

WIN WITH GOD

(The Christ Centered Life)

Sunday, July 26, 2015, 9th Sunday after Pentecost, 1 Chronicles 4:9-10; John 14:25-27

Steve Gidley

GREETINGS...in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to the members, friends and visitors of the Wilton Congregational Church; This is the day the Lord has made...Let us rejoice and be glad in it...

I am Steve Gidley, and I also welcome you and am grateful to God for this time we share together today.

One day like me you might find yourself standing in a pulpit preaching a sermon and ask yourself:

“Lord how did I get here?”

Well...let me tell you the answer to that question. Last Sunday as Ken was preaching, I played in the Lake club tennis doubles finals and while I had my heart set on winning a championship title that had alluded me for my (25) years as a club member. I didn't win but it was a very close match as I lost 4-6, 4-6 to a younger better team.

I came home feeling a little let down and thoroughly drenched in sweat from the 90 degree heat wave and checked my email and low and behold opened an email from peter Kirchof which read:

Steve, any interest in preaching on July 26th? Of course, Pete, I replied, if you need me to I will. He answered, “That would be awesome” and here I am today.

My sermon topic is “Win with God” and “The Christ Centered Life”. I chose this theme because God always has better things in store for us than we could have planned ourselves.

After losing in the Club championship God, and Peter, awarded me a preaching engagement, so I Won!

In this morning's Old Testament lesson we heard about a man who lived 2,500 years ago who asked God to reward him with prosperity and keep him from all evil. Because Jabez was faithful to God the Lord did as Jabez asked and multiplied his land holdings and influence in that day. Jabez a God fearing Israelite Won with God.

Our New Testament lesson from The Gospel of John tells us God is always with us in the person of "The Holy spirit" which also indwells each of us and constantly guides us in our thoughts and actions. The Christ centered life is a spiritually centered life which relies upon Biblical Scriptures and the Teachings of Jesus to honor God by obeying the Ten Commandments. However, if we sin in our flesh, as we sometimes do, we repent of our sins and amend our ways and Christ forgives us.

In Romans 7 Paul says: "For I don't do the good I want to do but instead do the evil I do not want to do". Paul goes on to say: "So find this to be a principle when I want to do what is good, evil is right there with me for I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my body a different principle waging war with the law in my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which exists in my body. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from the body that is infected by death? Thank God through Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, because with my mind I myself can serve the law of God even while with my human nature I serve the law of sin.

Romans 7:21-25

Christ is pure light - it is His light that shines in us and we are His ambassadors to the world. If there were no Christ there would be no light in the world. The world would be an utterly dark place devoid of any light and all life would cease to exist. It is Christ's light that lights the world.

The Holy Spirit inspires us, instructs us, and corrects us in our consciences when temptation arises or we veer off the path of righteousness. The reason we know right from wrong is because it is written on our hearts by the author of life Christ our Lord and Savior, and it is His Spirit that we follow.

You see Christ enlightens us through His Holy Spirit which resides within us. It is Christ we seek after because The Holy Spirit beckons us to come forward...In him is life and He is in us and we are in him. As Paul says, "if we live we live to Him and if we die we die to Him." Christ is everything to everyone. He is one with God the father. The alpha and the omega. ..The Great "I am".

My dear friends, In Him is eternal life. Freedom from bondage to sin...Yes, we have been set free. Christ has opened the door to paradise and called each one of us by our name to join Him as coheirs to the Kingdom of God!

Let me repeat that incredible reality: By our birthright we are inheritors, co-heirs, with Jesus Christ The Risen Son of God to all things good on earth and in Heaven!

This covenant God made with His people is so utterly astonishing that at first it seems unbelievable...never the less, brothers and sisters, IT IS TRUE!

In wonder and amazement I still ask myself: Why me? Why you? How did we receive this awesome gift? Let me explain: God has a salvation plan and it includes you and me.

God so loved the world, that He sacrificed His only son, Jesus Christ, as ransom for our sins. Then God raised Jesus from the dead and when he ascended to Heaven God sent the Holy Spirit not as a substitute but as the real thing; the Holy Spirit connects us to God and God empowers and sustains us through the Holy Spirit to live Christ centered spiritual lives.

Christ through his suffering and death on the cross atoned for our sins...all of our sins...are forgiven. Every past, present and future sin that the believer will ever commit is pardoned. Christ is the Propitiation for Sin. Sin is paid for in full forever. Every one of us is free to be found blameless at the throne of God on the last day...What a miracle!!!

Let's go back to Jabez for a moment. In 2005 (5) years after Bruce Wilkinson wrote the 2000 New York Times best seller book, "The Prayer of Jabez" I had occasion to attend a New Canaan Society's Christian gathering at Jim Lane's home on Rosebrook Road in New Canaan which featured Bruce Wilkinson.

After Bruce's incredible talk regarding how each of us can follow Jabez's example and pray to God for His assistance not only with our problems but also with our requests for security and prosperity, I asked Bruce if I could meet with him afterward and he agreed. I presented him with a dilemma I have had which some of you may be familiar with and that was my struggle to always do the next right thing. I told Bruce sometimes I just want instant gratification even if I know in my heart it isn't right for me and God would not approve. That in the past I had veered from the path of righteousness and erred in my ways...therefore, I asked Bruce what can I do when these temptations arise?

Bruce asked me if when such a temptation arose could I defer seeking the gratification...I have meditated for years on what I heard Bruce say and come to believe, for me and perhaps for many of you, this is a real practical answer to the dilemma that the flesh is weak but the spirit is strong...To defer gratification each time temptation arises means to consciously deny doing something that is bad or wrong in favor of doing God's will and creating a brighter future. The Bible tells us that we must deny ourselves and die in the flesh in order to experience the resurrection to eternal life. By practicing the art of self-denial we live to honor God and thus lead Christ Centered lives. This means we Win with God because God *cannot* lose. May this great reality come true for each and every one of us!!! Amen.

Benediction

Let your light so shine before the world that there can be no doubt...that we are all children of Lord God Almighty, walk with the King today and be a blessing!!!