

## Who Teaches Canaries

Friday, 01 June 2007

As believers, has God given such a burden to perform in living the Christian Life that we simply cannot accomplish it, or have we simply taken on a burden of our own design so that we cannot successfully experience the Christian Life? It's a question that we should consider occasionally, so that we can rightly divide the Word of Truth. Evaluating the purpose of our performance will help us not to burnout, crash, give up or get discouraged. After all, Jesus taught us that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Did that sink in? Paul further states that if we took up Christ's yoke, we would find rest! We would not find more work than we could possibly handle. Is that our experience? If not, we need to take another look at what we are 'picking up.'

Jesus certainly indicated that we would have much to 'deal with' in this life. Some parts of this life would be 'heavy' and cumbersome. But, just as importantly, He indicated that one of His purposes in coming was to help us through the tough times that would occur to us, or the tough times that we create ourselves. Scripture reveals that Jesus is the true vine and without him nothing could produce the Christian life. (John 15) To be successful living the Christian Life, we will need to make Him the source of that life. Not as just our leader into Truth, but also permitting Christ's life to live through us. Our role is to bear much fruit. But, it should be His fruit, not our own. That's one of the places we run into trouble living the Christian life. It gets 'heavy' trying to do the Christian thing in our own ability, but we should never have picked up that heavy burden. His ability propels us through the Christian life. Christ is the author and finisher of our Faith. He has started that process in each of us, and He alone will be able to complete it. The Gospel life is about Him, not so much about us. Taking up the Christian life is to take up His life, not our own.

We are encouraged to mount up on eagles' wings. Eagles move effortlessly through the air. They appear to be resting rather than flying. How many trees do you know that think to themselves, 'I'm a tree and trees have to bear fruit.' No, trees bear fruit because they are trees! Nothing on their part is required other than being created a tree. When we are 'created' anew, the life we bring forth can come from the very source of having become what God intended us to be. Who teaches a canary to sing? It simply sings because it's a canary! It does what canaries do best. It does that because of what it is; it does not do anything to become a canary. Christians should not perform and bear much fruit to be Christians; they bear much fruit because they are Christians.

Resting in Christ gives us the opportunity to relax, trust and believe that God will live through us. We can serve God best by yielding our lives to His 'living' rather than serving Him with our living. Now I know that sounds 'goofy' compared to how we usually talk of serving God, but we have to get in the order of God to experience God. After all, laying down our life doesn't mean going out in the street and getting in front of cars. It means putting our life at rest so that God can use it for His purpose. I remember a teaching by Bill Gillham years ago. Bill taught us that ground is just dirt unless God is present. With the presence of God it becomes holy ground. God's presence in our lives is what makes anything we do holy. We are not that by ourselves, even when we are the best 'ourselves' we can be!

During our most recent Celebration, Mike Middleton and I were talking about how to live the Christian life. Mike made a statement that I have been thinking about ever since. We were discussing the necessity of reading scripture and keeping our minds on Christ. We both agreed study is a very important part of staying on course with God. However, in that same conversation, Mike noted that study alone would not permit us to experience the Christian life in full. He suggested that the Christian life is like many of the artists that we bring in concert. Once they have learned the lyrics to their songs they no longer need to read the words to sing the song. They sing them effortlessly, without having to even think about the lyrics. They have placed those lyrics in their hearts and draw on them without having to have a sheet of paper with those words on it. That's not to say that we should not read the Word of God-obviously we should. There is no substitute for reading the Word of God. The Word of God is exactly what turned so many of our lives around. But reading and doing are not exclusive of one another. Reading the Word and doing the Word is the best mix. Jesus taught that believers who hear the Word and do the Word is like a man who built on a strong foundation. When the storms came he could not be

shaken. But, he that hears and does not do them, the ruin of his house was great. (Luke 6:46-49) He did not say that they were condemned. Rather that only reading them without doing them was not enough to stabilize our walk. Doing the Word became possible when the Spirit of God came and re-birthed us, empowering us to live the Christian life- just like that canary can sing without ever being taught to sing.

Most of us have read stacks of books, listened to cabinets full of cassettes and still asked what might be called &lsquo;silly little questions&rsquo; about the Will of God, seemingly stumped about what we think God wants us to do next. By this time, some of the teaching in the Gospel should have become natural for us to do, things that we do so instinctively we hardly think of them at all. Things that let us do the Gospel as easy as that canary singing. We don&rsquo;t work hard to do them; they have become part of our natural expression. Jesus taught of a group that was always learning but never coming to the Truth. Always memorizing but never living scripture. I believe the knowledge of God is in the reading-- preservation of God is in the doing.

Jesus wanted us to take up his &lsquo;burdens&rsquo; and discover they are natural for us. They are not too much to carry. Those things He asks us to do are possible because He is the one who accomplishes the task, carrying them for us. Not something that we have to struggle with or go out and figure out the mystery to. The Christian life was not given to us as a puzzle, but something that even a little child could experience. In fact, it is as a little child that we will have to come in order to experience the Christian life. It&rsquo;s a song sung from the heart rather than the head. It&rsquo;s a song whose lyrics have been placed in our heart just as that canary&rsquo;s song. Canaries can&rsquo;t go to canary school-- they just draw on the song God gave them to sing.