

Complacency vs. Fervency

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Last year, as I was deleting some old messages from my email account, I scrolled over to the side bar and saw a folder (that I rarely used) titled “Notes.” I had about seven files recorded in that folder, all dating back to 2012; one of those files was labeled “Things I need to work on.” Curious since I did not remember typing those notes, I opened the file. To my surprise, and my shame, it was a list of challenges I struggled with spiritually that I had written down for me to improve. This was a very humbling find, since I still struggled with those same challenges four years later, with little improvement. The voice of my conscience had suddenly rung loud at the revelation of my complacency.

Christianity is a growth process. Being baptized into Christ washes away sin, but it does not necessarily wash away former habits, desires, temptations, or other spiritual struggles. We need time, practice, and patience to grow and mature ourselves as God’s people. I believe the Lord understands this, as the Bible describes some Christians as “babes” needing milk, and others as matured ones who should consume “strong meat” (1Pet. 2:1-2, Heb. 5:12). However, while God does not expect us to go from “0 to 60” in an instant, He does expect growth and progress.

On the contrary, the voice of complacency is so attractive. It says, “You are fine where you are. There is no need to go further. You do not have to do anything else. You have arrived!” But, a Christian ought never to believe they have perfectly mastered the image of Christ. We certainly do the best we can at each interval of our lives, but never can we say that “We have arrived,” or, “We have done enough.” You may not have a list that you made some time in the past like I did, but if you think back two to four years ago, can you say that you have matured as a Christian in that time? Are you spiritually older and wiser? Or, are you still in the same place, with the same challenges and the same shortcomings? Your answers may suggest that you have listened to the voice of complacency.

I encourage you to make spiritual goals for your personal spiritual maturity. Start off small, with simple tasks that you can achieve on a daily basis. If you are lacking in your prayer life, write down a daily goal that says, “I will pray first thing in the morning before I get out of bed and right before I go to sleep; as well as before meals.” If you have been stagnant in your Bible study, get on a daily Bible reading program to have a passage each day that you can feast on. If there is a particular sin that you cannot seem to overcome, try sitting down and brainstorming over the problem, as well as possible solutions. “What generally happens right before I start engaging in this sin? Is that the cause, or a factor, in my bad habits? What does the Bible say about this particular transgression? What have I done to try and stop myself from engaging in this? What can I do differently in the future? Is there someone I can talk to and seek counsel from?”

Listen to the voice of the unprofitable servant that says, “When you do everything you can for God, you have not gained. You have not done enough. You have not earned anything. You have done your duty to the Lord” (Luke 17:10). Listen to the voice of Paul that says, “Your race is not finished until the breath of life has exhaled from your nostrils” (2 Tim. 4:7). Listen to the voice of progress that asks, “Do I pray more than I did a year ago? Do I still struggle with the same sins that I did two years ago? Has my knowledge of the Bible increased in recent months? Am I stronger Christian today than I was when I first obeyed the Gospel?”

Listen to the voice of fervency that says, “Do more. Give more. Sacrifice more. Love more. Forgive more. GROW MORE!”