



Meaning

Last in a Series

For from Him and
through Him and to Him
are all things. To Him be
the glory forever. Amen.

Romans 11:36

The process of taking God seriously is not a philosophical exercise. God is not a theory to be debated, but a person to whom one gives one's life. This is the point the apostle Paul tried to make with the learned men of Athens gathered on Mars Hill. These philosophers whiled away the hours listening to and debating new and strange ideas, so when some of them heard Paul "preaching Jesus and the resurrection," they invited him to speak to their group.

Paul, standing before them and surrounded by statues of pagan gods, used the opportunity to describe to them the existence and nature of the one *true* God.

"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'"

Acts 17:24-28 ESV

God—and by that I mean the full-

ness of the divine Godhead: Father, Son and Spirit—is not just real, but unique, personal, intimate, involved. Since the very genesis of man, when He sunk His own hands into the mud of Eden to shape and fashion Adam, God has been intimately involved in the earthly lives of His chosen people.

In return, He commands—yes, *commands*—that those who call upon His name be involved intimately in *His* life. Far too many Christians consider their faith to be in the same category as playing golf, or eating at a nice restaurant, or visiting the grandkids: something one does regularly, but not every day. Most of us do not live on the golf course; most of us do not eat every meal at an expensive restaurant; and most of us, no matter how much we love them, do not live every day with our grandkids.

But God expects more. He expects His children to live *with* Him, to live *in* Him. Life in Christ is not a sterile philosophical discussion bandied about by pointy-head intellectuals, but a top to bottom, inside and out life-change: "In Him we live and move and have our being."



The morality and ethics of the culture in which we now dwell are soft and pliable—and grossly unserious. Nothing means anything, while anything goes. It is a plastic world: cheap, brittle, easily broken and easily thrown away. The more modern man strives to bring meaning to life, the less life means.

If everything is anything, then nothing means anything.

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity." All things are wearisome; Man is not able to tell it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor is the ear filled with hearing. *Ecclesiastes 1:1-2, 8*

The Christian who does not take God seriously falls prey to the emptiness and futility of this existence. Even as he claims his faith, he drifts inexorably away from it. One reason God expects more than this from His children is that He knows that every moment we are not living with Him, our faith is being eroded by the fallen culture in which we dwell. In time the believer's faith becomes as plastic and brittle and meaningless as the sulfurous world in which he dwells.

This world will never reinforce our faith; it will only undermine it.

The Christian who daily, earnestly takes God seriously, does not live this way. In a plastic world built on shifting sand, he stands on a rock. He unapologetically embraces words and concepts, morality and ethics that the world finds abhorrent. Most of all he embraces *faith*. This fortitude does not come from flesh, from self, but from his time spent with God: from his knowledge of God's word, from the mystical union of his spirit to the Holy Spirit living within, and from the rock—his obedience to the Lord—on which he stands.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

Matthew 7:24-27



Our modern culture is one built on a foundation of excuses. Those who do not behave as they should are always ready with a handy rationalization to excuse away their failure. *I was having a bad day. It's too hot. It's too cold. My boss yelled at me. My alarm didn't go off. It's not my fault!* When Christians are unserious about their walk with the Lord, they too can try to excuse away their failures, their sin. *Everybody does it. It's different for men; they have these natural needs. I'm too busy for that. God doesn't understand the pressures of this modern world. I live under grace; Jesus will love me anyway.*

For Christians who are taking God seriously, there are no longer any excuses. Failure means we have sinned, and sin must be confessed to our Lord. Beyond just taking responsibility for our errant behavior, even when we do what is right and things go well we do *not* take the credit. The glory, the praise, the credit always go to Him—the One who purchased us at the cross.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Galatians 2:20

For Christians who are taking God seriously, His written word is the road map for their life. There is no argument with it, no negotiation, no excuses. He said it, and that's that. He is the Master and we are the slaves.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

For Christians who are taking God seriously, there is no space, no line of demarcation between earthly life and spiritual life. For they know that "life in Christ" means literally that: their lives have been subsumed into His, and His life has moved into theirs. They are truly *in* Christ. Thus for them there is no longer secular and spiritual.

All is now spiritual.

Epilogue

Many Christians do not take God seriously in the here and now because they are waiting to get serious once they cross the threshold of heaven. But that is not at all the Biblical picture of a believer's walk of faith.

Jesus, in His own words, described an intimate, in-depth relationship with His followers that takes place *right now*. In a prayer to His father just moments before His betrayal and arrest, Jesus said,

"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."

John 17:20-21

Notice the time frame: "...that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." This is not speaking of being unified with the Godhead in some vague future date after death. *The only way the world would be witness to it is if it occurred in the here and now.*

Jesus speaks of His desire that all of His followers would live "in Us"—that is, the fullness of the Godhead.

Father God, His Son, and His Spirit earnestly, passionately want us to take them seriously. But just what does that mean? What does it look like in a practical, common-sense way?

As this introductory series now draws to a close, in our next issue we will begin looking at what it means to put this into practice—how each one of us can live our life in Christ to the full, by taking God seriously.

