

BEYOND THE BASIC

CHAPTER 4 - MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

The Need to Build Upon the Foundation

God provides instructions for us in His Word to mature (Ephesians 4:15), to develop faith (Jude 20), to build up ourselves (2 Peter 3:18), to encourage others (1 Thessalonians 5:11), and to increase His church (Ephesians 4:16). He has identified various responsibilities that He gave us for these present times. To facilitate taking on these assignments we have need of spiritual strength. We must study the word of God, obey God, pray to God, and continually endeavor to complete the tasks He has appointed for us. The matters He requires us to carry out are more often than not foreign to the customs of the world. Frequently we do not do what God desires us to do because we truly are not aware of what He wants. Shame on us for not getting deeper into God's Word. Often we do not do what God desires because we are spiritually and morally inadequate. Shame on us for being spiritual couch potatoes. If we actually built upon the foundation given us we would know what He desires of us, would know what we are capable of performing, and we would not have problems with God's plans for us.

You Are Kidding, Aren't You???

Some of the actions God demands we accomplish are not a big deal for most people. We are able to understand most of the ten commandments (Matthew 19:18&19) and we can comprehend that when God said "Thou shall not . . .", He meant "Don't you dare do that!" Most of us could most likely answer similar to the rich young man that we have complied with these decrees, at least most of the time. When we continue to read further about giving away all worldly wealth (Matthew 19:21) we are likely to respond, "You're kidding, aren't You???" What Jesus said to do was not impossible to comply with, but it certainly was contrary to worldly wisdom. There are many instances in scripture where we are directed to perform actions that are plainly foreign to the ways of the world. We find them to be difficult to comprehend, and in conflict with the values we were taught by society. If someone physically attacks you your impulse would be to counterattack and get even. God said, "Don't do that. Instead offer the other cheek." (Matthew 5:39-42), and the flesh cries out "Surely you jest!" If someone dislikes you and acts abusively towards you your natural instinct is to greatly dislike them. God said we are to love our enemies and bless those who abuse us, (Matthew 5:44&45), and the flesh cries out "That's not fair. They need to be punished." The Word of God tells us to take every thought captive to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Our intellect asks "Why? They are my thoughts, and besides, there are too many of them floating around to scrutinize and evaluate all of them." Jesus said we were to take up our crosses and follow Him, (Matthew 16:24-26), but we say, "Today is a good day for golfing, or fishing, or anything but carrying a cross. There will be time later." We are tempted to complain about the difficulty and say, "Lets get real! That's too hard." There are many more commands, and we tend to either set them aside as too demanding, or we simply pay no attention to them. These directives from God are not connected by "*ors*"; they are all connected by "*ands*." We are not given the option to pick and choose.

You Want Me to Do What???

Some of the actions God demands we carry out appear to be impossible to accomplish. They are a major concern for most people. The church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22&23), and the church provides the only flesh and blood hands, feet, mouth, and ears Jesus has available on earth. The glory of Christ should be seen within His church. That is why we were told to do greater things than Jesus did (John 14:12). Knowing what and who we are, we may well cry out in panic, "You want me to do WHAT?" Jesus said that we could move mountains, and nothing would be impossible for us

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(Matthew 17:20). We respond "Yeah, sure!" Jesus said we were to heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead (Matthew 10:8), and we get flustered and say, "I can't do that!" He said that we are to be holy (Ephesians 1:4) and to be perfect (Matthew 5:48), and we respond "Who, me? I don't know how." Jesus also said that we were to love God with ALL our hearts, and ALL our souls, and ALL our minds, and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:37 & 39). The impossible demand is the word "ALL". We can love God, but most do not love God more than anything else. It may be easy to share of your excess with a neighbor in need, but sharing from your own lack, especially with someone you either don't like or know, is something different. God is saying to us, "Your mission, should you accept it, is to become a spiritual clone of Jesus." Many simply accept the devil's lie that the assignment is impossible for mankind, so they give up and just forget about it. They will concentrate on other tasks that they believe are obtainable.

