

**Life at the Top**  
**March 26, 2017**  
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Good morning, Lighthouse, are you ready for the Word of God this morning?

**2 Peter 1:1-10**

1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for **if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:**

Over and over in the ministry we have seen folks get saved, rejoice in their new life, begin to grow for a while and then fall back into their old life in the world.

Sometimes they are able to come back from it; most of the time they are not.

This is not new, this has been happening in every Church since the first one. Paul writes about these folks in:

**1 Corinthians 3:11-15**

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: **but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.**

What a waste! Bought by the precious blood of Christ, redeemed from all sin, set free from sin's bondage...and now living for who knows what; no glory, no fruit and no joy!

This falling away is not exclusive to new Christians. Sometimes believers saved many years - for whatever reason - get stupid and decide they had rather live for themselves than for Jesus.

Then, in both cases, they decide to stay miserable because they are too embarrassed to come back and admit how foolish they were.

This is not the life Jesus died to give you.

All things in nature function according to a certain order. What many don't seem to realize is that all things spiritual also function according to a certain order.

Salvation from the penalty of sin comes to us as a free gift. When we place our trust in Jesus Who paid for our sins on the cross, He, all by Himself, gives New Life to our Spirit.

**John 5:24** Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Our spirit which was dead in sins (**Ephesians 2:1**) is passed from death to life eternal; born again in the image of God.

Salvation from the power of sin in our present lives is not something Jesus does for us all by Himself; for this we are given, and I quote, "exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (verse 4, again)

**Our old life doesn't just go away, it has to be replaced with new life!**

This is what baptism and then becoming a living, breathing, functioning and dedicated servant in your Church is for.

Serving the Lord in your Church is the replacement for much of that garbage you are trying to leave behind.

**Ephesians 4:21-24**

21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Accurately stated, those Christians who are energetically and enthusiastically serving the Lord and doing so with all their hearts...**those are the Christians who are being ruled by their new man**; their spirit which has been raised from the dead; re-created in righteousness and true holiness.

Those saved people (it's hard to call them Christians) who have fallen back into the world; they are those who are being ruled by their old man, their flesh.

I recently counselled with someone who is saved but out there in the world, consumed in his old ways. One of the things he told me was that the happiest he has ever been is while he was right here in this Church learning to serve the Lord.

I don't know if he will ever come back or not; Satan has sold him a lie that he has just sinned too much to be forgiven.

Some excel to become stable and steadfast servants of the Lord, and they never fall.

Others vacillate and waver and it is just a matter of time before the flesh takes over and they are back; miserable in the world.

What is different? What causes some to fail while others rise to great success, bearing fruit and glory to the Lord?

About five or so years ago, the Lord sent us an illustration that explains this in terms that almost anyone can understand:

**Picture** a horizontal line across the center of a blank sheet of paper. Below that line your old man rules your life. Above that line your new man rules your life.

Those who constantly waver and often fall away try to live their lives just above the line.

They want just enough of Jesus to beat the alcohol. They want just enough of Jesus to stay off drugs. They want just enough of Jesus to be blessed financially. They want just enough of Jesus to feel good spiritually - at least at times.

**They live on the edge of the line.** They come to Church...sometimes. They are involved in Church...a little bit. They serve...if they are asked and it's not too much trouble.

Old Pastor Turk used to call it "trying to hold on to the World with one hand and trying to hold on to Jesus with the other".

We all sin and fail God every day; (wavy line) sometimes in ways we consider minor and sometimes in ways we consider major.

God's advice is get off the line and start living at the top of the page. We call it things like "completely surrendering to the Lord", "becoming a living sacrifice", "giving God your all", "sold out to Jesus".

God calls it things like "holiness", "sanctification", being "fully persuaded".

Whatever you call it, when you are living down on the line, every time you sin it takes you below the line and puts you under the control of your old man, the flesh; it's only a matter of time and occasion until you fall away and find yourself with no strength to get back.

The only path left is to fall deeper and deeper into the world.

When you are living way up here, "sold out to Jesus", you can suffer even a substantial failure; but you still don't fall under the control of the flesh; you confess your sin, get right with God and still **never fall** away.

If you are living down here on the line, it's only a matter of time before some specific failure takes you so low you can't get back.

Some of you have been saved a long time and there was a time that you served the Lord with excitement and enthusiasm; remember when that was?

But you've moved down the page and now you are doing things you never thought you would ever do again.

Old sinful habits have begun creeping back into your life.

The only thing that will give you victory over an overt sin in your life is to replace it with a Godly activity that you will love more than your flesh loves the sinful one!

Some of you need to get back to serving the Lord with all your heart!

You may not be down here on the edge of the line yet but you sure enough know that is where you are headed.

Can you see what is coming?

