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AUGUST 2017
HOW TO BE INDUCTED INTO
GOD'S HALL OF FAME (Continued)

Greetings beloved saints of God!

We pray everyone is blessed and experiencing God's best!

First of all, let me take a moment to thank all of our gracious and faithful partners for your continued financial support, prayers, and friendship. We are so thankful for you because of your obedience to our Good Shepherd- Jesus Christ- who always leads us in triumph and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place we go! We praise God for the friends and partners that He has put in our lives, and we are confident that His reward to you will be exceedingly abundantly above all you could ever ask or think- both in this life and also for all eternity. Thanks again!

I have some very exciting news to share with you all this month- **I am in the planning and preparation stages of going back to India in October!**

For those of you who are newer to our ministry, India is a place where I have regularly ministered in times past, having visited there now three times. When I have gone before, I have ministered in everything from churches to bible colleges, and all of these ministry times have been extremely fruitful!

Also, on this trip, I am excited to finally have someone to travel with me: Bruce Van Bibber, who is our secretary/administrative assistant here at High Point Church, will accompany me this time. He has a heart for missions and I know he will be an asset to the ministry I plan to do on this trip.

So, I ask that you lift us up in prayer as we plan this trip- for it is important that we be led in all we do- from traveling at the right times to traveling to the right places. I appreciate your prayers!

As for this month's teaching, I want to continue along the same lines as what I shared with you a couple of months ago on the subject of "How to Be Inducted into God's Hall of Fame." Last time, we delved into part of Hebrews 12:1, and this month I want us to get into another important part of this verse and extract some more practical truths so that we can further learn "how to be inducted into God's Hall of Fame." Shall we?

Again, **Hebrews 12:1** reads- *"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."*

The picture that the author was painting here was of us being competitors in a race, surrounded by the grandstands of heaven that are full of all those who have run a race of faith before us (see Hebrews chapter 11). And since we are the ones on the track right now, he gives us three exhortations for running our race in verse one alone.

One of them is what we covered last time- that is, having a need of endurance. But how many of you know that in order for a runner to truly have endurance there are a couple of things that the runner must

do? And these two other things are what the writer of Hebrews lists before ever mentioning the race we are in and the endurance that we are to run it with. So, what are these two things?

PUTTING OFF THE WEIGHT AND THE SIN

He said just before even mentioning the race, “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us...” The words “lay aside” literally mean “to get rid of.” So, there are two things that the writer of Hebrews mentions that we are to get rid of in order to successfully run our race with endurance.

You see, if a runner has a lot of baggage on him while he is trying to run a race then he is going to have a harder time enduring to the end, right? So why do so many believers think that they are going to finish their race with so many encumbrances in their lives? No, the first thing we must do if we want to make this race we are running easier to endure is to “get rid of every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us.”

Let me first just quickly make mention of the second half of this phrase- “and (get rid of) the sin which so easily ensnares us...”

Now most people understand and would agree that sin is definitely a hindrance to our walk and will ensnare us in our race of faith if not removed. This is a rather obvious point that I will not spend much time on. However, allow me to make a couple of points regarding this truth.

The illustration that the author was using was of sin being like clothing that would ensnare (or entangle and trip up) the runner. It is for this reason that the Apostle Paul said in **Ephesians 4:22**- “...*put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to deceitful lusts.*” The truth is that our old man was crucified with Christ, but what so many Christians do is they continue to wear the same clothes that the old man left behind.

You see, when Paul used the term “put off” it literally meant to take off some sort of clothing. In other words, when he admonished his readers over and over again to “put off” this characteristic of the flesh and “put off” that characteristic of the flesh, what he was literally saying was “take off this piece of clothing” and “take off that piece of clothing.” You see, things like anger, wrath, bitterness, envy, and lying are all garments left behind by the old man and we are admonished to take them off and get rid of them lest we become “entangled” in them and not finish our race.

And while sin is equally as important as getting rid of the first thing mentioned, I want to spend more time on this word “weight” because it is less understood. So, for the rest of this teaching this month, let’s deal with this phrase “get rid of every weight.”

This word “weight” literally means “bulk or mass.” So, while the sin described the clothing on the runner, this word describes the excess “bulk or mass” on the runner himself. In other words, this word “weight” refers to him or her as being overweight and out of shape. So, I believe what the author had in mind here was for us to get rid of the extra weight that would encumber us from being agile and swift and cause us to not have endurance in our race.

Now, of course, this admonition is not referring to us being in shape physically, but rather spiritually in order to effectively run our spiritual race with endurance. Being spiritually fit is such an important key to running our race effectively. So, let’s now talk about the keys to **keeping spiritually fit!**

KEEPING SPIRITUALLY FIT

So, how do we get in shape spiritually? Well, how do you get in shape physically? By eating healthy and exercising regularly, right? It is exactly the same in the spiritual, saints! We must eat right and exercise regularly in order to keep spiritually fit.

