

LIVING THE SPIRIT FILLED LIFE

By Pat Mullins

8-13

Let the message of Christ dwell among you in all its richness. Instruct and admonish each other with the utmost wisdom. Sing thankfully in your hearts to God, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Whatever you are doing, whether you speak or act, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Col. 3:16-17 NEB

Therefore we must have before us the fear that while the promise of entering his rest remains open, one or another among you should be found to have missed his chance. For indeed we have heard the good news, as they did. But in them the message they heard did no good, because it met with no faith in those who heard it. Heb. 4:1-2 NEB

The time came that Herod died; and an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said to him, 'Rise up, take the child and his mother, and go with them to the land of Israel, for the men who threatened the child's life are dead.' So he rose, took mother and child with him, and came to the land of Israel. Matt. 2:19-21 NEB

God is doing a wondrous thing in our day—the Holy Spirit is poured out as never before in the history of the Church or the world. His sons and daughters are prophesying, believers in Jesus are speaking in tongues, casting out demons, laying hands on the sick and expecting them to recover, and the Good News is being preached to the poor all over the world. Thousands and millions of people are experiencing God in their midst in glory and power—men and women from the poorest to the most academically elite around the world. God is pouring out His Spirit as at a new Pentecost and in His awesome grace we have been invited to participate in fullest measure. The question is “ARE WE RESPONDING IN FAITH?”

ENABLED TO YIELD

As we have been sitting with the Lord listening in these recent months, He seemed to be speaking this challenge to His people as reflected in the Scriptures that began this article. First, from Paul's letter to the Colossians, is a series of admonitions to each of us as we seek to live out our daily life. To put this in perspective, we need to remember that living as a Christian is not a “boot-strap” operation. God never tells us that we are to simply try harder and we will live better and love more. No—God tells us that the only way to live the life we are called to live is to entrust ourselves to Jesus Christ His Son as both our Savior and Lord. God tells us that we must

be born again of the Spirit and water, that we must receive the promised gift of the Holy Spirit—then, united with Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be enabled to live the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ. And remember, we don't just do this once. Jesus says that “daily” we choose to allow the instrument of death to work in our lives to get us saved from our selfishness and our egocentricity. Any of us that are honest about ourselves know that we need to be saved from the ravages of those powers more than anything else outside ourselves.

God has commanded us first to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and then to love everyone else (including ourselves) with His love—and as He loves. Nobody but Jesus has ever been able to do that! But we know the Good News is that He still lives to do just that within the life of each of His disciples. Will we let Him do it? Do we understand that the cross we are to pick up each day is an instrument of deliverance from ourselves in the self-centeredness and ego we thrive upon. God wants us free, truly free--free to love as He loves—free to live for His calling, in His power, in His Spirit, in His way. That is what St. Paul is admonishing us to yield to!

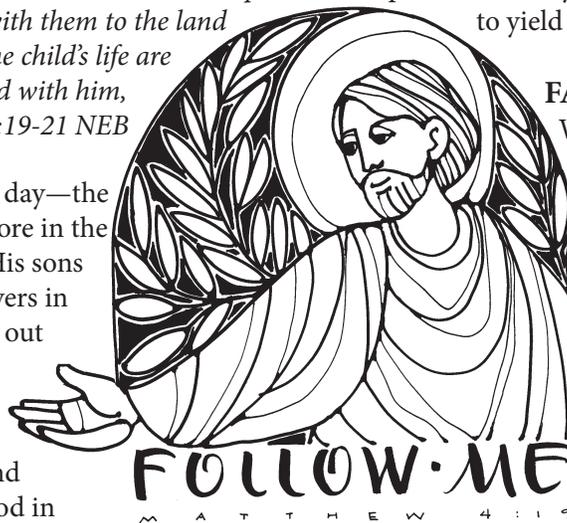
FAITH--OR BELIEF?

We are new creations! We have been clothed in Christ Jesus Himself. He is our forgiveness for all our sins, He is our righteousness, He is our sanctification, He is our wisdom, He is our love, He is our strength, He is our praise, He is our way to life—He is Life!! Do we believe it? In the second text above, the writer to the Hebrews tells us that those that heard the Good News in ancient Israel did not believe it. It met with no faith—so it did them no good. I think we know

that God's promises to His people are not magic pills! God's Word will remain eternally true and accurate forever, but it requires a response from a person. Faith! Now “Faith” is an action word as the letter of James makes clear. It is quite possible to make a mental ascent to a series of facts, saying that we do believe these facts to be true and accurate, but to still have no faith. Again James tells us that even the devils believe in the facts of Jesus Christ, and “it makes them tremble,” but they have no faith. Faith—to be faith—requires some action to be taken, or it is not faith.

