

BACK TO THE BASICS OF FAITH

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When the Honeymoon Is Over

When we are young in the Word, a spiritual infant, it's just like getting married. We're so excited that we've found the Lord that we just want to tell everyone we see about our new love. It's a time when we witness some of the most miraculous and exciting spiritual experiences. This time in a believer's life is often referred to as the "*Honeymoon Phase*". I always tell folk that God absolutely spoiled me during my honeymoon phase. I had miracles popping up all over the place. I thought "*Boy, this spiritual thang is the business! If my life keeps going like this, the sky is the limit!*"

In order to gain a clearer perspective of this period in our spirituality, we need to visit Ephesians 1:3-6 (The Message):

³⁻⁶How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son.

The King James Version of Ephesians 1:5 says that God "*predestinated us*". He handpicked us out before the foundation of the world. This is huge—too huge to soak in all at once. When most of us ponder this piece of dynamic truth, we envision that God orchestrates every move we make so that our individual lives are mapped out like a blueprint. No, that isn't it at all; it isn't what Ephesians 1 is telling us. If that were the case, if God moves us about like puppets, there would be no need for His Word. If He would cause our lives to unfold according to a specified script, His son would never have had to die. We wouldn't need the gift of the Holy Spirit as an inner guide, because we would never venture off the path that God had predestined us to travel.

God is a God of order. He does not predestinate chaos. God is perfect! And He is the Giver of Good and Perfect Gifts.

God is perfect. His gifts are perfect, and His law is perfect. Everything about Him and everything that comes from Him is perfect. Imperfection and problems don't enter the picture until we humans begin to tamper with the gifts of God.

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He gave us His Word, the example of His son, Jesus Christ, and He also gave us the indwelling Holy Spirit. He gave us these tremendous gifts to perfect us. 1 John 2:5 says *"But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him."* God has given us everything we need; therefore, we are fully equipped to perfectly follow the path of righteousness, but that is a choice. We are predestined to follow the path, but destiny is a peculiar thing, she doesn't care how you reach her, just as long as you get there.

You and I can take the hard road or we can perfectly follow the path. The choice is ours. We all have the extraordinary gift of free-will, and we have received all the wonderful privileges that accompany those rights. God will not make us follow His Word. He will not make us step into the path of His infinite overflow. It is our choice to follow after His righteousness and enjoy the rewards of doing so.

As we look in the Old Testament, we can witness how this gift of free-will was sometimes exercised rather poorly. Examine the children of Israel, they vacillated back and forth—sometimes standing on the Word—sometimes far from it. Just like us, they often rebelled against God and wanted autonomy. They wanted to operate independent of God's laws. We know from the Word of God that the Children of Israel were God's chosen people. They were predestined to be His chosen people not because He loved them more than anyone else, but because Jesus Christ would be born of their lineage.

Deuteronomy 26:18,19 (KJV)

¹⁸And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments;

¹⁹And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.

God called the children of Israel His peculiar people. He loved them very much, as much as He loves us, and yet their behavior caused them to experience many tremendous hardships. God did not want them to endure slavery. God did not want them to be in the wilderness forty years. He did not want them to experience any hardship. He told them, *"I've chosen you to be my special people and I've commanded you to obey my decrees and regulations, and I want you to do so wholeheartedly. By walking according to my ways, by obeying the decrees, commands, and regulations that I've set forth, I promise that I'll place you high above all the other nations and you'll receive praise and honor, and be very popular."* He predestined them to be His called-out ones, but He didn't predestine the chaos they experienced. If they had followed the Word, the difficulty they experienced could have been avoided.

When we're young in the Word and taking baby steps to walk on God's Word, there are a host of His angels to help us sturdy our steps. Psalms 91:11-13 (The Message) says *"He ordered his angels to guard you wherever you go. If you stumble, they'll catch you; their job is to keep you*

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from falling. You'll walk unharmed among lions and snakes, and kick young lions and serpents from the path." As we develop and cut our teeth on the Word, the angels who are charged with our care are released to move on to the next baby in Christ. God expects us to walk by faith and stand on our own two feet. He expects us to learn to be strong in the power of His might as it says in Ephesians 6:10.

Yes, the Honeymoon Phase is marked by a bevy of wondrous supernatural activity, but there's a more rewarding phase to come. The best part of our spiritual walk is when the honeymoon is over. It's when we become so spiritually mature that we are able to usher in a new dimension of blessings and wisdom by manifesting a mature faith in God. What's required to usher in this new dimension? Faith! Galatians 3:24-26 (The Message) says " ²³⁻²⁴*Until the time when we were mature enough to respond freely in faith to the living God, we were carefully surrounded and protected by the Mosaic law. The law was like those Greek tutors, with which you are familiar, who escort children to school and protect them from danger or distraction, making sure the children will really get to the place they set out for. ²⁵⁻²⁷But now you have arrived at your destination: By faith in Christ you are in direct relationship with God. Your baptism in Christ was not just washing you up for a fresh start. It also involved dressing you in an adult faith wardrobe—Christ's life, the fulfillment of God's original promise."*

Understand that you've got some place to be; you have a destination and it is the place where you employ the power of Christ within to set miracles in motion. Don't whine and complain to go back to an infant's stage of believing. Don't complain about being in the wilderness. Put on the mind of Christ and come out of it. Stand strong in His power and view your circumstances with a heavenly view. When you do—you'll realize that a bridal gown is good for one day, but an *adult faith wardrobe* will last an eternity.

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