

Vitals for New Converts



When a person becomes a true Christian he enters a brand new life. In a moment of time he passes from death to life, from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to the power of God. Many things start to happen to him that may be surprising. (I can still remember what it was like for me when I came to salvation over 37 years ago.) What you are going to read in this article is what I would have greatly benefitted by had I been presented with these vital Scriptural truths back then. These are not the kinds of things you will readily hear from the typical pastor of our day or TV or radio teachers who seem more interested in getting people under their influence than spreading the word of life. Nonetheless, these eternal truths are precious pearls for the new convert. Let's go to the Scriptures and see what they declare:

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law a man's enemies will be the members of his own household. Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Mat 10:34-39)

It is very common for one's family to be divided because of Christ, even to the point where dear family members become the new Christian's spiritual enemies. If this occurs to you, please know that it has also happened to multitudes of others as well. It is possible your unsaved family might want you to stop reading and talking about the Bible. They could also be ashamed of you being so religious all the time and will try to cool you down. Dear friend, regardless who or what might try to hinder your love, zeal and devotion to Jesus, you must not yield to their ungodly desires. You must love Jesus first, which will be shown by obeying him over others who would want you to go against the Lord's teachings or to just ignore them. This is vitally important. To be worthy of Jesus, we must love him supremely. Notice the following two Scriptures about those who love God:

However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9)

Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? (Jam 2:5)

We show our love for God by obeying his commands (John 14:15).

Persecution

Another important fact of your new life in Christ is that you will bother people outside your family who don't have a heart for truth—old friends, coworkers, neighbors, etc. Some of these people will show their annoyance with persecution in various ways. Take heart and be encouraged by what Jesus (and Peter) taught:

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Mat 5:10-12)

Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets. (Lk 6:22,23)

They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. (1 Pet 4:4)

Persecution for righteousness, even in the milder form of being excluded or insulted, is a test. Loneliness is something all godly people have to deal with from time to time. Sadly, some Christians have fallen away from salvation over the test of persecution or just the fear of it:

They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. (Lk 8:13)

So when (not if) persecution comes to you because you are living godly, continue to obey and let your light shine. But also remember not to cast your pearls to swine—those who boldly oppose the truth of God—because they may tear you to pieces (Mat 7:6). Keep walking in faith thinking about the eternal rewards before you because of these persecutions. All godly people of the past were also persecuted and faced suffering:

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Tim 3:12)

Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and



mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. (Heb 11:35-39)

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. (Heb 11:24-27)

We must be willing to die for Jesus if necessary and never be ashamed of Him or His words (Lk 9:26).

The Importance of Knowledge

Similarly, Jesus taught:

All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. (John 16:1).

Hence, knowledge of certain things is a preventative from going astray or stumbling. Conversely, some do go astray because they are not aware of the things Jesus was referring to. Let's check the context to learn what the Lord is speaking of:

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: "No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: "They hated me without reason." When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning." (John 15:18-27)

Called to be Witnesses

Jesus stated that the knowledge we need so we won't go astray is that we will be persecuted and we must testify about Jesus. We have all been called to be witnesses for the Lord in this dark, sin-cursed age (Acts 1:8). This is how the first-century Christians were, according to the book of Acts.

When I started witnessing (or testifying) about Jesus to others, I simply gave people the word of God. Sometimes I was asked a question I could not answer. I would tell them, "I'll get back with you on that." That gave me a chance to search for an

answer in the Bible. After awhile, your ability to fluently witness will become more and more polished as you continue to read and study God's word. Remember, people are going to Hell all around us and desperately need to know the truth about salvation.

An excellent way to spread God's eternal truths to others is by having a personal tract ministry, but be sure to use only Biblically sound literature—literature that clearly tells one he must repent (turn from sin) to be saved from Hell. Moreover, don't distribute literature that teaches or implies the lie of eternal security, even if it is free. Our ministry makes available an excellent and very popular dual-colored salvation tract on Heaven and Hell with the vitals about the plan of salvation. We also have an important article on tract evangelism. Click here to get important ideas about using salvation literature.