## **I. Get off the line!**

*A. You may have begun to doubt your salvation.*

1. We teach our members, personally and thoroughly, how to make sure they are saved.

2. You are commanded right there in **2 Peter 1:10** to make sure you are saved! *Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to **make your calling and election sure**:*

3. Maybe you need a review.

4. You must compare your salvation experience with that of the Bible.

5. **If it matches** what the Scriptures say, you will have God's Word on it that **you are saved**.

*B. Next, get about learning what God has called and equipped you to do...or perhaps what He has for you now at this stage of your life.*

1. There are lots of needs here in the Church that require servants to meet them; you can start with what God has put right in front of you.

2. Then get about finding your true calling; your place of service in God's house; and don't give up until you do.

3. Some would really like to do certain things for the Lord but are afraid to try: try anyway.

4. Some want to do things the Lord has not called or equipped them to do. Do you really think you would be happier doing what you think you want instead of what the Lord wants and knows you need?

5. Not everybody can preach; not everybody can sing well enough to lead in music or play an instrument well; not everybody can teach; find what you do well to serve your Church and don't quit until you do.

6. When you find it, not only will you be content and love it; you will become very good at it.

7. Then do it with all your heart!

## **II. Don't just visit the top of the page; live your life there!**

*A. You are where you are because of the choices you have made.*

1. That is not all bad because at least for now, you are here, still hanging above the line.

2. Some of you are in a dangerous place; God is showing you this and you need to act on His warning.

*B. The power of God has been placed at your disposal; it's for every believer in every Church!*

1. **2 Peter 1:3** According as **his divine power** hath given unto us **all things that pertain unto life and godliness**, through the **knowledge of him** that hath called us to glory and virtue:

2. You have been given promises that will keep you in God's will.

**2 Peter 1:4** Whereby are given unto us **exceeding great and precious promises**: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

4. These promises are empty until you claim them by faithfully meeting their conditions.

5. God's power and promises cover '**all things that pertain to life and godliness**'.

6. Marital, financial, social, business, provisional; you name it; God has a promise that covers it; but we've got to act on them.

Finally:

### **III. You've got to cut yourself some slack.**

*A. There are some things you see and learn from being in the ministry a long time that you really can't learn any other way.*

1. One of them is that people in general have way too high expectations of Christians.

2. They think that if you claim to be a Christian you ought to be able to walk on water, never cuss, never want what other people want and just about walk around with a glowing halo over your head looking up at Jesus all the time with your hands folded.

3. Then when one of those folks gets saved, they generally end up expecting way too much of themselves as well.

4. After the initial peace and joy of coming to know Jesus they soon realize that they still have all the same lusts and desires and yes, even pretty much all the same bad habits as before.

5. At this point many folks become extremely disappointed in themselves; sometimes to the point of just giving up.

6. Sin is wrong and God hates it, but we must deal with it realistically like God does.

*B. You need to know that God **expects** you to go on sinning.*

1. Certainly God does not want you to sin.
2. Certainly you do not want to sin, but God knows you will.
3. **I John**, which is written exclusively to Christians tells us much on this subject.
  - a. **1 John 1:8** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
  - b. **1 John 1:10** If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.
4. Jesus, Who was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin, understood this well.

**Matthew 26:41** Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

5. God promises that if we will confess our sin He will be faithful to forgive us.

**1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

6. Problem is, many of you have not learned to forgive yourself as well.
7. You've been saved however long it is now and you walk around all miserable and down on yourself because you don't have all your worst sins conquered by now.
8. Guess what? You are normal.
9. Ok, it must be alright to sin then? No, it's not - and never will be - but it does not have to take away your joy.

8. **Hebrews 12:1** Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and **the sin which doth so easily beset us**, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

There are some "besetting" sins that may take a very long time to completely overcome.

9. And...you never will live long enough to conquer them all.

*C. This is an area where just maybe you ought to cut yourself some slack.*

1. Why should you expect more of yourself than God does?
2. Some of you perfectionists have to get it perfect or you don't even want to try.

3. This is one area that nobody gets it perfect!

4. Some things you may allow in your life may not be right...and you, as yet, may not have the strength to change it.

#### **Romans 14:21-22**

21. *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor smoke cigarettes, nor go dancing, nor drink beer, nor watch secular movies, nor drive over the speed limit, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*

22 *Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. **Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.***

5. These kinds of issues are nothing more than a fact of normal Christian life, don't let them take your joy!

6. Some of you are down on yourself because you think you don't know enough; you can cut yourself some slack there as well.

#### **7. Ecclesiastes 7:16-17**

16 *Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?*

17 *Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?*

**Conclusion: (Go back to chart).**

**If you will live your life as a dedicated servant of the Lord...up here at the top of the page:**

**You will become wiser.**

**You will become more righteous.**

**You will conquer more sin.**

**And you will live a much happier life!**

**What it really comes down to is WHO you are living for...**