

Continuing the Process

Colossians 1:12-14

“Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

Former heavyweight boxer James (Quick) Tillis was a cowboy from Oklahoma who fought out of Chicago in the early 1980's. Years later, he still remembers his first day in the Windy City after his arrival from Tulsa, “I got off the bus with two cardboard suitcases under my arms in downtown Chicago and stopped in front of the Sears Tower. I put my suitcases down and I looked up at the Sears Tower and I said to myself, ‘I am going to conquer Chicago.’ When I looked down, my suitcases were gone.”

We are doing a series of messages that I have entitled “The Process” and in the introduction we said that the first step to spiritual maturity is that of salvation. But we also reminded you that salvation was just the first step in your journey to spiritual maturity. So today, I want to talk to those of you who are new Christians and give some reminders to those of us who have been saved for a while.

The first piece of advice that I want to give to new Christians is simply this - you need to be patient. We start with great expectations when we are first saved. It's like that drink of pure fresh clean water when we are extremely thirsty. **It satisfies and we are so happy.** **Then somewhere along the line Satan and the world steals our clear refreshing water and gives us stale, flat and contaminated water.**

Although some changes happen immediately for a new Christian, there are occasionally some old habits that require prayer

and teaching to overcome. You need to understand that your life did not get messed up in a day, and you may not get it straightened out in a day. **The object of a new Christian is to not be weary in well-doing.** **You will reap a reward on your commitment as you grow day by day.** I guess one of the most important things to remember is that we are continually going through a change, a **metamorphosis.** We are constantly conquering areas of weakness as the Holy Spirit empowers us (Ephesians 4:28-31).

If you can resist the temptation to become discouraged by areas that require change, God will bring you into a newness you have never imagined possible. Understand that it is **not all right to practice sin.** Simply put: **sin is disobedience against the know Will and Word of God.**

Early, very early in your walk with the Lord, you must become aware and remain very aware that you have entered a new kingdom. Colossians 1:13 tells us that we have been "delivered from the power of darkness and conveyed into the kingdom of the son of his love." The transference of the unbeliever to this kingdom is accomplished by the Lord through our willingness to go. **What I want you to focus on is where you are now.** **If you are in a new kingdom, that means you have a new king. Right?** Each king rules in an entirely unique style and has laws, rules, and customs that are unlike other dominions. **The wicked king, Satan, did not want you to go to the new kingdom because he realizes that you will not serve him anymore.** Furthermore, you are very likely to go get more people to come with you to this marvelous new kingdom with the **new king.** **Then you have really irritated the old king; He now has not only lost his grip on you, but he stands to lose many more followers.**

There is one thing you must realize about your enemy: He is persistent. He did not relinquish you without a fight. **You see, if you came out of his kingdom, you were under his authority.** **Of course, we are not aware of this while we are still sinners, or at least most of us**

are not, but Jesus said we cannot serve two masters. Keep in mind that all the time that **you may not have been aware of him, but he was very much aware of you.** Consequently, he has a great deal of information about you: your *faults*, your *weaknesses*, your *insecurities*, your *low self-esteem*, your *addictions*, and your *vulnerabilities*.

The important thing is that you know what to expect; you are not exempt from his temptations. If he tempted Jesus, which he did, he will certainly tempt you. The truth, however, is that **Jesus defeated him, and so can you.** **The devil must get through your will.** Be mindful of the roaring lion who goes about “**seeking whom he may devour,**” not *can*, but *may*. He “*may*” if you let him; he *may not* if you *do not*. **The Lord has made a way.** You can be sure if you have had a problem with *alcohol* in the past, Satan will tempt you with alcohol. If you have had problems with *rejection* in the past, he will set it up for you to be rejected. If you had a problem with *drugs* in the past, he will make sure that some of your “*dealing buddies*” will drop by.

But God is another story! The devil doesn't trick God, and God doesn't want him to trick us either. The Bible says that we are not to be ignorant of the devil's devices.

Now you are in the new kingdom, and all of a sudden, you have a powerful enemy who knows all about you. Just believing that he exists is too much for many people; they deny that the devil even exists. Denial is a very deceptive tool and the devil uses it to lay his well camouflaged traps, especially for new Christians. **Without your even knowing it, you were enslaved to the cruel taskmaster.** Now he will confront you with everything you ever did while you were serving him! He is so unmerciful and cruel.

