

Dearly Beloved of God,

A Happy and Blessed Thanksgiving to all, from our house to yours.

I have a little Thanksgiving observation for you. If you like it, pass it on. If you don't, I'm sure you know how to use the delete key. Thank God for the delete key!

Yesterday I was at the club where I try to play tennis a couple times a week. Those of you who think I might overdo the tennis-life allegories, hold on; this has nothing to do with tennis. I was on my way out of the locker room, and as I was stuffing the last bit of gear in my bag, I overheard this conversation. I'll call them Guy #1 and Guy #2, and give you a brief description of them, followed by my recollection of their conversation.

Guy #1, about 28 years old and about 5'11. maybe 235 pounds; 6 months ago he weighed about 315 pounds.

Guy #2, about 50 years old and about 5'10, maybe 155 pounds - looks like he has been trim all his life (probably has a 120MPH metabolism).

Here's the conversation.

Guy #2 "Hey, you're really making great progress."

Guy #1 "Yeah. I've lost about 80 pounds, and my blood pressure's dropped about 40 points to 130/80.

Guy #2 "Have you hit your target threshold yet?"

Guy #1 "Not yet, but I'm getting close. Another 15-20 pounds should do it. The weight comes off a little slower now.

Guy #2 " That's the way it usually is. Are you still using the personal trainer?"

Guy #1 "Yeah, but only every fourth or fifth workout now. I think I could do the routine in my sleep."

Guy #2 "It's great when you have a good trainer. They know how to push you, but not too fast. They help keep you disciplined."

Guy #1 "That's true, but I pretty much know what I'm doing now. I think I'll quit with the trainer in another week or two."

Guy #2 "I wouldn't recommend that. Even after you hit your threshold, I would keep the trainer. Maybe not for every workout, but pay to have him monitor you and even go through 1-2 workouts with you every month. Paying for the trainer keeps you motivated. It gives you

incentive. Otherwise, you'd be amazed how quickly you can lose everything you've gained, without even trying.

At that time I was packed and on my way out the door. But I had heard enough. Immediately I began thinking about another type of training. God speaks about it through a letter written by the aged and experienced Apostle Paul to a young (30-40) man named Timothy.

1 Timothy 4:8 (NIV)

8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

To train in godliness you must have a starting point in godliness. Just like physical training - if you are going to do it, you must have a physical part to your being. Well, the Bible tells us that we all start off in life with no godliness in us. There is no righteousness in us and we are spiritually dead in our sins. Here are just a couple of verses on that.

Romans 3:23 (NIV)

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Ephesians 2:1-3 (NIV)

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

The next few verses of Ephesians tell us that it was God who made us come alive spiritually through what Jesus did and our faith response to it, imparting godliness to us.

Ephesians 2:4-6 (NIV)

4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,

5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.

6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

Now it is our responsibility to train in godliness. Any time we think we can do this on our own, without the help of a trainer (in this case, the Holy Spirit) we are fooling ourselves. The Holy Spirit motivates us and empowers us in the things of God. We can never lose the weight of guilt, worldliness, shame, bad habits, etc. without Him.

Philippians 2:12b-13 (TEV)

..... Keep on working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation,

13 because God is always at work in you to make you willing and able to obey his own purpose.

Let us all be thankful that God the Father, through the completed work of Jesus (God the Son) has made us capable of being spiritual/godly in the first place, and that through the work and abiding presence of God the Holy Spirit (like a good trainer) motivates us and enables us to grow

in godliness. If you're going through a rough spell, a test or a trial, it just may be your trainer adding another 5lb weight to the bar. Do you hear Him saying, "You can do it. I'm right hear."

Yours for His Purposes,

Pastor Les & Barb