<sup>37</sup> Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup> The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" <sup>39</sup> But this He said in reference to the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive.

So firstly, when we think about the indwelling of the Spirit, it's open to anyone who believes.

The second point that I wanted us to understand as we look at the indwelling of the Spirit is that the Holy Spirit is given at the moment of salvation, the moment you accept Jesus into your heart and accept what He did at the cross as penalty for your sin.

Ephesians 1:13 *In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of the promise.*

And the third point in this indwelling is that He indwells believers permanently.

2 Corinthians 1:22 *“who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.”*

As a pledge until one day we are standing in God’s presence. From the time of salvation until the time of regeneration, we will have the Spirit. But the filling of the Spirit that is referred to in

Ephesians 5:18 *“Be ye filled with the Spirit of God,”* talks about a complete yielding to the Holy Spirit.

As we have the Holy Spirit within us, remember that we can grieve the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can feel sad about the things that we are doing, if we leave Him out of our lives, out of parts of our lives. then we also read that His activity within us can be quenched. That’s a sad thought – to have the Holy Spirit within us and then to quench the Spirit. That happens when we don’t obey Him. When He wants us to do something and we say “No, we’re not going to do it,” then we quench the Spirit of God.

When Paul says “be filled with the Spirit,” it implies freedom for Him to occupy every part of our lives so that He is guiding and controlling us, so that His power is exerted through us, so that what we do is fruitful to the Lord. The question for us, before we move on, is: Does the Holy Spirit have that kind of freedom in your life? does He have access to every part of you? A couple of weeks back, I talked about Dr. J.T. Seamands, and his question to us: Is the Holy Spirit a guest or is He a resident in your heart? Is He a guest, meaning is He allowed into only two or three rooms in your heart? or as a resident, does He have the keys to every part of you? That’s a good question for us, as well, to just pause and say: Am I completely open to the Holy Spirit today? Does He have complete access to my life?

It is also important as we look at the outside and the behavior that comes out of being obedient to Him, to make sure that the Holy Spirit has access to behavior that is not visible as well. The psalmist says, *“May the words of my Mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord.”* We use that in a very positive sense. And yet the question is: What do we meditate on? What are our thoughts on? We need to be careful both of behavior that is visible and behavior that is not visible.

And then the key question is: How do I get filled? I’ve spoken to you quite a few times on this. As we look at Ephesians 5:18, there are 3 or 4 key thoughts that we must understand.

- **It’s a command.**  
It is not an option. “Be ye filled.” It’s in the imperative. If you’re a disciple of Jesus today, then your duty is to be filled.
- **It’s in the plural.**  
It’s for all of us. God expects that the church, all of us, would be filled so that it’s a vibrant church.
- **It’s in the passive voice.**  
In other words, you can’t say: Today I’m going to fill myself with the Spirit. The only thing you can do is empty yourself and say, “Lord, I’ve emptied myself; now fill me.” And He does the filling. That’s what the passive voice is; it’s an action that’s done to us. And the only way that God can fill us is if we empty ourselves. Beloved, every day there is an emptying that must happen in our lives. The Holy Spirit will point out things in our lives and say what is inconsistent with being a disciple. And our job then is to say: Lord, I yield this to You. Would You take it out? And in its place, would You fill me with Your Holy Spirit.

- **It's in the present continuous tense.**

Be ye continually filled with the Holy Spirit. So we are constantly open to filling. It's not a one-shot deal. Every day, as God shows us new areas in our lives that we need to yield to Him, we give it up and then we ask for His filling.

Then to be led by the Spirit. What does that mean? Galatians 5:25 exhorts us, *"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."* To walk by the Spirit means that we yield to His control. We follow His lead and we allow Him to exert influence over us. Galatians 5 also talks about the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, kindness .... and then we become unsure. The first couple of ones we know very well. and yet, beloved, that is what happens when the Holy Spirit has control – that we see that kind of fruit.

Let me amplify it for you.

- Those who walk in the Spirit, walk in love. They live in love for God and for people around them.
- Those who walk in the Spirit, walk in joy. They exhibit gladness in what God has done, is doing and will do.
- Those who walk in the Spirit, walk in peace. Their lives are not defined by worry or anxiety. Are you worried today? Are you anxious? are there things that are troubling you? Is something weighing heavily upon your mind? Has peace been stolen from you? If it has, then God is not leading you through this situation. You're trying to lead yourself.

When the Spirit of God leads you through a difficult situation, the residual effect in our lives is peace. that's why the peace that comes from God is a peace that defies our human understanding. It's a peace that doesn't make sense. It is not a peace that says, "Okay, everything is going well now, so I have peace." No! In the midst of the storm, it is a peace that we have from God. And if we are being led by the Spirit of God, then peace must be evident.

- Those who walk in the Spirit, walk in patience. They're known for having a long fuse and do not lose their temper.
- Those who walk in the Spirit, walk in kindness. They show tender concern for the needs of others.
- Those who walk in the Spirit, walk in goodness. Their actions reflect virtue and holiness.
- Those who walk in the Spirit, walk in faithfulness. They are steadfast in their trust of God and His work.
- Those who walk in the Spirit, walk in gentleness. Their lives are characterized by humility, grace and thankfulness to God.
- Those who walk in the Spirit, walk in self-control. They display moderation, constraint and the ability to say 'no' to the flesh.

