

*Supporting Pastors by Ministering to Christians
in Need of Guidance and Deliverance*



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Dear APF Supporter:

Greetings!

Happy New Year! I hope that 2009 will be a good year for all of you.

Praises:

I praise God for a good Christmas season. My family was able to enjoy a number of fun family Christmas celebrations. One evening we spent driving through the Goshen area to look at the Christmas lights and decorations. The children enjoyed seeing the lights and the snow.

God gave us wonderful gifts through a secret Santa this year. It was quite a blessing for us to get presents from a mystery person or group! Thank you to whomever was involved.

Another praise is for the end of year giving that we received. The giving really helps for finances in 2009.

Something to Consider:

In the last month, God's goodness has become even clearer to me. The importance of remembering that God being at work is so much more important than what I do is apparent. Often in ministry work, not just ministry sessions, but organizational and business work as well, I put a tremendous amount of pressure on myself. I would think that success or failure sat squarely on my shoulders. God has been working with me to see that He is the One at work, and that even if I fail, He is still at work to make good out of any situation.

We'll begin by looking at Ephesians 2:6-10. *"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

In this passage, the Apostle Paul states that we are put in Christ and seated at God's right hand. This gift of salvation is just that: a gift. It is given to us when we accept Christ as our Savior. This position is not earned, but comes to us by God's grace. I believe this is a very freeing position. I don't have to attain a certain status or produce to a certain degree to earn God's love and His work in my life. Verse ten then makes clear that instead of earning a position, because we already are in Christ, we now are empowered to do good works for God.

Since God is the one who is empowering us to do the good works, He becomes central in any person's life for daily living, not just in a "ministry position." It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the world, and we are His instruments. Again, I see this as being very freeing and comforting because God is bigger than any mistake I make. We don't work to get to God's right hand, but do good work because we are already there!

Next, we turn to Galatians 5:1. *“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”*

When we get focused on our production in life for God, we can allow ourselves to be “yoked to slavery.” We can begin to believe that God has demands or standards that must be met for Him to accept us, to the point where grace seems irrelevant. Salvation may even be doubted. Even if salvation is not doubted, we can believe that our success is so dependent on what we do, that we become slaves to our work.

Success is God’s work in us as we faithfully serve Him. Making obedience our heart’s desire is what is important. If a person’s desire is to be obedient, the Holy Spirit can empower the person to do His will. What freedom this is! We have freedom to make mistakes because God is able to do more than what we can do. Romans 8:28, I believe, is what this is about. God takes mistakes and bad things and makes good of them.

In ministry, I could easily make it about what I do for people: learning truth, being healed, or being set free from demons. All my effort and work can never replace what the Holy Spirit does. He is really the One teaching the truth, healing the person, or setting the person free from demons. I must be obedient and be in tune to His direction. He knows exactly what each person needs in each situation. At times, I felt then that I was irrelevant, but that is simply not true. Each of us are necessary for God’s work to be done. My mentor, Dean Hochstetler used to say, “David had to sling the stone. God guided it to Goliath’s forehead.” David had to physically enter the battle, but it was God who defeated Goliath. Just as David entered the battle we need to “work for God” and allow Him to work through us. When it is about Him and His work and each person being faithful to Him, the burden is off of us. We are free to do His will in Him. We can produce the good fruits of the Spirit.

Prayer Concerns:

Please pray for continued growth of the ministry in 2009.

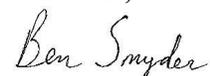
Please pray for me as I teach a class at Jefferson Brethren on Wednesday evenings, January through May 6.

Please pray for God’s working in getting the office building completed. I’ve often joked that it will take a miracle of God to get it done...so I’m asking for a miracle!

Final Thoughts:

In Numbers 13-14, God told the Israelites to invade the Promised Land with victory assured. He Himself would give them the victory. The people instead made the battle about themselves. They were afraid to enter in because the people there were too big and scary. After Moses’ rebuked them, the people tried to invade and failed because they did not have God’s blessing. How easy it is to question God and not do what He calls us to do. Just as the Israelites needed to physically invade the Promised Land (note that it was a promise of God to them, and they doubted), we need to do the work God has called us to do. In Matthew 28, Jesus tells us to spread the Gospel to the world, and He promised to always be with us. Let’s not be afraid of God’s promise. It is about His work, not us, and we get to enjoy the success!

In Christ,



Ben Snyder