

July 2013 Newsletter

Ministers Of The Spiritual Life Dynamic

“According to the faith of God's elect,”

A. *“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;” Titus 1:1 - παυλος δουλος θεου αποστολος δε ησου χριστου κατα πιστιν εκλεκτων θεου και επιγνωσιν αληθειας της κατ ευσεβειαν. “Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—” NIV*

*“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ,” - paulos doulos theou apostolos de iesou christou. **Servant and apostle defines Paul's function before God and his rank in the Church.** This passage will reveal just exactly what are ministers supposed to be doing in the local church. What is the area of their responsibilities. What are the areas of their function. Who they work for, and to whom do they answer to. It also answers the question of what are churches to be about anyway. Are they places of show? Are they places for entertainment? Are they to be catering to the flesh nature? Or are they places that are to be ministering to the spiritual side of believers?*

The first thing we see is that Paul, et al, is a servant of God – not people, not the local church, not church denominations, but of God! The next thing we see is that their life and function to the people of God is about **service, not servitude**. And this service is one that springs forth out of the grace and love of these ministers of God. Their love for God and their grace to the people of God. The **apostle gift gives them the authority to carry out their service to God**, just the same as the Pastor-Teacher gift gives us the authority to carry out our ministry for God!

“According to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;” - kata pistin eklektion theou kai epignosin aletheias tes kai eusebeian. It begins with the preposition kata, which denotes the specific area of the ministers function, with a limiting idea as well, telling us what the man of God's ministry is all about.

The KJV translates it as **“according to”**, while the The NIV translates it as **“to further”**. Both are acceptable translations of *kata*, but in context it should be translated as, **“with respect to”**. With respect to clears up any misconceptions that Pastors, or their congregations, may have about what are the responsibilities of their ministers. It instructs both parties, Pastors and congregants, what the duties are of these men, which also limits them to this sphere of activity. It also rejects other things that Pastors, or congregants, may try to get going in the local church. Things, such as, entertainment, social activities, committee meetings, human good activities, community activities or involvement, etc..

We see here that our ministry is to further the faith of the elect, or, is with reference to the faith of the elect. This not only tells us what the ministry of the **Pastor** is to be about, but it also tells us that the ministry of the **local church** is to be about and what the **Christian life** is to be about! Our ministry is to teach God's people God's Word so that they will not only grow in the knowledge of God and his Word, but **so that the faith he has given them may grow!** Even when, and if, we get into areas of counseling with some believers, it's always to bring their focus back on the need for them to be living by faith in their lives. In essence, the focus of our ministry is to be centered around faith in the Word.

The second aspect of our ministry, which is also connected to the first one mentioned, is the *epignosis* knowledge of the truth, which is Bible Doctrine that one has heard, learned, understood and believed. We are servants of God to further the faith of God's elect and their *epignosis* knowledge of the truth. That defines our area of ministry, that limits our area of ministry, and that is our service to God. It is **our ministry to God's people and it is our service to God**. And how we do that is by faithfully and accurately teaching them God's Word.

And then finally we see the phrase “*that leads to godliness*”. Here lies the whole force of the passage and that is living in our spiritual life, *eusebeia*. God created in every single believer in Christ, which includes every single member of the Pastor's congregation, their very own unique spiritual life. And *eusebeia* defines that idea and develops it further in that all believers are to not only live in it in their spiritual communion with the Father, but also apply it to their life as they journey through life. And to do that we need faith, we need the Word, (*epignosis*), and we need the filling of the Holy Spirit. So we see that **Pastors are ministers to further the spiritual life dynamic**.

B. “*Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*” 2 Timothy 3:7 - παντοτε μανθανοντα και μηδεποτε εις επιγνωσιν αληθειας ελθειν δυναμενα. “*Always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.*” NIV

We see in the passage the the word for **knowledge** is *epignosis*, which is Bible Doctrine that has been metabolized by faith. Metabolized doctrine is not only necessary for our growth in grace, and for us to continue living in the spiritual life dynamic, but it will also prevent us from becoming legalistic and from being led astray by others, unbelievers and believers alike!

Think of all this with a visual image of two hands of God coming down out of heaven offering us a gift. We look and this wonderful gift is the Word of God. And contained in it is everything we need for faith and godliness. He gives us his Word to believe, and his Word gives us the faith to believe it! He provides everything we need in his grace to us. And, as we look deeply into his Word, we notice that our faith starts to grow and soar. But we also notice that we start to have peace. This peace is evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit. So we also see that his Word not only gives us faith, it is this faith in his Word, which is what *epignosis* is, also has provided us the setting for the filling of the Holy Spirit.

