

Eastern Mission

Apostolic Lutheran Church of America

September 2023

This One Thing

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also, I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” - Philippians 3:12-14 KJV

Life is full of decisions from birth to the grave. Do I coo or cry? Do I crawl or walk? Do I want sweet or salty? Do I do this, or do that? Eventually, choices get harder and more complex. Do I continue my education, join the Military or work force? Do I study or play? At a young age our thought processes form, our preferences begin to establish themselves, and our personality takes shape. At some point in our life, a bigger question comes, Jesus asks this question to Peter and us. This question that is asked of all, should alter our decision making the rest of our lives. Matthew 16:15-17, *“He saith unto them, **But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.**”* Something miraculous happens, Christ enters our lives and we receive the Holy Spirit. We now have faith in Christ, truly a gift that only God can provide.

But what about now that we profess to be Christians?

How do we think now?

Romans 6:1-2, *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? **God forbid.** How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”*

So, in a practical sense, what now? Trials and temptations in this world today, look vastly different than when Jesus, and His disciples lived over 2000 years ago. We are bombarded moment by moment with information from so many differing voices in this world. Truth, alternate truth, fake news, choices regarding radio stations, television channels, streaming services, phones with unlimited data or no data, or totally unplugged as the world did 100+ years ago? **Did I make my point?**

In our opening verse from *Philippians 3:12-14*: Paul explains to us that this life does continue, and we “press on to the mark”. Several years ago, the lyrics from “Just a Closer Walk with Thee” really struck me in a way that “in this life I cannot live the life that I desire”.

I am weak but Thou art strong
Jesus keep me from all wrong
I'll be satisfied as long
As I walk, let me walk close to Thee

Just a closer walk with Thee
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea
Daily walking close to Thee
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be

When my feeble life is o'er
Time for me will be no more
Guide me gently, safely o'er
To Thy kingdom's shore, to Thy shore

Just a closer walk with Thee
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea
Daily walking close to Thee
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be

Paul in Romans 7:15 empathizes with us, *“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.”* Our hope and prayer should be as Paul and the songwriters desire, *“Just a Closer Walk with Thee”*. We can’t be perfect. That spot is taken by Jesus. HOW DO WE LIVE? I do believe we are to renew our minds, thoughts and even lives daily and ask ourselves, just as Jesus asked Peter in Matthew 16:15-16, *“He saith unto them, **But whom say ye that I am?** And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

We then start over just as a musician starts his Music 1 – 2 – 3 – 4, 1 – 2 – 3 – 4, 1 – 2 – 3 – 4.

Or as a Carpenter builds his house one board at a time. Or as the old riddle goes *“How do you eat an Elephant? – One Bite at a time”*. Starting always by keeping Christ on the throne and following Him.

You see, my friends, decision making as a Christian is easy, - it’s just hard. Stay encouraged my friends and may the peace that passes all understanding be with You.

God’s Peace be with you,

Pr. Robert Tumberg