

The STRONG Christian 1
STRONG in Revelation: Living in the Word.

The sub-heading for this course is 'decided, committed, tested, proven and glorious'. These five things are the result of choices that we make. We choose to become a Christian. We choose to be committed or not. We choose to be tested or at least, to go through a testing time or procedure. I can always refuse to be tested by opting out of the test. We choose to be proven, which means that we become a living proof of what God can do. We choose to let our life and personality be the scene of proving Christian processes. We choose to be glorious by entering into the glory God has in store for those that love Him (1 Cor 2:9) and not choosing the glory of the world.

The STRONG Christian is one who is strong in faith. This is not about those who happen to have a strong personality or a strong physique or a strong reputation. A Christian may or may not have these qualities. And none of these qualities are necessary for a Christian. But what a Christian definitely requires is faith and the ability to believe. Without the ability to believe one cannot be or function as a Christian. But everyone has the faculty to believe. Believing is not a function of age, ability, education, gender or culture. Other than breathing, human beings have the capacity to believe something. Human beings define themselves by what they believe about themselves or their situation. Animals eat, breathe, sleep and reproduce but none of them believe (that I am aware of). Animals may be conditioned to certain behaviours but only humans live in symbolic universes. People may feel trapped by what they believe, or believe that they have no alternative to what they believe, or they may be fixed in a certain belief about themselves. For instance, a woman may believe that, because she is a woman, there is only one outcome for her, namely, male oppression. Therefore, she will interpret everything that happens to her as the effect of being oppressed by men. Or a man may believe that the world owes him a living and he will interpret everything negative that happens to him as a denial of his 'rights'. Or an aboriginal may believe that white society will always deny him the full justice of his aboriginality. Therefore he will interpret everything that happens to him as a denial of what he wants. I can go on giving examples of people who believe that they are disempowered or marginalised by current society. This kind of thinking is a framework of believing. It is a methodology for Revolt. They will behave on the basis of their belief. People are always locked into what they believe. Are you aware of what you actually believe? If not, examine how you react to and behave in any particular circumstance. I will only admit as a fact what I can believe. Each of us is locked into our symbolic universe which we have received from others by means of the culture and which we have adjusted for our own comfort, so that we have a good 'culture fit'.

Any religion or ideology is based on a recognised set of beliefs. I live my life based on a set of conscious (and unconscious) beliefs. These are the values supplied to me by my Australian society and church sub-culture. How do I become aware of my unconscious beliefs? Do I accept that I can be driven by an unconscious belief, that is, a belief of which I am not aware? Do I recognise that I can act out of a belief that I did not know I had? For instance, the way a parent treat their child, or the way

a husband treats his wife, or the way a child treats an authority figure, or the way black treats white and white treats black. I can well remember the time I first became aware (shocked) that I was speaking to my child the way I was spoken to by my parents.

Christianity is also about Faith, which is the capacity to change and augment what we believe. Faith is the capacity to steer what we believe, so that we are no longer the prisoner of our beliefs. We may believe that something is impossible but faith says that it is not impossible. The words of Jesus Christ give us a faith base for changing what we believe about what is impossible: 'Nothing is impossible to God' (Gen 18:14, Jer 32:17, Mtt 19:26, Mk 10:27, Lk 1:37, Rom 4:21). What do you want yet still regard as impossible? If there is a desire in your heart, something that stirs your spirit ('lights your fire'), then you should pay attention to it and get it before God. If it does not stand examination before God then let it go, if you can. But if you can genuinely orchestrate your desire into some activity for the Kingdom of God, then why not test it, prove it (Rom 12:2) and verify it for a ministry or service to God. As we stand before God (1 Kings 17:11), a desire in our heart can be God speaking to us. It can be a deposit in our spirit. It can be a seed in our soul. God can be working through our natural desires and abilities and passions. Now this can be a place for deception and self-aggrandisement. But we can test these things and move onto greater things for God. The Incarnational principle (that God works through and reveals Himself in human nature) means that God will be using you and who you are and what you can become for His purposes in history. I want to be part of what God is doing. To sense the impossible may be God stirring in our nature so that we can reach beyond ourselves. Jesus consistently teaches that there is nothing impossible with God. So with His word in our heart and His words abiding in us (John 15:7) we may ask what we desire. Are we asking what we desire? Or do we deny ourselves what we desire in some form of false humility? We should come before God and ask what we desire. It is not presumptuous to ask great things of or for God. Jesus encourages it (Ps 37:4, John 14:13,14; 15:7,16; 16:23,24,26). Note God's appearance to Solomon (1 Kings 3:7). James says that we do not have because we do not ask (James 1:5; 4:2). As I grow in the asking I can grow in the things of God for me. This also creates an inner strength where my activity for God is grounded in my own struggle to be real and productive. Life is not fighting God.

This is an example of living in the Word. Scripture is the base for altering what we believe and pointing us in a godly direction. We can change what we believe in an ungodly direction. We can attempt to use God to glorify Self. But God will not share His glory with another (Is 42:8; 48:11). The basis for what we believe in God is what we can see in God. If I am seeing something to do in God, I should attempt to do it and so prove the will of God (Rom 12:2). I should trust that if I stay close to God, I will not be deceived in God. And what we see in God is Revelation.