The true gospel, which we are to spread, includes the following truth:

By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. (1 Cor 15:2)

Old Friends

If you are like many, when you first came to the Lord, all your friends are ungodly. In fact, some new converts don't even know a single Christian. But now that you are a follower of Jesus, at least some if not all of these old friends won't like your new priorities. In fact, some might even try to get you to sin or snare you somehow with wickedness. They want you back the way you were when you readily sinned as they still do. Scripture states:

... do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure. (1 Tim 5:22)

Sin can make a holy person unholy and a pure person impure and no longer fit to enter heaven. It can bring a true Christian to his spiritual death (Rom 8:13; Jam 1:14,15 cf. Lk 15:24, 32; etc.). Hence, after you tell your old friends your stand for God, if they want to continue in their sin, don't hang out with them anymore. To continue to spend time and go places with such people will open you to spiritual dangers that would never exist otherwise:

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." (1 Cor 15:33)

Remember, your old unsaved friends are in darkness and spiritual death. They do not think or react like you. They are also on the road to Hell, even though they don't know it.

One of the shocking (and vital) truths I learned in the Bible is that Christians are to avoid certain people, places and things. Remember also if Eve would never have gone near that tree with the forbidden fruit she would have never been tempted, which led to her sin and leading Adam into sin also. So avoid places of temptation like swimming pools, beaches, discos, Las Vegas, etc. It is also important to dress modestly so you won't cause another to sin (1 Tim 2:9). Remember also Rom 12:2:

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.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate," says the Lord. "Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty. (2 Cor 6:14-18)

Keep a Clear Conscience

One of the striking truths about Paul's strong and faithful walk with God is shown in the following Scripture:

... there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. (Acts 24:15,16)

The importance of this is also expressed as a safeguard against shipwrecking your faith:

Holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. (1 Tim 1:19, 20)

Paul knew the same horrible thing that happened to Hymenaeus and Alexander could also happen to his faithful co-laborer, Timothy. Hence, he gave him these vital responsibilities to follow which would prevent the loss of salvation. For us to enter the kingdom of God we will have to endure to the end to be saved (Mat 10:22). See also Heb 3:14 and Rev 2:10,11. Follow Paul's example and advice to Timothy about keeping a clear conscience. This is also one of the reasons you need to be water baptized by immersion now that you have become a Christian (1 Pet 3:21). Any true Christian can water baptize you and it doesn't have to be done in a church building.

False Teachers and False Prophets

All new Christians are hungry for God's truth. Oftentimes they can never get enough of His precious word. This is clear evidence of God's saving grace in one's life. But with this hunger for God's truth a new danger is opened up—false teachers! One of the great dangers at the end of our age especially is religious deception. There are false teachers around us. Examples are Calvinists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Catholics, Muslims, the Church of Christ, Jesus Only people and Seventh Day Adventists. These people can be very friendly and zealous, but they are spreading deadly false doctrines, especially about salvation and Jesus himself. See Mat 7:15.

Beyond them there are also many more false teachers on religious TV and radio, as well as authors of books, articles and tracts, which are not readily known as false teachers. These would especially include the eternal security teachers and people compromising with the Catholic church. (Eternal security is, for the most part, an unrecognized rampant heresy in our dark day.) Without writing a mini book on why these people are so dangerous, suffice it to say they dangerously downplay sin in the life of a Christian and de-emphasize the importance of bringing forth good fruit. Because of eternal security teachers, multitudes are on the road to hell but think they are on the road to heaven. Consequently, their false doctrine needs to be exposed and refuted, not supported. To support such ministries and local congregations will cause you to share in their wicked work. (For an exhaustive presentation of this teaching with Scriptural refutation, please see our 801 page book entitled, *The Believer's Conditional Security*.) Don't just trust what you hear someone teach, even if they are a popular teacher over TV, radio or from a pulpit in a local church. Verify and test everything with the Bible, including miracles. You might be surprised to know that both God and the devil can perform miracles!

Churches or Death Traps?

Hand in hand with the danger of false teachers can be going to church. Strangely, many churches are spiritual death traps. Most often the pastor and elder board are apostate themselves and therefore cannot offer sound doctrine and true godly leadership. Such congregational leaders will lull a new convert into lukewarmness and worldliness as they take money from them! This would also include any congregation that would think one can commit "occasional" acts of adultery and murder, like King David did, and still remain saved. If the Christian doesn't flee from such an environment he will often die spiritually because of such a church. It is better and safer to witness to those going to such a local church after you leave it. The Christian of our day might have to gather with just a few other true believers in a home where they can worship and seek God together, since a sound congregation is hard to find.

Finally, oftentimes the so-called spiritual leaders themselves and the other people in a modern-day church often hurt others, especially new converts. For the spiritual health and well being of the Christian, he must forgive others so his sins can likewise be forgiven (Mat 6:14,15).