Those who walk in the Spirit, according to Romans 6:11, says that they rely on the Holy Spirit to guide them in thought, word and deed. So, if we are walking in the Spirit, if we're being led by the

Spirit, then the fruit of the Spirit will be evident in our lives. and fruit not only blesses us but blesses people around us as well.

So, to be an Authentic Disciple who has longevity, we need:

1. Enduring passion for the Lord.
2. Being Spirit-filled and Spirit-led.
3. Embrace the inconvenient.

### **WE NEED TO EMBRACE THE INCONVENIENT**

We need to embrace the things that are inconvenient. We need to accept the challenges. We need to accept the difficulties. We need to realize that is par for the course on being called to be a disciple. Disciples will face difficult times. The Master did, so will the disciple. Stands to reason.

### **What does it mean to embrace the inconvenient?**

I want to look at Psalm 27 and we'll quickly follow through on four areas that I believe are pitfalls for disciples.

- i) Fear
- ii) Hopelessness or helplessness
- iii) Abandonment
- iv) Despair

Often when we come to situations when we are fearful, or we feel helpless, or we feel alone and abandoned, or we feel desperate or despair, we often fall in that walk as disciples. But the psalmist looks at all of these areas and he says: There's a way out of it.

### **WHEN YOU FACE FEAR, THE LORD IS YOUR DEFENCE**

"When you face fear, believe that the Lord is your defense. Vs. 1-3

*<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my light and my salvation;  
Whom shall I fear?  
The LORD is the defence of my life;  
Whom shall I dread?*

*<sup>2</sup>When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh,  
My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.*

*<sup>3</sup>Though a host encamp against me,  
My heart will not fear;  
Though war arise against me,  
In spite of this I shall be confident."*

The Lord is the One who defends me. I don't know whether this morning, you're in the midst of a fearful situation. Fear has gripped your heart and you're immobilized. You're not able to think clearly. In fact, you've been fighting this. Maybe today the Lord is saying to you: The battle belongs to me. I am your defender. I am the One who can defend you, and I will. And maybe it's time to release that issue or that circumstance to Him and let Him be your defender.

As ones who are on the journey for the long haul, we must continually do that because the Bible exhorts us so many times, not to fear. Fear is not part of a disciple's vocabulary. Fear is trusting in our own ability to make things happen. It's not trusting in God. So look at your lives and see if there is anything that you are fearful about today. Maybe you are not believing in Him.

### **WHEN YOU FACE HOPELESSNESS, DRAW NEAR**

When we face hopelessness or helplessness, and sometimes we do get into a position where there is not hope. And we think: No! I can't find any way out of this. And yet, for a disciple of Jesus, there is always hope. Because we trust in Him, we believe in Him.

Vs. 4-5

*<sup>4</sup>One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:  
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the LORD  
And to meditate in His temple.*

*<sup>5</sup>For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle;  
In the secret place of His tent He will hide me;  
He will lift me up on a rock.  
He'll conceal me. He'll hide me and He'll lift me up.*

One of my saddest moments this past week was reading in the newspaper of a study about the number of suicides in India in the year 2019. Every day, 450 people take their lives. every day, 450 people say, "There is no hope. That's it! I can't live another moment." And yet, that's not true for us, because our hope is in Him, the solid rock. Our hope is in God. We never have a moment of hopelessness or feeling helpless. All we need to do is to press in, draw near to God.

### **WHEN YOU FACE ABANDONMENT, GOD WILL NEVER ABANDON YOU**

When facing abandonment, the psalmist says: trust that God will never abandon you.

Maybe this morning, some of you are just feeling very alone. You feel like you don't have anybody around you as a support system. Beloved, the only person you need is the One who has said to you: I'll never leave you, and I'll never forsake you. Though everybody else may leave you, He never will. And so, if you're feeling lonely today, just trust that God has said to you: I'll never leave you. I'm with you. Put your hand in His and walk confidently forward.

### **WHEN YOU FACE DESPAIR, WAIT FOR THE LORD**

*I would have despaired unless <sup>13</sup>I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.*

*<sup>14</sup>Wait for the LORD;  
Be strong and let your heart take courage;  
Yes, wait for the LORD."*

There are times when we just need to wait for God to come through. He doesn't want us to do anything. Just wait for Him to do what He needs to do. Sometimes, that's difficult! But that's what He wants us to do. There are times when despair just fills us, overwhelms us. The psalmist says: Just to be able to believe that you will see the goodness of God in the land of the living, while you're still alive. In the midst of the despair that you are facing, you will see His goodness. So wait! Don't do anything. Just keep your eyes fixed upon Him.

Beloved, as we look at just staying in for the long haul, making sure that we are active authentic disciples of His till the very end, we need to put in all of these: To have a passion for the Master, to develop that passion, to be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led. Then to have longevity, to make sure to determine in your heart that at no point you are going to give up or give in. God wants us to be authentic disciples of His. May that be so. Amen.