



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 50”

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



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John 12:42-43

42 Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in [Jesus], but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue;

43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

I received an interesting invitation to a meeting that is to be held in East Lansing on July 14th, and I would like to extend the invitation to anyone that might be interested. It is a meeting in which Zig Ziglar is the headliner, and Robert Schuler, Rudolph Giuliani and others will be speaking. The cost is \$4.50 per individual, or \$19 for everyone in a group, so it appears to be cost effective. The title of the seminar is "Get Motivated" and the purpose is to help business people, to motivate them to increase the effectiveness of their businesses.

The root of the word "motivation" is motive, which is defined as something within a person that incites them to action. There are two basic types of motivation.

We may be motivated to act because we desire to feel particularly pleasurable emotion as a result of our action. Back when my wife could dance, I loved to take her dancing because of the positive reinforcement that I received from her and from those watching us dance. Hopefully, she will eventually be able to go dancing again and I can regain the feeling.

We may also be motivated to act because of discipline. The reason that soldiers train so rigorously and extensively is that men in combat will very likely be required to put their lives at risk, and in order for men to perform effectively in such sacrificial situations, they have to be trained and disciplined so well that they do not have to even think about that which they are doing. I remember a line from the movie Top Gun, in which Tom Cruise was playing the role of an instinctive, 'fly by the seat of your pants' fighter pilot, who was training in the most advanced pilot school in the Navy. As one of his instructors was reviewing a particularly unconventional maneuver that Tom performed during a combat simulation, the instructor asked Tom what he was thinking when he did this. Tom replied, "You can't think up there. If you think, you're dead."



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It is the objective of the commanders of men in combat to have their men trained so well that they can react properly without having to think about what to do. They must know what to do without thinking, and they also have to have already decided to do it when necessary. Men whose job is to put their lives on the line for others have to be disciplined enough to react correctly and spontaneously.

So, we have two types of motivation. Motivation is either based upon either emotional satisfaction or discipline.

Back before Father's Day, we began discussing death, specifically, the purpose for the death of Jesus Christ. In the twelve chapter of John, Jesus presents His sacrifice on the Cross to His disciples, as His opportunity to glorify God by putting his life on the line of others. Jesus says, in **John 12:23-24**:

23 But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

Jesus knows that His mission is to die, just as a military man knows that his mission may involve his death. Jesus is not motivated to go to the Cross by the feeling that the Cross is going to bring Him, as His trip to the Cross is not going to feel very good. Jesus is, rather, motivated by commitment and discipline, which is a much more effective form of motivation than feelings. It is difficult to rely on people who need positive feelings to stay committed, as their motivation leaves them if their feelings change.

The difference between marrying a spouse and cohabitation, that is, "shacking-up" with a partner, is that marriage is a commitment and "shacking-up" is an avoidance of commitment. Marriage says, "as long as we both shall live", which is a commitment, while "shacking-up" says, "as long as we both feel like it", which is not a commitment. People may claim that "shacking-up" is a preparation for marriage, but it clearly is not, as being a roommate with benefits but no commitment is clearly not the same, or even a similar mindset to having the commitment of a spouse.

Weddings are generally expression of positive feelings. Couples kiss at the altar because of their desire for one another, but the kiss comes after the commitment. Once you leave the altar, the circumstances of life may cause your feelings for your spouse to change for the worse, and you may desire to divorce. We make the commitment of marriage, knowing that our feelings may change, because we recognize our commitment to the marriage motivates us to work on our marriage to produce a long term benefit rather than losing that benefit by acting out on how we feel during any one period of time.

Jesus tells His disciples of His commitment to the Cross, and that they will have to develop the discipline to follow his lead if they are to remain His disciples, in **John 12:25-26**:



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25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

Jesus, however, is both human and divine. The divine part of Jesus, His Spirit, understands and is prepared for the necessity for His death, but the human part of Jesus, his soul, is troubled by the fact that the sacrifice for sin that God has planned for Him will cause Him great pain and agony. No one can volunteer for pain and agony without some soul searching, as Jesus tells us in **John 12:27-28:**

27 “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

28 Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, saying, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.”