This *epignosis* knowledge of the Word not only perpetuates us living in the spiritual life dynamic of the filling of the Holy Spirit, but it also enables us to stay away from the control of the flesh nature with its many lusts, emotions, passions and pleasures. It also enables us to keep from another operation of the flesh and that is **legalism**, which is a function of the attitude of pride. So *epignosis* keeps us from becoming arrogant and legalistic.

We know that “*knowledge (gnosis) puffeth up*”, 1 Corinthians 8:1, that is, it gives us big head. But “*but charity (agape love) edifieth*”, and *agape* is brought about by the spiritual life dynamic of the Holy Spirit. But knowledge that has been converted into *epignosis* knowledge through faith, under the filling of the Holy Spirit, keeps us humble, as well as, living in the spiritual life dynamic.

The spiritual life dynamic also prevents us from being led astray by those who aren't doctrinal, whether they are legalistic or lascivious, (legalistic here). Not only because we have the answers that doctrinal insight gives us to prevent our being influenced by those not living in the spiritual life, but also because the spiritual life dynamic provides us the spiritual power we need to avoid their influence. And it is the ministry of the communicator of God's Word to teach the doctrine to God's people.

C. “*And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;*” - Philippians 1:9 - και τουτο προσευχομαι ινα η αγαπη υμων ετι μαλλον και μαλλον περισσευη εν επιγνωσει και παση αισθησει.

Agape love increases in the sphere of *epignosis* and *epignosis* provides us with **discernment**, *aisthesis*. Once again our attention is directed toward the importance of metabolizing Bible Doctrine by faith. *Agape* is brought about by the filling of the Holy Spirit, who operates in the sphere of faith in the Word. And it is the Word that gives us faith! All of which takes place in the new man.

Discernment is the mental ability to discriminate, to look beyond the veil and see what's really going on. It's an inner knowledge that knows the truth and the truth about things. It's not a feeling, nor is it some kind of “sixth sense” - it just *knows*. It's the ability to differentiate, to discern, and it comes to us through the intake and metabolization of Bible doctrine.

Speaking in the ways of the world, it knows the difference between brass, fool's gold and real gold. It knows the difference between phony gold leaf and real gold leaf, between diamonds and CZ's. It knows the difference between phony love and real love, between what's good for us and what's bad, between false teaching and true doctrine, between false communicators and the real men of God's Word, **whose spiritual ministry to Christians enables them to have discernment.**

Right now most Americans and most Christians are caught up in the wave of evil that is sweeping over this country and has conquered the land. They cannot see what is going on right under their noses! And the reason why they have no discernment in this area, (others as well), is because they lack the ability to discern what is going on! And why is that? Because they are not operating under the true filling of the true Holy Spirit and because they do not possess *epignosis*!

And why is that? Because they do not have a love for the truth! And because they do not have a love for the truth, they are now being swept away by a **demonic spirit of delusion** that has taken America and most of its churches over! “*And for this cause God shall send them strong **delusion**, that they should believe a lie:*” 2 Thessalonians 2:11

D. “*For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*” Romans 10:2 - μαρτυρω γαρ αυτοις οτι ζηλον θεου εχουσιν αλλ ου κατ επιγνωσιν. *Epignosis* provides the basis for true zeal. Religion and zeal go hand in hand and you can find religious zealots in every one of them: Judaism, Islam, Catholicism, Shintoism, etc.. Even among the ranks of Christianity! Being a Christian does not exempt one from zeal, but usually it's the wrong kind of zeal, or a misguided zeal.

Zeal takes in the ideas of one's thinking, one's beliefs, one's emotions, one's volition and one's actions. It takes in the whole person to the place where the individual's actions are directed toward a certain goal. Which goal is centered around one's beliefs, religion, personal values, etc.. The problem lies in if there is faulty thought processes, insufficient information, faulty information, faulty belief system, any subjectivity in one's emotions, any personal emotional hangup, any form of mental illness, any lack of control over one's volition, then that individual will go off in all their zeal and do the wrong thing!

This kind of zeal is of the flesh nature and the flesh nature is fraught with every kind of problem imaginable. So there is no doubt that zeal coming from the flesh nature will not only be misguided, but will turn out wrong! But true zeal, which springs forth from the new nature and *epignosis* doctrine, metabolized Bible Doctrine, will always accomplish a Biblical and proper goal.

E. “*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*” Romans 12:2 - και μη συσχηματιζεσθε τω αιωνι τουτω αλλα μεταμορφουσθε τη ανακαινωσει του νοος υμων εις το δοκιμαζειν υμας τι το θελημα του θεου το αγαθον και ευαρεστον και τελειον.

