



The apostle wrote in 2 Peter 3:16 "As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction".

Since the beginning, men have tampered with the sacred scriptures to make it difficult, confusing and hard to understand.

The entire religion can be simply summed up in a verse - Deuteronomy 10:12 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. Yet we see in Jesus' time how divided and legalistic it was! This was how Jesus viewed it in Matthew 23:15 - Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Today, Christianity is not much better. There is a small and noisy group who would like to make it stricter, more exclusive and complicated than it really is. When Jesus saw Martha, His advice to her was Luke 10:41-42 - "thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Starting on the first Wednesday of 2013, I will conduct a 3-week series on "What Really Matters". I will focus on our approach to the Bible, the Church and the Gospel of Christ. Good notes will be distributed during these classes. If you are confused, led astray and feel you have missed out on what really matters, I look forward to welcoming you to this series. Until then, here are 5 things that really matters for your consideration:

1. Salvation is a matter of grace. Ephesians 2:8-9 - For by grace are ye

saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

There is nothing anyone can do to deserve salvation. After accepting the terms of salvation, the Lord adds you into His church through baptism. Even after you have become a Christian, there is nothing you can do to gain heaven.

Author Max Lucado explains that grace means that there is nothing we can do, for God to love us more; and that there is nothing we do that will make Him love us less. The only reason that entitles us a place in heaven, is God's grace, which He freely gave in having Jesus to die for us.

2. The church is a safe haven for Christians who are called to a radical lifestyle. 1 Peter 2:9 - But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

This world is not our home. They do not understand our faith. They do not share our goals. It is not Christian-friendly. Indeed, we are told in 2 Timothy 3:12 - Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

So when Christians come together, we are here to support, uphold and uplift one another. We esteem each other better than ourselves. Everyone is important, even the feeble ones as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:22 - Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.

Indeed, there is no place in the body of Christ for judgementalism, infighting or grudges. If we harbour any evil against our brother, our worship will not be accepted and we must make it right immediately. Matthew 5:23-24 - Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

3. The life of a Christian is characterized by joy. This started right at the moment we come into contact with the gospel. Matthew 13:44 - Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

God created us all as freewill agents. We become Christians by our own violation. In doing so, we willingly give up everything. Matthew 16:24 - Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

How can we do this for the long haul? To be faithful unto death? It can only be possible with joy, like it is for our Lord Jesus in Hebrews 12:2 - Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The greatest joy would surely be in Matthew 25:21 - His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

4. The work of the church functions through team work. 1

Corinthians 12:12-14 - For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

Even though the church at PP has elders, deacons and staff members, there is a crying need for more members to come in to lead in the work of the Lord. While most members will attend, support and assist in many activities, very few are willing to be accountable, scrutinized and subject themselves to the consensus of a team ministry.

This robs the church from its full potential as a large portion of its resources are not readily available to be utilised. I am so thankful for the men who have given themselves to kingdom service, to work with our elders, deacons and staff members as part of the ROS (Registrar of Societies) committee. As we move forward, we need to increase the number of members who will give of their time, priority and effort in working as a team for the Lord.

Talent and ability is not what the Lord is looking for in His service. We need men who walk the talk, are willing to give of their best, people that can be entreated and not give up because of some problem, criticism or setback.

For all of us reading this article, God may be speaking to you as He did to Esther in Esther 4:14 - For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time,

then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

5. The living Christian is a growing Christian. 2 Peter 3:18 - But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Take a look at your Christian walk. Are you more active and involved now than you were a year or two ago? Do you give priority to your attendance, giving and support of the activities of the church? When was it last that you invited a friend to Christ or shared the good news with another?

Most importantly, do you take time to retreat, reflect and make resolutions in your walk with God? Without a daily living relationship with God, we are not only barren but become nothing as Jesus declared in John 15:5 - I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. Let us pray with the Psalmist in Psalms 139:23-24 - Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Ultimately, the Christian must take responsibility for his or her own faith. The apostle Paul puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 9:27 - But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

It is so important for each of us to to be true to God. Be careful that we are not justifying ourselves because of the perceived faults that we find in another. Matthew 7:3 - And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Indeed, as Paul told us in Romans 14:4 - Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.

Conclusion: Do not be distracted by the issues and matters that cloud our focus. Stay on course with what really matters in our walk with God, that is the weightier matters of the law (Matthew 23:23).