Revelation is something that is given to us. I cannot determine what is shown to me. That is someone else's decision. God can show us things and so can the devil. I can imagine things for myself and represent to myself the objects of my desires. I would suggest that I do not manufacture the desire but I can manufacture the object or intent of the desire. The desire to marry can have various objects. The desire to achieve can have various forms. We

can select an object but can we select a desire? We can imagine that we feel a certain way about a given object but can we really desire it without the desire already being present? We can perform as though we desire it, to satisfy somebody else or even ourselves. But can we really manufacture the desire? We can even deceive ourselves that we have a desire but the behaviour cannot be sustained. I am sure some marriages fail because the need to marry could not create the desire to be or stay married. What are the desires of our heart? To sense our true desires is to find our true person, the origins of who we can truly be in God. The human task is to realise and fulfil that desire in flesh and blood. The origin of desire is spiritual, either good or evil. A desire is given. Working it out is my responsibility. Evil desire (or desire for evil) cannot be from God. Good desire (a good and perfect gift, James 1:17) is from above and can be used to glorify and celebrate God. So a desire can be a revelation, a deposit in our spirit, by which we can serve God. A desire is a revelation, a pathway, a lifestyle and a destiny. And this can be for good or evil. May my desires be sourced in God! Otherwise the very fulfilment of the desire will destroy me. That which is of God is creative and life-giving. That which is of the devil is destructive and death-giving (Rom 8:6, 13; 1 Cor 2:14). The key notion here is that desire is a gift. Where it comes from is my responsibility to test and verify and justify. We are visited with various desires. Beware!

Here I am treating Desire as a gift and a revelation. If desire has a supernatural source then it is either good or evil. In Gen 4:7 Cain is told that sin is crouching at the door (of his heart). Its desire is for him, but he must rule over it. We need to discern that our desire is from God and grow in the strength of that desire. Strong people have strong desires that they can handle, grow with and focus their life around. People can also have strong desire that is destroying their personality, such as an addiction. A desire is a source of life, but we have to discern what kind of life it is inspiring in us. If I can identify a God-sourced desire in me then I should enhance it and run with it to the detriment of other rival desires. Kierkegaard said that 'Purity of heart is to will one thing'.

The spirit realm is an authority realm. A desire from the spirit realm takes on an authority in my life. It is an authority that can provoke crisis and meet deep resistances within me. The desire as a revelation enables me to see the greater revelation that God has for me or that I can take part in. God is not there to meet my personal needs. Rather I meet my personal needs by pursuing and obeying God. Obeying God may well require deep changes in my personality. I may have no concept of what changes are actually required, but I should trust the Spirit of God for revelation to engineer my future destiny and scope as a person.

I need revelation for my healing. I have to be able to see myself healed and restored. To be reconciled to God is to see myself (and the creation) as restored to God (2 Cor 5:16-21). For the prayer of faith (James 5:15) to work it needs the structure of faith in the person. Faith healing is not magic. If we do not have the faith structure for healing, the desire for healing is only a wish. We have wish-healing instead of faith-healing. A wish is simply a fantasy that has no basis in reality. It may express a need but it has no base or floor in reality (or the personality) to bring about change. Faith is the means by which we see and implement the

impossible. Without faith it is impossible to please (God) (Heb 11:6) and it is impossible to change. Strong change is implemented by strong faith. Faith healing requires a Possibility Belief Structure (PBS). There is a whole message here about Possibility Thinking that is based firmly on the teaching of Jesus Christ.

As I start to live out of revelation, I receive a new authority in my spirit. This is not an authority to control or rule over others. This is a misuse of authority because all authority comes from God (Rom 13:1) and must be exercised in the fear of God. Otherwise it will corrupt the person and their environment. The power Hitler had came from God, but he did not exercise it in the fear of God. Therefore, he corrupted and devastated Germany and the world (and Jewry). I obey authority or else I rebel against it. To do nothing is to rebel. Rebellion is characteristic of our age. But the scripture says that 'to obey is better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rams' (1 Sam 15:22). The price of glory is the price of obedience. I must learn to obey and conform myself to what I understand to be the will of God (for me and the creation).

In the Bible the Greek word for revelation is 'apokalypsis' from which we get the word 'apocalypse'. 'Apokalypsis' has the root meaning of the drawing back of a curtain to disclose what is behind it. John, in the book of Revelation, is being shown what is to come. In receiving revelation I am being shown spirit truth which will have an energy and a power that I should learn to handle. I do not choose what I am shown but I choose what I do with it. I do not choose my desires but I choose what I do with them. I even choose whether to admit that they actually exist. By admitting what is really in my heart, I am allowed to start dealing with it. God tests us to show us what is in our heart so that we will do something about it. By recognising the existence of a spirit realm with which I am intimately and eternally related, I can commence to deal with the real issues of my life which are the forces that make me what I am. To be strong is to recognise where I have come from. If I am in denial of my origins I am weak. When I recognise the ways that I have responded to the desires in my heart (the excitements in my spirit) I see that they have made my life and engineered my being. My life is my response to my desires.

Questions

1. What is God showing me?
2. What is the devil showing me?
3. Is my heart pure (Mtt 5:8)?
4. Is my spirit capable? Am I born again (John 3:3)?
5. Is God a stranger?
6. Am I strong in resisting evil desire when it arises?
7. Do I harbour evil spirits (Ps 36:4, Mk 5:9)?
8. Do I grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30)?
9. Can I run with what God shows me or can I only make sense of what concerns me?
10. Am I prepared to make (major) changes to my life for God?

Paul prays in Eph 1:17, that God may give the Ephesians a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. That is, a spirit that wisely receives revelation as knowledge about God. Strength in revelation means that, as I live in the Word, I am true to and determined in the revelation that I receive. The Holy Spirit provokes us with revelation (desires) that we must handle to grow in God.