But you need to remember you are no longer bound to him; Jesus has set you free. Your *past* is under the blood of Jesus, just as your *today* and *tomorrow*. That is not a license to ever commit sin; *it is a proclamation of the mercy of God.* **Although you have been set free,**

the temptations will still come. Please, please remember that *when*, not *if*, they come, *you have not lost your salvation.* You must remember that the devil's vocation is to place before you something that will make you fall. **He doesn't just want to trip you up, he wants you to go down and stay down.** That is why the Bible says, "Give no room for the devil." That is why the Bible says to "shun the very appearance of evil." **Temptation: If it came to Jesus, it will come to you and to every believer.** Remember the devil will hurl your past in front of you, trying to convince you that you will never make it. **The devil is a liar!** 1 Corinthians 10:13 gives us this assurance, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

Remember to focus on Jesus. The Word of God is essential to achieve every victory you will have. Stay in the Word, and learn about warfare. When temptation comes your way, we are given this word of encouragement in Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

As a child of God, you need ever be afraid of the enemy; Jesus has given you all authority when He let you use his name. It is just wise to know what to expect so that you can **defeat Satan at His game.** Perhaps one of the greatest opponents a new believer will ever confront is *discouragement*. **The least mistake you make is an excuse for Satan to throw a party.** He will bombard you with *hopelessness* until you find it hard to even pray. You will sit down to *pray*, and he will *hurl your circumstances before you* and *remind you of your limitations*. **Do not despair!** You do not have to *wallow in self-pity and hopelessness*. Look at what the Word says about where you are now: Standing in grace, as seen in Romans 5:2, "Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Listen and get this, **you cannot be bowed**

down with hopelessness and self-pity and at the same time be standing in grace.

Amazing grace is what brought you to salvation, and it is grace that will sustain you. You do not need to worry about feeling like you do not deserve anything from God. You don't and I don't. The truth is that we have all sinned and fallen short of God's will for our lives. But the Bible says that now that you have been saved by the grace of God stand up against the wiles of the devil. God gets no glory in your misery, your defeat, your complaining, or your hopeless feelings. He is all you need to be an overcomer.

Maybe people have hurt you and you allow that to transfer to the Lord. He is not like any person you have or will ever meet. No matter what you have done, He is not shocked, surprised, or ready to give up on you. Just remember when you are tempted, that why He went to the cross, He knew you would someday make the choice between sin and His deliverance. Child of God, just reminding ourselves of His great love should cause us to balk in the face of temptation. Stop to think how much it costs the lover of your soul to pay for that sin.

There is no doubt that is what Paul had in mind when he wrote these words in 2 Corinthians 5:14, "the love of God constrains us." Webster's definition of "constraint" includes this: "Repression of one's natural feelings." The more time we spend with Jesus, the more we will adopt His character and, in turn, lose our fleshly desires and take on His desires. Learn to hear His voice. But again, if you do sin, He will still be there for you. Please remember not to abuse that grace, but to allow it to increase your love for Him. Grace is the power to change.

In short, I guess I am trying to get you to understand that you are being retrained. If you have a few failures, do not throw in the towel and go back to your past life. Allow God to train you through

the Word, *teaching you* and *working with you*. **As with each of us, bad choices are humiliating and embarrassing, but they are not irreversible.** God has the **grace to change you** if you have the **desire** and the **patience** to cooperate with Him as He leads you through the **process**. The apostle James says in James 1:2-4, "Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy, for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. So let it grow, and don't try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete."

You are literally a new creation. In the eyes of God, you are a **newborn baby**. 1 Peter 2:2 says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." **Be patient and keep drinking the milk of the Word.** It will **strengthen your faith** and **direct your footsteps**. **Growth** is not something that can be **rushed** or **forced**, but it will happen if you continue to receive the Word of God.

Remember, it is not how much of the Bible you read. It is how much you **receive**. You can only use the Word that has been received into the uttermost recesses of your heart. Psalm 119:9 says, "I have hidden Your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You." **If the Word of God is received in your heart, it will deliver your mind from evil and wicked tendencies that Satan will put before you from time to time.** Remember, you are not alone when it comes to temptation. Even mature Christians struggle sometimes with their old habits and ways.

New Christians need to hear tread the Gospel of John again and again to get all of the spiritual nutrients from it. Compare your **spiritual growth** to your **physical development**; **you were not born an adult**. That growth was a **process**, and so will be your journey with the Lord. **I am preaching what I am preaching because I have seen too many new Christians overtaken in some fault and fall by the wayside in their walk with God.** Listen, and take it from someone who

knows, *you are going to make some mistakes, you are going to make some dumb decisions, and you are going to step into some trap that Satan sets before you*, but my advice is to *just keep picking yourself up and going on*. You have God on your side, and He wants you to succeed. Remember, 1 John 4:4 says, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” Romans 8:31, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” **Keep on trying; you are going to make it!**

To those of you, who are new Christians, remember, *the Christian life is a process, a journey, and being saved is just the first step*. And *if you are have never been saved*, then, why not take that great step of faith today?

Everyone please stand for prayer.

Father,

You brought me out of a horrible pit, and I thank you for giving me new life. I am a Christian by faith. I confess that I will not quit, but I need your Word to assist me to become all that you desire for me to be. In Jesus' name. Amen.