Although the problems of this life can trouble our souls, it is up to us to maintain a heavenly perspective. The military man recognizes that doing his job may cost him his life, and so he has to make the decision, before joining the military, that he will take on the personal responsibility to protect his family, his friends, and his country from military threats, both foreign and domestic. The military man says, as did Thomas Jefferson, that the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants, and that he is willing to be one of the patriots willing to give his blood, if necessary. If a man believes that the cause is just and proper, a man will give his life for the cause.

Jesus recognized that His cause was more just and proper than any other cause on earth. He came to represent the army of God and to cast out the tyrant that controls this world, as Jesus says, in **John 12:29-33:**

29 Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to Him.”

30 Jesus answered and said, “This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake.

31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

33 This [Jesus] said, signifying by what death He would die.

Just as the World War II soldiers that defeated Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in the 1940s were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to overthrow the dictators of the Axis powers in order to bring freedom and liberty to Europe and the Far East while maintaining peace and security here in the United States, Jesus was also willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to overthrow the devil, and to bring salvation to man and glory to God by suffering on the Cross in our place and for our sake, to suffer the piercing, painful and punishing penalty to pardon our debt, deficiency and disobedience caused by the stranglehold that the devil



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had on our lives. Jesus volunteered to give up the ghost on the Cross of Calvary to fix the fractures in the fellowship between God and man caused by the devious discussions of the devil, and then bring human and Divine together in the unity of the Holy Spirit and the bond of peace with God.

But, as Jesus explained His pursuit to those whom He was preparing to participate in His plan, they proclaimed that they did not perceive His purpose.

John 12:34 records:

34 The people answered Him, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

The people speaking of the law, the Christ and the Son of Man are referring to two Old Testament prophecies. The first is found in the book of Isaiah. After the prophet Isaiah prophecies the Assyrian deportation, he then talks about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. From the wording of the prophecy, however, he is actually talking about an event that will last longer than an earthly kingdom. In **Isaiah 9:6-7**, the prophet says to Israel:

6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Based upon the titles given to this governor, the Jews recognize this as a prophecy of the coming of the permanent kingdom of God, one that will be ruled by God’s Anointed One, the Messiah. The Messiah is to rule forever from the throne of David in Jerusalem, according to the prophecy, which is why the rank and file Jews so anticipate Jesus’ coming to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. When Jesus comes to Jerusalem in great power, raising men from the dead and healing the diseases that are afflicting the Israelites, the Israelites say to themselves, “Surely this is the one of which Isaiah spoke.” They cannot then reconcile the prophecy of an everlasting kingdom in Isaiah with Jesus’ prophecy about His being “lifted up”, which they understand as a reference to His crucifixion,

The second prophecy is recorded in the book of Daniel, as Daniel is prophesying the destruction of four great kingdoms of the earth. Daniel then prophecies, in **Daniel 7:13-14**:

13 “I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.

14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an



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everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the One which shall not be destroyed.

Once again, the Scripture speaks of an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, which is inconsistent with the idea of being “lifted up”, or crucified. Thus, the logical question to Jesus is, “If the kingdom of the child that is born will have no end, and the kingdom of the Son of Man is an everlasting kingdom, and if you are the fulfillment of these prophecies, how then can the prophecy be true if you are going to be crucified? If you are going to die, you are obviously not the everlasting ‘Son of Man’ discussed in Daniel, so what ‘Son of Man’ are you?”

But Jesus does not answer their question directly, because there is no point in doing so. The people to whom Jesus is talking cannot understand the “grain of wheat” teaching because the concept of His physical resurrection from the dead is still a little beyond their ability to comprehend.