This passage deals with the transforming of the believer's inner essence and how it is accomplished by the renewing of our minds. And according to Colossians 3:10, “*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*”, we find that the mind of the believer is **renewed**, *anakainoo*, by *epignosis* doctrine! “*And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*” NIV

Paul is telling the believers in Rome to stop being conformed to this present age using the present middle imperative of *suschematizo*, which is a command to stop an ongoing action. *Schematizo* dealt with a change of the outward appearance; it's to appear to be something you're not. The prime example of someone appearing to be something they're not is Satan, who masquerades as an angel of light. “*And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*” 2 Corinthians 11:14

Many Christians try to appear to be one of the crowd, to be like everyone else, to be like the people of the world. But try as hard as they can in dress, mannerisms, speech, values, goals, ambitions and viewpoint to be like everyone else in society, they can never really be like the world because God has saved and regenerated their souls. Inside we're totally different and nothing can change that and he commands them to stop trying.

Then he tells us how we can do this and that is through us being transformed by the renewing of our minds. Here we have the present passive participle of **metamorphomai**, which is a changing of the inner essence of the soul. Not that it is changed into something else different than it is, but that it is changed into what it already is, just like a young child is still a human being, but it is changing, growing into becoming an adult human being.

Morphe refers to *our inner essence*, **meta** denotes the changing of that essence. Not into something different, but along the lines of what it already is. And how this is accomplished is through Bible Doctrine that has been metabolized by faith. That's what changes us inside, and that's what prevents us from being conformed to the world around us.

But there is a **pattern** for all this, as well as a **goal**. We may have our own unique personality, that which distinguishes us from others, but Christians are a part of a large body of people, who are all in union with Jesus Christ. And as such, we all have a prototype after which we are being brought into conformity with, and that prototype is Jesus Christ! “*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*” Romans 8:29

Now the teaching of Bible Doctrine is an integral part of this process, and it is the teaching ministry of the Pastor-Teacher that God uses to accomplish this. We are servants of God and in our service to him we are ministers of the spiritual life dynamic going on inside believers in Christ. For it is the new man that God created inside of us, a being whose essence is spirit and truth, that is growing and changing, (hopefully each day), as that believer metabolizes the Word of God by faith. With the confidence that one day, whether in this life or the next one, that which is inside of us **will be brought to absolute completion**. “*to the spirits of just men made perfect,*” Hebrews 12:23b

F. “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:” Colossians 3:10 - και ενδυσσαμενοι τον νεον τον ανακαινουμενον εις επιγνωσιν κατ εικονα του κτισαντος αυτον. “And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” NIV

This verse is an amazing passage for it gives us insight into **how** believers in Christ are renewed spiritually! And that is through *epignosis* doctrine. Not *gnosis* - factual knowledge, nor *epiginosko* – knowledge in progress, which both are a necessary part of the process of renewal, but *epignosis*, which is Bible Doctrine we have learned, understood and believed. Believe God's promises.

Epignosis, believing God's promises, is what leads to *oida* knowledge, which is a full and complete understanding of a subject. And *sophia*, which is translated as **wisdom**, is the doctrinal knowledge that we have learned, believed and understood that we apply to our experiences in life.

The **new man**, *neos*, was created by God in us at the point in time when we trusted Jesus Christ as our Savior. From that point in time onward we are to be constantly renewed, the present passive participle of *anakainoo*, through the spiritual dynamic of *epignosis*. The present participle tells us that this is to be a way of life for us, a daily practice. The passive voice tells us that renewal is something we receive, not something we can do. It is something that occurs to us in the inner man as the result of the spiritual dynamic of *epignosis*. “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is **renewed day by day**.” 2 Corinthians 4:16

Believers are **transformed** by the renewing of their minds, *metamorphomai*, and our minds are **renewed** by *epignosis*. But God has a purpose for all this; a goal he is bringing us to, and that is the renewal of our spirits is **according to the image of Christ, *kat'eikona*, the One who created us**. This is the process by which Christ is formed in us. This is the purpose and the ultimate goal for which we were saved. “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be **conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Romans 8:29

Churches and Christians place their emphases on different things that they consider important: soul winning, programs, home visitations, being involved in various church functions, being involved in community affairs, etc.. Yet we see that the thing that God considers the most important, the thing to which we were predestined to, is to be **conformed to the image of his Son – both soul and body!**

In Colossians 3:10 it tells us that we are being renewed **according to, *kata*, the image, *eikon***, of his Son. The preposition *kata* specifies the criterion or standard by which an action is performed. *Kata* tells us that there is a model, or a standard, after which an action is performed. Houses may be built, but they must be built according to the standard of the local building code. The Bible may be interpreted, but it must be interpreted in keeping with the standard of sound exegesis.