God's Expectations

God has given us a lot of commands that seem to us to be very difficult or impossible to comply with, and we may wonder what He actually requires from us. Our discernment of what God intended is enhanced when we look deeper into what God said. When He said we should "be perfect because He is perfect", the message was originally given in the Greek language. The form of the Greek verb "to be" used was future perfect, which does not exist in English. It's meaning is to constantly be in the process of developing or becoming, with the goal of finally arriving. We should never back down, but always stand fast. We are directed to stand fast in the Lord (Philippians 4:1), in one Spirit and one mind (Philippians 1:27). We are told to hold to the teaching from the Word of God (2 Thessalonians 2:15), and to be complete in the will of God (Colossians 4:12). You can be lost if you don't stand firm (Matthew 10:22), but you will be saved if you endure. Perseverance brings the crown of life (James 1:12). Do not allow the enemy to wear you down (Galatians 6:9) because he is only trying to get you weary enough to give up. Jesus said that if you endure you will eat of the tree of life (Revelation 2:7), you will not be hurt by the second death (Revelation 2:11), you will be given to eat of the hidden manna (Revelation 2:17), you will have power over nations (Revelation 2:26), you will be saved, wear white raiment, and be in the lambs book of life (Revelation 3:5), you will be a pillar in the temple of God (Revelation 3:12), you will sit with Jesus in heaven (Revelation 3:21), and you will be sons of God and inherit all things (Revelation 21:7). If you think you are seeing a pattern here, you are right. The message is **never, ever give up**. Endure the difficult (2 Timothy 2:3) and seek Him with all your heart (Deuteronomy 4:29). We may be surprised by what we can accomplish when we work together with other Christians. Jesus said He wanted us unified (John 10:16). He prayed to His Father that we be might one (John 17:11, 21-23). And finally we are to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). Jesus came to be an example (John 13:15), and he never gave up. He endured all things, even to the cross.

Our Progress Report

Individually we each should be striving to develop into the likeness of Christ and have within us the mind of Jesus. People should easily notice that we are different from the world; that we stand apart. It should be apparent to the world that we know Jesus. Jointly we should show forth the full glory of Christ with nothing missing. If the world looks at us and does not see Jesus, we are failing. The Christian community is God's temple. As such it is not to be spoiled or ruined by division, controversy, or any other sins as the members come together to Worship God. A God of peace and love will not dwell in the midst of internal strife and contentious people. If we harbor ill will towards

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another or get angry over trivial things, we are failing. When Jesus walked this earth He went about healing people, and His church continued that work (Acts 3:1-10, Acts 5:12-16). The story of the first century church is a story of divine healing in the name of Jesus, revealing God's glory (Acts 9:32-35, Acts 14:8-10). People were not only convicted, but were attracted by the visible presence of the power of God. If the sick and injured are not coming forward in our place of worship for anointing and the laying on of hands, then leaving healed, we are failing. The effectiveness of the disciples was strengthened by their corporate prayers, by being in agreement with one another and with the Holy Spirit. Some clearly supernatural events occurred because of prayer (Acts 12:5-8, 12). If we are not all spending significant time in private and corporate prayer, we are failing. The Lord's desire is for unity in His church. Those first Christians knew how to do that (Acts 4:32-35). If the church was to survive it had to have a spiritual unity under the headship of Christ (Galatians 3:28). The church was founded to be Christ's representative on earth and had a unity of Spirit, hope, Lord, and baptism (Ephesians 4:1-6). If we are not a family, young, middle aged, and elderly, sharing life together and caring for each other, we are failing. If our caring is limited to those who sit in our church building, we are failing. We are given power to proclaim God forgiveness for sin (John 20:23), and we are called to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:1&2). The church is a spiritual hospital where sinners should be healed back to full spiritual health. Instead, some today would accuse the church of being the only organization that shoots it's wounded. During that first century the community saw God's power, love, and glory in His church. If the world cannot see God's power, love, and glory in His church today, we are failing. We can sing, and raise our hands, and pray in tongues, but if there is no power or mighty move of the spirit, we are failing. We sometimes give up when we should surrender. Giving up is simply quitting, sitting there merely going through the motions with no expectations. Surrendering is yielding to a higher power, the will of God.