Someone might be thinking, "Is this idea biblical?" It most certainly is! These two necessities to our spiritual well-being are mentioned by the Apostle Paul in **1 Timothy 4:6-8**. Let's take a closer look at this passage of Scripture...

In these verses, Paul was instructing Timothy, and notice what he tells him... *"If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."* In these verses Paul shows us the two keys to developing a healthy and strong inner-man- nourishment and exercise.

NOURISHING YOUR SPIRIT

So, let's first talk about the first key mentioned- nourishment...

An important truth that we need to understand is that our inner man needs nourishment just as our outer man needs to be nourished. In other words, your spirit has an appetite and needs to be fed constantly just like your body does. The reason this is so important to understand is because, just as in the natural, if you don't eat every day you will get weaker. This is what Paul implied when he used the word "nourished" here in 1 Timothy 4:6...

The New American Standard more correctly translates the word "nourished" as "constantly nourished." You see, we have to be constantly nourished spiritually just as we have to be constantly nourished physically. In other words, our spirits must be fed healthy spiritual food everyday so that we can be spiritually nourished.

So the question now is- What is healthy spiritual food?

Paul specifically said in this passage of Scripture that we are to be "nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine." You see, the Word of God is our healthy spiritual food! Let me put it this way- The Word of God is to our spirit what meat, milk, potatoes, and green beans are to our physical bodies. So, you could say that the Word of God is the only real "**soul food**."

Let me give you a few Scriptures that further verify that God's Word is food for our spirit...

1. **1 Peter 2:2**- *"as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby."*
2. **Jeremiah 15:16**- *"Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."*
3. **Job 23:12**- *"I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."*
4. **Matthew 4:4**- *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."*

So, through these verses we can see how the Word of God is likened to “food” but notice again what Paul specifically told Timothy will “nourish” us in the Word of God... It is constantly indulging our spirits “in the words of faith and of the good doctrine.”

Let’s look at what Paul mentioned first- “the words of faith.” This would be better translated “the words of the faith” because there is a definite article in front of the word “faith” in the original text. “What’s the difference?” someone might ask. Well, while “faith” by itself would be referring to the subject of “faith” alone, “the faith” refers to the Christian faith altogether. And “the faith” can be summed up best as the belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel of the kingdom of God. So what Paul was basically describing here was being constantly nourished in the teachings of the New Testament.

Then the second thing that Paul said would nourish us is- “the good doctrine.”

The word “good” means “what is right and correct” and the word “doctrine” simply means “teaching.” So “good doctrine” literally means “correct and right teaching.”

So according to Paul, there are two ways to get nourished through God’s Word:

1. Through the written Word of God (primarily the New Testament)
2. Through teaching of the Word of God that is good, correct and right.

Now I want to talk a little further about these words “good doctrine” for a moment.

You see, we can hear teaching of the Word of God and not necessarily be nourished. The reasons can be similar to the reasons we aren’t nourished in the natural. Like for instance, one reason can be how it is prepared. That is how preachers put together their messages. Like it is in the natural, if our spiritual food is not prepared well, it won’t taste too good. Saints, some preachers need to learn how to cook! Another example could be what it is served with. For example, if a preacher always puts a little condemnation in with the Word of God then it won’t be too tasty.

Then, on the other hand, some preachers only serve up desserts. **2 Timothy 4:3** says, “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers.*” The word for “sound” is the same Greek word that is translated “health” in 3 John 2. So, these believers that Paul describes in 2 Timothy 4:3 are like little kids who only want to eat the “sweets.” They only want to hear the preachers that will give them what they want to hear and what makes their flesh comfortable. I call these kinds of sermons- “cotton candy sermons.” That’s because they might seem grand and great, they might even be colorful, and they might make people swing from the chandeliers from a temporary “sugar high,” but there is no substance or nourishment in their words.

I have heard it said that it would be great if teaching tapes, Christian books, and even preachers themselves would have nutrition labels attached to them. Just think about it- what if there were these labels that said things like, “10 grams of faith, 60% hype, 2 grams of filler, 100% love, 2,000 milligrams of grace, etc.”? Although this is not possible, there is one thing you can be assured of: The Word of God in itself has no added preservatives and no artificial additives.

