

Roger Simpson, How to get going in the Christian life ? And Keep going !  
Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2023

## INTRODUCTION.

1 In the afternoons we like to go cycling. Ursula gets the map out and plans our route. It's very important that we start on the right road. We take a flask of tea to drink on our journey. So we make careful preparations before we go. It doesn't matter whether the journey is a short, one or a long one

2 Christian life is like that. We have to make sure we start in the right way and that we continue in the way that we started. When Jesus Christ calls us to follow him. It's not just for a year or two. It's for our whole life. And then on into eternity. So what is the right way to start ?

A HOW TO GET GOING IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE Matthew 22 v1-14 )

1 Jesus is in the temple courts. He has been speaking to them in parables. He tells them another story.

THE STORY OF THE WEDDING BANQUET. It's a well known story.

a there is a GENEROUS king. He is going to give a marriage feast for his son. So the king sends out his servants to tell them that the moment has arrived, and that they should come. In the culture of the day Two invitations were expected when a banquet was being given.

b first invitation was to ask the guests to attend. The second invitation announced that all was ready. ( bit like cooking a meal at dinner time I usually tell everyone twice ! ) In this story Jesus tells us that the guests were invited three times.( v3,4,8) And each time they reject his invitation. In Lukes account of the of the parable, they give various reasons as to why they can't come.( one has just bought a field, another has just bought some oxen and another has just got married. Different reasons. The important thing is that the timing is INCONVENIENT for them.

c in fact, they not only refuse the invitation. But they seized the Kings servants. They'll treat them and kill them. So the king sent his army and destroyed the city. The king says to his servants go out to street corners , and invite all the people they could find. The bad as well as the good and soon the wedding hall is filled with guests.

d it was the custom for the wedding guests to be given SPECIAL GARMENTS to wear at the banquet . ( I remember once being invited with Ursula to the Ascot Races . We were even given places in the Royal enclosure. The ladies had to wear hats and the men top hats with tails! We did not dare to go to the Royal Enclosure without these !! I was lent a top hat and tails to go !)

e the feast was provided FREE By the generous king. For the wedding of his son. Not only did he invite everyone to it. But he provided beautiful ROBES for them all to wear. In this way the poor people, were not ashamed of their RAGS. And the Rich people had no right to be PROUD of their fine clothes ( smart dinner jackets and Ball gowns ) . Everyone who came arrived on the SAME LEVEL. So there was no room for EMBARRASSMENT and No room for PRIDE.

f But there was one man , who pushes his way into the feast without any of the wedding clothes that the king had provided. Of course, he stood out like a sore thumb.( have you ever been to an event and worn the wrong clothes ! ) the king noticed him as soon as he came into the room ' Friend ' he said ' how did you get in here without any wedding clothes

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g there was no answer to that question. And the man was thrown out into the darkness,, with his feet and hands tied. “ where there will be ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ No way out

WHAT IS JESUS SAYING HERE ?

### 1. DON'T MISS THE INVITATION.

it's easy to turn down the invitation. I've seen many do that. We can all make excuses. Work responsibilities, family duties, financial needs. But Gods invitation is the most important event in our lives. No matter how INCONVENIENT it is for us. Are you making excuses to avoid Gods call on your life ? Jesus reminds us here that the time will come when GOD will cancel his invitation and OFFER it to OTHERS. Then it will be too late to get into the BANQUET.

### 2 DON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE

What was the mistake the man made ? He thought wrongly that his BEST was good enough for GOD ‘ I've tried my hardest to lead a good life' I'm a good person, I haven't harmed anyone in my life” “ I've said my prayers. I've gone to church. I've given my money to charity” I've done my BEST.

But GOD says your best is not good enough. Imagine at the end of your life. You stand before God and all your friends and family. All the people who have know you in your life. Your life , thoughts words and actions are put up on a big screen. How would you feel.

Isaiah the prophet said this to Gods people (740 years before Christ ) “ all of us have become like one who is unclean. All are righteous sex are as FILTHY RAGS.” But then he wrote this. ‘ my delight greatly in the Lord. I saw rejoices in my God. Four he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, and closed me in a row of righteousness.” CS Lewis. ‘Forgiveness is like a tape recording of your life, wiped clean’

God has provided the feast of the kingdom. It is the wedding feast for his son. If you think you can get own by relying on your own efforts, your own life, you will be thrown out. He has provided for us his forgiveness.( his robe.). Many are invited, but few by their response show that they are chosen.

B HOW TO KEEP GOING IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. ( Philippians 4v1-9).

How are we going to keep going in the Christ Life. Something I learnt many years ago. “We continue in the Christian Faith in the same way that we started. How did we start ? BY GRACE. how do we continue ? BY GRACE.

Paul in his letter gives us three keys in these verses. ( Philippians 4v1-9)

### 1 STAY UNITED. v1-3

There were a couple who had fallen out. Euodia and Syntyche (‘odious and soon touchy’) ! Powerful ladies. Possibly friends of Lydia ( the business woman) Paul urges them to make up and forgive one another. You will find very quickly that there are people within the church who are you don't get on with! But we need to forgive each other. Be reconciled. That way we can stand firm. It's really important to stay united

## 2 STAY CLOSE TO JESUS CHRIST v 4-7 read

16 times in this letter Paul tells them to REJOICE! But how can we rejoice when bad things happen to us? The clue is in the next three words.' IN THE LORD.' Whatever is happening in our life. We can always rejoice in the lord stop he's always faithful, always present. ( notice v 5. The Lord is near ) He is always loving. So look up to Jesus Christ. Don't look down.

## 3 STAY FOCUSED(v8) read.

There is a saying "sow a thought, reap an action, sow an action reap a character. Sow a character. Reap a destiny" that is why the apostle Paul wants us to set our minds on the right things. We need to think about those things which are noble ,true., right, pure, lovely, admirable, praiseworthy. Let me give you a little clue.

What goes on in our mind comes to us through our eyes, our hands and our feet. That is why we have to guard the gates to our minds. Jesus said "if your eye causes you to sin cut it out , if your hand causes you to sin cut it off. If your foot causes you to sin chop it off." What does he mean? " it is better, he says to enter heaven, maimed them to be thrown into hell with both eyes, both feet and both hands."

He means this. If by looking at something it's going to cause me to sin. DON'T LOOK. If by touching something, it's going to cause me to sun DON'T TOUCH and if by going somewhere, it's going to cause me to in DON'T GO!

## CONCLUSION

let us pray.

1 have you started on the Christian life? Is there someone that you know who would like to start on the Christian life? Could you invite them to Alpha? Have you realised that it's all by Grace? It's not dependent upon your own efforts.

2 are you continuing in the right way? By Grace. Are you united with your family and friends? Is there someone you need to forgive? Is there someone you need to ask for forgiveness from you? Praying regularly? Are you rejoicing in the Lord or are you grumbling a lot? Are you thinking about things that are pure and lovely, and worthy of praise? Or are you looking at things on the Internet but you know you shouldn't or engaging in gossip about someone. Lord give us your grace to stay focused, to stay close to you , stay united with people who are close to us.