

You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3:17-18

I. Introduction

- A. Vacation Questions:** While on vacation I had a few people ask me what I thought was coming and what we as Believers should be doing.
- B. Staying in the Religious Sphere:** There are several different spheres of society. I will focus on what I think we as Believers should be aware of.

II. Grow in the Grace & Knowledge of God

A. Abide in Yeshua

4Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” John 15:4-5

B. Draw Near to God – Amazingly, He responds to our initiation

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. James 4:8

Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Return to Me,” says the Lord of hosts, “and I will return to you,” says the Lord of hosts. Zechariah 1:3

a. He’s invisible and it takes faith

b. Word from last week: “I miss My time with you”

C. Can’t do this on the Run: A Believer won’t grow in God without consistent set-apart time with Him; this abiding doesn’t happen “on the run”

III. The Importance of Accountability

A. High Profile Leaders Falling: I have been thinking much about how we as Believers can stay steady and faithful over a lifetime. We should be sobered by certain Christian leaders being exposed as having some measure of a double life, but we don’t need to be in a fearful panic. These leaders have clearly violated some basic, wise constructs of their faith-walk. One of the most important areas intended to help us walk in holiness before God and others is basic accountability.

B. Accountability Partner: Find another same-gender friend who you can consistently transparently share with and who can encourage you in your faith

1. “*If you never want to get free just tell God*” is a phrase that a friend shared with me years ago that has been true in my life in certain areas. There were issues in my life that I was unable to walk in righteousness with until I had a friend who I could consistently share with and who prayed with me.

2. The Bible states that we are to confess our sins one to another

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. James 5:16

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7

C. Be Realistic: You’re not looking for a Billy Graham to be your partner; most any godly, growing Believer will do.

D. Dependent Upon the Person: Accountability is based on an individual’s vulnerability and willingness to honestly share. It’s not your partner’s responsibility to ask you the right questions and to dig things out of you.

IV. A Group of Ten

A. A Small Group: A group of around ten people to meet with regularly is another wise practice. This adds another helpful accountability component provided that a person in the group is honest and hungry to grow in their relationship with God and others. I believe that most Believers can also have as a legitimate goal to

aspire to be a leader of one of these groups. In Exodus 18:13-27 Jethro recommended to Moses a simplified leadership structure that would take weight off Moses and raise up other competent leaders. He described appointing leaders of 10, 50, 100's, and a 1000. The leader of ten is the foundational and most important leadership role in the local congregation.

- B. Simply a Structure:** Groups of ten are merely structures; book clubs and many other non-religious topic groups meet in groups of ten. There is nothing particularly supernatural about just meeting with 9-ish other people. People can still hide and not be honest in these smaller settings, but it is harder to do than being primarily in larger more anonymous setting. It is important for us to pray for the group to grow in their hunger for and relationship with God—if we all have lukewarm walks with the Lord then we will have boring, uninspired group meetings.
- C. A Safety:** Being known in these contexts is a safety; a number of Christian leaders have become disqualified (and more will certainly fall in the days ahead). It is a safety for us to be known in smaller accountability settings.

V. Praying for Awakening & Revival

- A. Longing for Revival:** We rightfully want a renewal in the church and for the wicked to turn to God.
- B. Great Awakenings:** Two great awakenings in American history:
 - 1. First Great Awakening (1730-1755): before the Revolutionary War; George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards
 - 2. Second Great Awakening (1790-1840): before the Civil War; Charles Finney, Francis Asbury
 - a. 100,000 thousand converts each week for a period of time at its height!
- C. Realistic Expectations:** We should have excitement over and pray for another Great Awakening and the kingdom to spread, but we shouldn't have an unrealistic expectation of having a permanent revamping of governmental and societal leadership structures. This will only happen in full when Yeshua returns and reigns from Jerusalem.
 - 1. Gospel Advancement Comes with Persecution: Where the Gospel of the kingdom is going forth with greatest power there is persecution and oppression from the government towards the church: China, Iran, Afghanistan.
 - 2. Ultimate Success is Promised: This Gospel of the kingdom will be preached to all ethnic people groups and then the end will come (Matthew 24:14)
- D. Believers Before American Patriots:** I admonish us to guard our hearts related to Christian patriotism; we are Christians first and primarily before we are patriots. Our kingdom mandate as Believers will not stop if (God forbid!) the United States ceases to exist.

VI. Preparing to Suffer for Our Identification with Yeshua

- A. Wicked & Righteous Together:** Wheat (the righteous) and tares (the wicked) will all grow together and “ripen” at the same time until Yeshua’s return when they are identified, separated from each other, and gathered together (Matthew 13:24-30)
- B. The Wicked will Prevail** (in the short-term): The Bible is very clear that the bad guys will prevail for a short time directly preceding Yeshua’s return.
 - 1. The harlot Babylon system is drunk with the blood of the saints (Revelation 17:6)
 - 2. The AntiChrist wages war against the saints and prevails for a short time (Daniel 7:21, 25)
- C. Birth Pangs:** Yeshua prophesied that there would be great societal challenges that increase like birth pangs before His return (Matthew 24:1-14). We as Believers will not be exempt from these challenges.
- D. Promised Persecution for Being Faithful:** We are to stand with God and His biblical standards; as we do the world will mock and persecute us. (2 Peter 3:3; Jude 1:18; Matthew 5:10-12; 13:21; Mark 10:29-31; 2 Timothy 3:12)
 - 1. Sermon on the Mount Lifestyle (Matthew 5-7); this is the constitution of the kingdom and what we are to consistently strive to align our lives with.
 - 2. It's Worth It: Our present and coming troubles are momentary, light affliction that is working in us an eternal weight of glory beyond compare (2 Corinthians 4:17). God has his billion year plan in front of us and every aspect of suffering in the short-term with Yeshua will be **SO worth it** in eternity.

E. God and His Kingdom will Prevail: fear not because God's kingdom and purpose will prevail.

VII. Watch & Pray

A. Yeshua's Admonition: In light of the coming days Yeshua gave us one consistent admonition...to watch and pray (Mark 13:33; Luke 21:36)

1. Watch: We are to regularly be in the Bible looking at what God tells us is on the horizon; we are to watch what is going on around us
2. Pray: we are to be connected with God through prayer and to come together corporately with other Believers to pray for God's heart, wisdom, and for His kingdom to come.

B. Pursuing God & Resisting Evil: We are to actively resist evil—namely Fear, Offense, Lust, & Deception. These four will be predominant in the last days, and we will overcome these through consistent intimacy with God and consistent connection with other growing Believers.