We are the image of Christ. In Greek thought the **image, *eikon***, shared in the reality of what it represented. The essence of the thing, (deity), appeared in the image, therefore the deity himself was present and operative in the image. For example, if there was a statue of Zeus, (large or small), or a mosaic of Zeus, or even a painting of him, which would be the image (*eikon*) of Zeus, then it meant that the essence of Zeus was present and operating in it. So it is through us being renewed everyday by *epignosis*, our inner man is being changed. And as it is being changed it is being changed according to a standard, the standard of Christ the prototype. This is what Christian growth is all about where Christ is being formed in us. The outer change, also into conformity to Christ, will be the resurrection body.

Most Christians have a problem with the word icon, from *eikon*, because of all the negative things people have attached to it. **Likeness** is the English word often used to translate it, but that word is also used for the Greek *homoioima*. The difference is that *homoioima* denotes a resemblance to something, but is not derived from it. While *eikon* not only resembles it, but is actually derived from it. Two eggs may resemble each other, but could actually come from two different hens.

Eikon always has to have a prototype, that which it not only resembles, but from which it is drawn. A son is in the image of his father because he comes from his father. While another boy may look like the son, but come from a different father. In this there is only a resemblance between the two.

Jesus Christ is the image of the eternal God, because he comes from him being born by the activity of the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary. But remember, in the definition of the word *eikon* tells us that the essence of the deity was fully present and operative in the image. So God was and is fully present in Christ. But we are also in the image of Christ, **so Christ is fully present and operative in us!**

And our spiritual renewal, which is take place each day, and which is accomplished by believing the promises of God, as we are under the filling of the Holy Spirit, is changing our inner essence, our *morphe*, the new man inside of us, into conformity to the *morphe* of Christ! That is, our souls are being changed so that they will become like the soul of Jesus Christ. So complete is our union with him.

Our *morphe* is like the *morphe* of Christ because it was derived from him. Spiritual renewal and growth refer to the matter of our *morphe* changing so that it becomes like the *morphe* of Christ, who is the archetype for all Christians. The teaching of Bible Doctrine by a Pastor-Teacher, faith, the filling of the Holy Spirit, confession of sin, if necessary, are all a part of this. **We are in the process of becoming what we are, in becoming what has been created in us, in becoming like Christ.**

The word **transition** fits quite well here for it is the passing into a new state. The Greek has a word for that and it is *ginomai*, a changing of condition or state, to become something that one was not before, or a becoming. But there are also transitions going on all around us today and most of them are not that good. Our country, our communities, our churches, and many Christians are in a state of transition.

The question is, **what are we becoming?** What is our nation becoming? What are our communities becoming? What are our churches becoming? And what are Christians becoming? **But the most important question is, what are we as individual believers becoming?** We have little or no control over what is going on in the other sectors of life, but we do have control over ourselves.

Both the words **transition** and *ginomai* are neutral. They connote neither good nor bad. They simply state there is a change going on and one is becoming something he was not before. When we go through the stages of physical growth, from babehood, to toddlers, to young children, to adolescents, to adulthood, to fully mature adults and into venerable old age, all that denotes change! A becoming something that we were not before – and that's a good thing! It can be a good thing, if there is a proper goal, or model, after which one is striving.

Both young boys and girls should have as their goals in life to grow up to be decent, responsible men and women, to grow up to be the biblical model of husbands, wives, fathers and mothers. But sadly, most are not changing into that today. They have their role models laid out for them on TV and they are not good. So they are becoming that which is not good. But as Christians we are to grow spiritually in the new man, so that we become like Christ.

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Romans 12:2 The only thing that will prevent us from being conformed to the thinking of this age is through faith and the accurate teaching of the Word of God, which is what the Pastor's responsibility is. But something has happened to the thinking of most Americans and Christians, where their minds have been taken over.

It's very similar to the old Sci-Fi classic of the 50's called, “The Invasion Of The Body Snatchers”. Pods came from entities from outer space and were brought secretly into various towns, and as the people of these towns fell asleep overnight, a different person emerged in the morning. They looked like the old person the day before, but they were no longer the same person. They went about their work and various other affairs throughout the day, as they did before, but also noticeably lacking in the townspeople is **they no longer attended their churches!**

One by one each person in the town was changed until they were all different. The town, the buildings, the cars and people all looked the same, but the people were now different! And this is what has been happening to America since the 60's, except in changing overnight it has taken years. Communist cells, (pods), were brought into towns across America, and as the people fell asleep “overnight”, one by one, over the years, they woke up one day and they were different. Their thinking was different.