Music

Godly music will definitely prove to be a tremendous blessing to the saint. On the other hand, secular music in the form of rock 'n roll, country, oldies, etc. will adversely affect you spiritually. Hence, all music which is not spiritually edifying is potentially dangerous and should be avoided. Again, don't listen to such music at all. I remember hearing a testimony of a woman who fell away from the Lord for a time, which all began because she started listening to country music. Also, remember that just because music might be religious doesn't mean it is doctrinally sound. Many dangerous anti-scriptural concepts are conveyed in so-called "gospel" music! You should examine the words of a song as you would a teaching—checking it with the Scriptures.

Television

Perhaps the greatest tool the devil has in the early part of the twenty-first century is television, which can be magnetizing. The sights and sounds can stay with a person long after the show is over. The Bible says:

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (Rom 8:6)

Since TV shows are produced by ungodly people to draw ungodly people, much harm can come to the Christian through such, besides it being a waste of precious time which could be used to serve God. Even religious TV is far from being beneficial to the viewer with all those false teachers on there, as already mentioned.

The Bible is Final Authority

Another vitally important fact for new Christians is the Bible is final authority. This means if an experience, vision, dream, prophecy, teaching, testimony, sensation, feeling, etc. contradicts the written word of God then reject it. It is not God's truth. Furthermore, you won't ever need more than the Bible to accurately learn about salvation and what God wants from you in this life. Some dangerously think you need to supplement the Bible with Sacred Tradition, the Book of Mormon, the Koran, the writings of the ante-Nicene Fathers, etc. The Bible reads:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16,17)

The man of God is thoroughly equipped for every good work with the Scriptures alone. If someone thinks the Scriptures are not sufficient then he must not be a man of God. Finally, avoid so-called study Bibles with notes. The notes in them are often wrong and don't deserve the same space on the page as Scripture.

A Bible Translation

As a new Christian, I was misled into thinking the King James Version of the Bible is the most accurate translation we can read. Consequently, I spent a number of years struggling over this hard to read and misleading Elizabethan English translation. Many words in the KJV are words that readers have never seen before. Hence, they will often just take a guess at their meanings, while many other words seem to be commonly known but in reality have a different meaning from everyday life. All this adds up to frustration and hindrance in understanding God's precious, eternal word. Don't be deceived by KJV Onlyites who say the KJV is not hard to understand. Obtain a reliable, easy to read and understand translation of the Bible like the New American Standard, New International Version or New Revised Standard. In fact, switch off from these three translations for shades of meanings that are not apparent otherwise. Stay in the New Testament to learn especially what Jesus and his apostles taught about salvation. After you read through it perhaps 10 times, then start to learn the Old Testament while you also continue to read the New Testament.

Memorizing God's eternal word will have benefits throughout your entire Christian life. There are various reasons why this will help to strengthen, guide and encourage you as it also bolsters your faith to face each new day. The devil will try to hinder you from memorizing God's word. Stick with it and your blessings from such will be great:

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psa 119:9-11)

Your Soul Is Most Precious

Nothing you own now or ever will own can compare with the value of your soul. Therefore, you need to guard your SOUL carefully. See Prov 4:23. Heaven is real, but so is Hell. To enter the kingdom of Heaven and escape Hell there are things you must do for yourself now that you are saved, so that you will stay saved. There is salvation maintenance and effort that needs to be exerted to stay with God. That is true salvation security. See 2 Pet 1:5-12. Also, notice what the Lord Jesus taught:

Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to." (Lk 13:23,24)

It is worth any sacrifice to enter God's eternal, paradise kingdom and escape eternal punishment in Hell fire. The road to life is hard (Mat 7:14) and there are enemies along the way, besides the devil, so you will have to dress yourself with the whole armor of God and continue in the faith, even through the rough times that will sometimes come:

"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. (Acts 14:22)

You have a glorious future before you that cannot properly be expressed in words. See Rev 21:4; Phil 1:21-23; 1 Cor 2:9; Isa 35:10; etc.

New Christian or old Christian, keep your eyes on Jesus, your hand to the plow and don't look back. Immerse yourself in the Bible (especially the New Testament at first) and put into practice what you read. Jesus described the true Christians (his real spiritual family) as:

He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice." (Lk 8:21)

Several good daily prayers are:

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. (Psa 19:14)

Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word. (Psa 119:36,37)

Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me. (Psa 119:133)