

Marching forwards

In this life and towards eternity

Introduction:

We have a purpose in life. If we live for ourselves, we are dead while we live. Jesus is our example to copy; he said:

“For this purpose I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” John 18:37

And again: *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10*

Yet again: *Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 16:17-19*

For this purpose
I have come into
the world—to
bear witness to
the truth.

- Just as Jesus had a purpose, so do we. We are all called to build His church, to witness to the truth and to share abundant life with others.

As a church in Marston:

We are Jesus’ body on earth and as such we need to listen to the head, be dynamic and not afraid to move forward. Having said that, there is always an enemy out to use every opportunity to “steal, kill and destroy”. Like a batsman in cricket trying to score runs, they are mainly scored off the bowling of the enemy. On other words, we turn his attempts to kill us spiritually into victory for the Lord.

In two weeks’ time, from 4th June (Whitsunday) we will be concentrating our efforts on the morning meeting and stopping meeting in the evening. As a church we feel sure this is what the Lord wants for us at this moment in time, allowing us to focus on the growth and development of the morning meeting which was established earlier this year. Previously we were meeting in a house; the school gives us a wonderful opportunity to grow and bless the neighbourhood.

Something new:

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. Isaiah 43:18,19.

As a church we must be careful not to follow novelty for novelty’s sake. The church is the body of Christ the head, following His instructions. However, a big killer of real love for God is routine. Routine in itself isn’t wrong; it enables us to live orderly lives. However, in any love relationship, creativity is the watchword. The church in Ephesus has perhaps the deepest doctrine and experience of the Lord and were doing all the right things, but had lost their first love. Jesus said to

them:

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.

Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.

You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favour: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” Eph 2:1-6

- Losing our first love is clearly very serious. The solution here is to “repent and do the things you did at first”. At first, we were in love with Jesus. The things we did were spontaneous, creative, full of passion. The spirit of God is in us, enabling us to be creative in the way we worship and serve Him. With Jesus we have an infinitely creative heart and mind!

Marching in the love of God and the fear of God.

John Bevere says: “It is commonly thought in the Church that the fear

of the Lord is to be afraid of God and His greatness. How can we have an intimate relationship with someone we're scared of? If we know God passionately desires depth in relationship with us, why would He tell us to be afraid of Him?

There is a difference between being scared of God and having the fear of the Lord *in* you. The person who is afraid of God has something to hide. What do we see Adam do in Genesis? He hides from the presence of God out of fear. The true fear of the Lord is to be *terrified to be away from God* and away from His presence.

Let that be our deepest longing today, to have the holy fear of the Lord living in us! To love what He loves and hate what He hates, to desire nothing more than to be in the presence of the almighty God!

Overemphasising the fear of the Lord leads to legalism.
Overemphasising His love leads to lawlessness.

Some new things:

Refreshments and chat before the meeting:

1 Corinthians 13 is a constant reminder that love for one another is the most important goal. As we spend time at the beginning of the meeting welcoming new people and chatting with one another, so love develops.

Visiting homes in the area:

James 1:27 says: *“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”*

“Do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith”

- There are very many widows who we are unlikely to encounter without visiting them, and there are a great number of children in single families needing the love of the church. As always, we are commanded to “Do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith” Gal 6:10. By visiting we will find many who are

of the household of faith and may not be able to get to church or may have fallen away and need restoring.

Conclusion:

Paul said: *“I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have*

**For the joy set
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cross**

taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. Phil 3:12b-14

- Paul also said: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” If we are to be fruitful as Jesus requires, we must cultivate an attitude of looking ahead and not being held back by the past. There is a goal and a prize to be won. *“Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*

Heb 12:1-3