They still go about their daily business, but something inside of them has been shut down. They have gone away from the traditional values they once held. They have been hypnotized, mesmerized, mentally conditioned. Things that use to offend them, they now accept – even defend! The old churches no longer have a place in their new thinking, so they built new churches for themselves. They don't want to listen to the old men of the Word, so they replace them with those who will say what they want to hear. Truth is no longer important to them, only the continuance of their programming. Something from outer space, (demonic energies), has now come into town after town, over the hypnotic spell of the TV, and has changed them! They have become something they were not before.

At one time America was dotted with hundreds of thousands of small Bible teaching churches and the Christians who attended them were positive, humble people who simply wanted to hear the truth. But all that has been replaced by the glitz and glamor of the “Hollywood” type of suburban ministries with their emphasis on show and glamor and entertainment. They brag about their cathedrals, they point to their numbers and money and what they have done, and are too arrogant to see how far they have fallen! They have been **bewitched!**

The only thing that can keep us from “falling asleep” is the consistent, daily intake of Bible Doctrine! If they are not, then the believers are already beginning to fall asleep! And to those who have fallen asleep the command is to **wake up!** *“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to **awake** out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”* Romans 13:11 *“Wherefore he saith, **Awake** thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”* Ephesians 5:14

To show how serious a problem this is many believers will be deceived during the last days. We already are seeing it happen! They will be deceived by false teachers and false signs and wonders. This is why Christ warned the Church, *“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”* Matthew 24:24 **Falling asleep** has resulted in end time believers becoming smug, complacent, self-satisfied, full of human good and self righteousness, negative to the truth, rebelling against biblical authority, instead of being conformed to the image of Christ. Something has taken over their minds!

God is doing something wonderful in us, but he does this through us living in the spiritual life dynamic. He is conforming us to the very image of his dear Son. But we have to be spiritually awake! “*Ye are all the children of **light**, and the children of the **day**: we are not of the **night**, nor of **darkness**. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.” 1 Thessalonians 5:5-8*

Paul instructs us here on how to prevent ourselves from being taken over by this alien, mesmerizing, demonic force, that is found all around us via the mass media, (mass brain-washing tool), radio, TV, entertainment, and probably many other sources that we are not familiar with, and that is by us being on the watch for these things, of maintaining mental and emotional sobriety, both physically and figuratively, by putting on the spiritual armor each day and by staying awake spiritually!

The key issue for us is to live by faith. And to do that God has given us his Word. “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” Romans 10:17 We notice here that **faith** has as its origin the Word of God. But an interesting note here is the use of the word **hearing**. Now hearing implies that words are being spoke. So what we have is that a communicator of God's Word is teaching Bible Doctrine from his Word, so all there is left for the believer to do is **hear** the Word of the Lord. **And in hearing the Word of the Lord we get the faith needed to believe the Word!**

Right now the entire world is being taken over by a **deluding influence**. A demonic spirit that is so affecting the thinking of people, that they not only accept the brainwashing that is going on via TV and other mediums that influence public thinking and opinion, but at the pinnacle of all this deluding, demonic influence is America, whose people are virtually all caught up in this satanic influence, but who also is the chief culprit in disseminating this satanic influence around the world!

The only way we, as believers in Christ, can prevent this from happening to us is: 1) to love the truth of God's Word more than anything in life, 2) to so want the truth that it is our first priority in life and we make our decisions based on getting the truth, 3) to live in the true filling of the true Holy Spirit, 4) to live by faith each day and to claim the promises of God by faith each day, 5) to separate ourselves from every negative influence and person, 6) to learn to recognize the influences and activities of Satan around our lives, 7) to ask God for wisdom and a discerning spirit in these matters, 8) and to keep on praying over everything in life.

I think we are at the place in history, when all of these things that have been prophesied are beginning to unfold right before our very eyes. We are not at the end of these things, nor are we part way through them, but we are now at the **beginning** of these things. We are also at a point in our lives, either on a worldwide scale, or at the very least on a national level, that we are going to have to start making some serious changes in our thinking, our decisions, and our walk with God.

There is an oft quoted passage in the Old Testament that is applicable at any time in a believer's life. Whether in a time when we are getting older, or when a nation is in apostasy and ripe for judgment, or, and especially, when we are heading into the end of days. And that is, “*Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, **prepare to meet thy God**, O Israel.*” Amos 4:12

The Lord also told us in Luke 21:36, “*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*” **Escape, ekpheugo**, is to flee out of these things that the Lord previously mentioned.

Pastor Mike