I can remember going to visit my Grandfather in downstate Illinois when I was a child. Dad got us out of the bed and put us in the car at about five am, because it was about a five hour drive, and Dad wanted to make it to Grandfather’s house for church, since Grandfather was a pastor. I sat in the front with Dad because everyone else was going back to sleep but I was wide awake. I asked Dad, “Dad, where are we going?”

Now, Dad could have said, “Taylorville, Illinois”, but I did not know where that was. Even if he had showed it to me on a map, I still would not have known, and Dad figured, wisely, that if he answered one question, he would have to answer a lot of questions. So he responded, “You’re going where the car goes,” because he knew that I had no concept of our destination. Dad did not explain our destination any further, but just admonished me to wait and see, and enjoy the ride while I was doing so.

When it comes to prophecy, God, like Dad, knows that those to whom the prophet prophecies cannot understand that which the prophet says about the future. **Isaiah 55:8-9** says:

8 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD.

9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Prophecy is most valuable once it is fulfilled, because we can much more easily understand what God has done than what God is going to do. Jesus’ prophecy of His everlasting kingdom after His death became much clearer to the disciples once He rose from the dead. So Jesus, like Dad, does not answer their question directly. He just tells them, ‘Go where the car goes’, in **John 12:35-36**:
35 Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.

36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons



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of light.” These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

Now, the people have a choice. They can either follow Jesus, whose words they do not understand, or look for another Messiah that is more clear in His explanations. Although Jesus’ words seem somewhat ambiguous, Jesus’ actions are very clear; Jesus heals the sick, raises the dead, and tells the multitude that He is going to die Himself, even as a grain of wheat dies when it is planted, only to rise once again as a stalk of wheat with many grains. He instructs them to roll the stone away from their hearts, even as Mary and Martha rolled the stone away from the tomb of Lazarus at His command despite their fears of the smell.

The command of Jesus is to step out and follow Him on faith, and you have the choice to either do so or not. But **John 12:37-41** records:

37 But although [Jesus] had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him,

38 that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: “Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”

39 Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

40 “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.”

41 These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.

It is easy to understand how an ordinary person that has just come to Jerusalem for the feast might not understand that which Jesus said, because they are not professional students of Scripture. However, there is a group of people in Jerusalem whose job it is to administer the things of God, and that is the Jewish religious leaders. Of all people, they should have insight on the prophecy of Isaiah and Daniel, but they did not. They knew the words of the prophecy, but they had an alternate agenda that blinded them to the reality that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecy. They didn’t want the prophecy to be fulfilled by Jesus; they wanted the prophecy to be fulfilled by one of their own, a Pharisee. John tells us, in **John 1:10-11**:

10 [Jesus] was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

Even though I am a Republican, I pray that Obama’s economic plan works out. Why? I live in this country, and the state of the economy affects me personally. The Bible doesn’t say specifically whether or not the banks and General Motors should be bailed out, or whether or not health care should be taken out of the private sector and made part of the government. I know that I am not privy to all of the economic data and expert advisors that the President has in



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order to make an informed decision, and so I have to pray that President Obama, being a good Christian man, is trying his best to do the best possible job with the resources that he has. On moral issues that have a clear Biblical focus, I can have a definite opinion as to whether his position and mine are in agreement, but on economic issues, which have less of a Biblical focus and more of a focus on the uncertain future, I simply have to pray that the Lord is with President Obama's decision making. A wise man at a seminar once told me, "Support your leader. If his idea is a good one, you'll be glad that you supported it, and went with a winner. If his idea is a bad one, it will soon be obvious, and it won't need your help to kill it."

The scribes and Pharisees should have been at this seminar with me. Jesus came to town healing the sick, raising the dead and teaching the people that which the Word of God says. The Sadducees tried, unsuccessfully, to shake Jesus' teaching, and the teachers among the Pharisees agreed with that which Jesus taught. Jesus could teach better than they could, and Jesus had more power with God than they did. Since they could not duplicate His teaching or His power, they should have just supported Jesus and walked in His light. The Pharisees wondered if their jobs as religious leaders were secure. Were I there I would have said, "I don't know, but although I don't know where the car is going, I know that Jesus is driving and I know how to enjoy the ride, so I'm going to do so."