FAITH IN ACTION

In the third text above we see faith. Joseph was with Mary and Jesus waiting for God to speak to them again before returning to Israel. The Gospel tells us simply that Joseph heard the word, and acted exactly as he was told. He had no other proof that we are told about. He couldn't turn on CNN and get the latest news, or telephone to confirm the word. He



had to make a choice to believe and act according to what he believed--that is faith. How is his experience perhaps different than yours or mine? Probably that he had grown in trust and confidence in God to be able to let go of everything and obey God at any price. He believed God about Mary's pregnancy and acted to take her as his wife, to protect and care for her and the child. He believed God about getting out of Israel to save the child Jesus' life, so he acted quickly and went into Egypt. And we must believe that Joseph had many other experiences with God that prepared him for his role in the lives of Mary and Jesus, but the fact is that he was inclined toward God to do His will; so he was able to hear—and he was enabled by faith to obey.

Now what about the events in the end of the twentieth century where God is pouring out His Spirit? Do you believe that God wants to talk with you so you can understand what He wants in your life? Do you believe that when Jesus said that His sheep hear His voice and they follow Him, that He really meant what he said? In short, do you believe what the Bible says. Our Church has believed it, and preserved it for us, and proclaimed it to us for almost 2000 years. Our Creed proclaims what we believe, but do we have faith to act upon what we say we believe? The out-pouring of the Holy Spirit in our day is an invitation to each of us to go deeper and deeper into our commitment to the Lord Jesus. If the movement and power of the Holy Spirit is to grow in any life, it will be because we are learning more and more to yield to the invitation to faith in action. And faith requires that somehow we begin to know that we “hear God”.

LEARNING TO HEAR-- THE TRAINING GROUND

One of the ways God is using to activate His people in faith is in the simple act of praise. Look again at our first text from Colossians. “Sing thankfully in your hearts to God, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Whatever you are doing, whether you speak or act, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Are we doing this? Why not? Perhaps it is because we never have a place to practice what we are trying to learn to live! That is what a Charismatic Prayer Meeting is supposed to be like—a place to learn and practice to “Sing thankfully in your hearts to God, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”

How can we learn if we never put ourselves in the environment to practice? How about the “gifts of the Spirit”? In an environment where everyone is seeking to learn to listen and hear God, does your prayer meeting encourage people to “try” to speak what they think might be the Holy Spirit speaking in their hearts? Do you encourage people to “try” to speak what they think might be the Holy Spirit speaking in their hearts? St. Paul tells us to “put love first, then seek to prophesy.”

Prophecy in the Church is most often simple words of encouragement or instruction as the Holy Spirit is prompting the speaker, and it is a little scary to speak out when you are not certain it is God. I heard it said one time that if we are in the prayer meeting, and we think perhaps that the Holy Spirit is prompting us to speak, just “do it.” If we will just “do it” we will be in a win-win situation because if it is God someone will get blessed and God will be glorified. If it isn't God, then maybe our pride will suffer a bit and we will grow in humility. So we can't lose if we just “do it!”

God has established Charismatic Prayer meetings all over the world in these days, and one of the characteristics of a vital and growing prayer meeting is the attitude of learning children. Learning—practicing praise, practicing singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God, practicing listening and obeying the Holy Spirit in the ministry of the gifts of the Spirit. If your Prayer Meeting is not growing in trust in the Lord that shows itself in action that is “charismatic” any longer, then the chances are good that meeting will not be around much longer, or at least it will not be fulfilling the role of the Holy Spirit as a demonstration of the power and praise that the Holy Spirit has poured out to initiate this worldwide movement.

Do “Let the message of Christ dwell among you in all its richness.” Don't be like those who “in them the message they heard did no good, because it met with no faith in those who heard it.” If you can't yet believe that you can be like Jesus in all His fullness, and perhaps you can't yet believe you could yield to the Holy Spirit like Mary, then at least trust that God's Holy Spirit can enable you to be like Joseph—learn to hear, and trust and obey. Don't be afraid. He who called you can be trusted. He will not let you be ashamed. Learn, submit yourself to learn—never be as one who knows. Know God loves you and learn to let Jesus be Lord. Faith will bring with it these miracles: believers will cast our devils in my name and speak in strange tongues; if they handle snakes or drink any deadly poison, they will come to no harm; and the sick on whom they lay their hands will recover. Learn to hear and obey in little things, then God will be able to ask you to walk with Him into anything. He will do it if you will let Him.

Amen, Come Lord Jesus, The Spirit and the Bride say
Come - Amen, Marantha, Come Lord Jesus.

