

Understanding This Christian Thing in the Present Tense

Principle

1. God is always speaking – so the vital question is: Then why don't I always hear (or seemingly never hear) Him?

2. **This Christian Thing** always starts with God.

3. It always starts with frustration and dissatisfaction.

4. **This Christian Thing** only works when it is first priority!

Summary Thought

Yes, God speaks – the proof of that is the *Bible*. And He still speaks:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. Heb 1:1-2

Our responsibility then? To listen!

It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. . . Ro 9:15

Maybe the number one theme of the *Bible* is that God is sovereign – fully sovereign! **Understanding This Christian Thing** is solely a gift and grace of God – to try to understand it without His grace is futile and foolish.

Those who have something to lose typically see no purpose or reason for God – they are satisfied with themselves and are in love with the world!

God still speaks and any change starts with God and our resulting (caused by God's grace!) frustration and dissatisfaction.

To a large degree, what we can understand is a function of how we prioritize the various facets of our lives.

To **Understand This Christian Thing** (and to retain any understanding previously grasped) requires we have it in the God-ordained proper perspective and priority. If there is a single reason for so many people not **Understanding This Christian Thing** the reason would likely be traced to this cause – a failure to keep it in its proper (first priority) perspective.

Principle

5. It always starts with a miraculous and significant change.

6. True Christian understanding is always accompanied by visible and on-going signs.

7. We are always and only to be about God's "business."

- 8. Understanding This Christian Thing**
requires we know and have the Holy Spirit.

9. It is always and only maintained by great caution and care.

Summary Thought

It has been a consistent teaching of the Orthodox Church that a new birth is evidenced by and through a new life, a vital sign being hunger for God and His Grace and Truth as found in His Word.

"Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." Jn 3:21

For this to be true in our life requires we have God's on-going and daily grace.

Yes, our salvation begins with the very great gift of the forgiveness of our sins (based on the sacrifice of Christ), but the gospel work is not complete until we accept Jesus' grace required to do the good works which God prepared in advance for us to do. And this is a full-time, never-ending, job and blessing!

The Holy Spirit is God and is God's Interpreter – we never will, nor should expect to hear or understand God apart from the grace gift of The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes us from the base of the tower of Babel to the foot of the Cross – everything of God will be foolishness until we have God's Holy Spirit!

Three words should strike terror in the heart of any Christian:

David and Bathsheba.

We do not reach a point and then, without further work, maintain this level of achievement. And as we age we must do even more to grow! These principles are the same both physically and spiritually – we must be disciplined to both grow and maintain this growth and improvement.

Principle

10. It always and only grows through appropriate and increasing disciplines.

11. It always requires we return to the narrow and only way when we find ourselves on the broad road to destruction.

12. There will always be things we do not understand.

13. It's really this simple!

Summary Thought

Whoever loves discipline
loves knowledge.
but he who hates correction
is stupid. Pr 12:1

Disciplines are our friends, not punishment and our enemies! In fact, disciplines are necessary to keep us from being punished!

When we find ourselves in the position of “How did I get here again?” (which we will time and again) the answer is to “toggle” back to the discipline of grace versus self-reliance and self-righteousness – this is called repentance.

“The righteous will live by faith.”

To **Understand This Christian Thing** requires that we focus on what we do know, for the essence of real faith is believing someone without knowing everything.

Our past (“I am saved”) and future (“I am promised heaven when I die!”) grace from Jesus are incalculable. But the big link between these two great graces, almost the entire focus of the *Bible*, is the present tense. Our only bridge to Jesus’ future promise of grace is His present tense grace as outlined in the *Bible*.

Now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation. ^{2Co 6:1-2}

As the Holy Spirit says:

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts.” ^{Heb 3:7-8}