You see, that's why "the words of the faith" was mentioned first because the first and foremost way we are to be nourished is straight from the Word of God itself. Yes, while we all need to listen to good doctrine (i.e. correct teaching), and God gave the Body of Christ these teachers for the purpose of nourishing us, they are not to be a substitute for our personal time in "the words of the faith." We are not supposed to completely live off "vitamin supplements" and I can assure you all teaching tapes, Christian books, and preachers have at least a little bit of preservatives and artificial additives contained in them. The key is found in the word "balance"- add some good teaching together with your personal study time in God's Word.

So, make sure to make time to nourish your spirit through the Word of God. Take some time to get quiet, pull out your Bible and feed on some "Matthew" and then have "Philippians" for dessert. This is how we become spiritually nourished.

EXERCISING YOUR SPIRIT

Let's now move on to the second element to keeping spiritually fit- exercise...

Notice that Paul moves into this subject of spiritual exercise in **1 Timothy 4:7-8**... He went on to say, *"...and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."* In this passage of Scripture, Paul makes a comparison between exercising physically and exercising spiritually.

Now I want to make a quick point about what Paul did not say here. He did not say that physical exercise is non-important and it profits nothing. The point he was making was that, in comparison to the exercise and condition of our inner-man, the exercise and condition of our outer-man profits little. In other words, our spiritual well-being is by far more important than our physical well-being.

So how do we exercise ourselves towards godliness? The same way we exercise ourselves physically, of course! You see, our spirit is complete with nothing missing and nothing broken. It is born (again) with all that it will ever need like a baby is born with every bone, muscle, and organ that it will ever need, but there is a growth and development that needs to take place. And this growth and development is accomplished number one, through grace. You see, we do not know why the body grows and changes like it does. This is a product of the grace of God working in us. But in order for the body to reach its full potential, exercise must accompany that grace.

Early in my Christian life I was on a fast and the Lord asked me a question. He asked me- "Do you want to know what the muscles of your spirit are?" Of course, I said "yes!" Then He told me that our spiritual muscles are the fruit of the Spirit.

You see, our fruit is the indication of how strong and in-shape we are spiritually. And after He gave me the answer to His question, He gave me the Scripture "you will know them by their fruit." You see, just as we can recognize people by their physical shape, we can recognize the godliness of people by their spiritual fruit.

So how do we exercise these spiritual muscles that we have? The answer is- the same way we exercise the physical muscles we have- through using them! **Hebrews 5:14** verifies this by saying, *"But solid food belongs to those who are of full age (i.e. grown up), that is, those who by reason of use*

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have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Notice that it is by doing what we hear that we are exercising ourselves.

Now we know that we can exercise with no weights at all, but the best way to develop our physical muscles is through weight training. It is no different in our spiritual exercise either. But what are the spiritual weights? They are the adverse circumstances that come into our lives. Let me explain...

When we have trials and tribulations come into our lives, aren't those the hardest times to walk in peace, love, patience, and faith? Of course, they are! It is easy to love people when there are no enemies coming against you. It is easy to have peace when there are no waves of life crashing against your boat. It is easy to have faith in God when you are not walking through a trial of your faith. You see, it is easy to walk in the fruit of the Spirit when your fruit is not being squeezed, but this is the real test to find out what your fruit is made of. It has been well said that **you will find out what your fruit is made of when it gets squeezed.**

But, you see, we should actually view these weights (i.e. trials and tribulations) as opportunities and not just as obstacles. The reason is because they are opportunities to exercise our spiritual muscles. As a matter of fact, the word "tribulation" that is used oftentimes in the Bible literally describes a heavy, tight, and pressure situation. You see, these "tribulations" are our spiritual weights! When these circumstances come up that tempt us to become unloving, impatient, or not so joyful, this is when we should make the most of the opportunity and resist those temptations- thus exercising ourselves to develop the love, patience, and joy on the inside of us.

I guarantee you that, just as it is with natural exercise, when you start off "lifting those spiritual weights" it will be hard at the beginning, but if you keep at it those spiritual muscles will begin to develop and it will become easier as you resist those temptations.

So, in short, use those weights the enemy deals you and don't become bitter, become better! Exercise yourself towards growing in godliness! Amen!

So, in conclusion, if we are going to run our race with endurance, we need the same two things that we need to run a natural race- nourishment & exercise. Yes, we must regularly feed our spirits God's Word- nourishing our inner man with the words of the faith and good, solid teaching. And, yes, we need to then exercise our spirit by being doers of the Word that we are feeding on. Consistently doing these two things will cause us to become and stay spiritually fit! Amen?

I hope that you were blessed by this teaching this month, and if so, I encourage you to respond to it by either physically writing us or emailing us at the addresses listed on the bottom of these pages. We would love to receive your feedback and it would be very encouraging to us to hear from you. Thank you very much for your time!

Till next month... Maranatha!!!

Victoriously,