Unfortunately for the scribes and Pharisees, they wanted to drive the car that Jesus was driving. They weren't big enough to see over Jesus' steering wheel, and they weren't tall enough to reach the pedals that Jesus was using, but they refused to ride in the car because Jesus was driving it and they wanted to drive.

One day, Jesus passed a blind man sitting by the side of the road. Jesus stopped and spit on the ground, made mud with his spit, picked up the mud and put it on the blind man's eyes, and told the blind man to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash off the mud. When the man did so, his blindness was cured. It was traditional for a Jewish man that was miraculously healed to go to the synagogue, show himself to the priests and give thanks to God, and the man did so. The Pharisees that were there were affronted that the man was healed on the Sabbath day, because, according to their rules, no work should be done on the Sabbath day, and they considered healing to be work. **John 9:14-16** records: **14 Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened [the man's] eyes.**

15 Then the Pharisees also asked [the man] again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "[Jesus] put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

16 Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man [Jesus] is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a



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man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them.

Some people don't like Obama's economic plan because Obama is not in their party. Others don't like Obama's economic plan because Obama is not in their race. I say, "Obama is the President and has the right to make whatever economic plan that he wants, as long as his plan does not propose anything illegal. Let's wait and see how he comes out."

The formerly blind man, of course, recognized that Jesus' plan came out well, because he his blindness was healed. The formerly blind man thought that Jesus was a great man, disagreeing with the idea that Jesus should have waited until the next day to heal him, as **John 9:17** records:

17 They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about [Jesus] because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

Since the formerly blind man is clearly healed, and clearly wants to give glory to God and praise to Jesus Christ for His healing, the Pharisees realize that they can do nothing with this man to discredit Jesus. So they looked for someone to condemn Jesus in a different place. **John 9:18-19** records:

18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight.

19 And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

But the parents hesitated to get involved in the discussion. Why? **John 9:20-22** records:

20 His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;

21 but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself."

22 His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue.

The parents hesitated to get involved because they did not want to be put out of the synagogue. Our text for today, **John 12:42-43**, says:

42 Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in [Jesus], but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue;

43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

The vote to crucify Jesus was unanimous, but not everyone that voted for Jesus' death believed that Jesus deserved to die. Some refrained from voting their conscience and voted with the majority because they did not want to be the target of the men in charge. The devil did not win the scribes and Pharisees over with a logical argument; he simply entered a few of them and glared and



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screamed and argued until the others gave up and the devil was able to get his way.

The squeaky wheel gets the grease.

But Jesus told these men to follow Him, not to give in to the devil. The praise of God, although delayed until His plan is completed, is better than the immediate gratification of the praise of men. The reward of God, although delayed until His plan is completed, is better than the immediate gratification in the reward of men. Belief in God's plan, although His plan may be delayed, is better than the immediate gratification of belief in the plans of man. The authority of God, although delayed while He is completing His plan, is better than the puny authority of man. So Jesus admonishes us to reject the things of man and follow Him, in **John 12:44-50**:

44 Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me.

45 And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.

46 I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.

47 And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.

48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him— the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

49 For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.

50 And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."

John 3:16 tells us:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ is available to all of us. We can be saved from the penalty and power of sin, death, hell and the grave if we only listen to the Word of God rather than the words of men. But, to be true believers in Christ, we have to be willing to be put out of the synagogue and not receive the praise of men. We might have to forfeit being part of the big show to maintain our commitment to Jesus Christ, because the big show might be just that; a show. **John 12:25-26** records:

25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

The size of the show is not important, rather it is important to be devoted to Christ. Whatever we must give up to do so is less important than our relationship to Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us, in **Luke 14:26-27**:



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26 “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

Let us keep the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles taught to us by the life of Christ, rather than the peer pressure of the crowd.

Pastor Darryl R. Curtis
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