

Peter Mora - Baptismal Discourse

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Thank you, Brother Matt. Thank you, Brother Adam, for your prayer and good morning, brethren. I'd like to start by introducing our three candidates this morning. Would you sisters stand up and face them?

We have Sister Marisha Nemchik from the Vancouver, British Columbia Ecclesia, Sr. Kathy Lundy from the West Newton Ecclesia, and Sister Eileen Rogers, also from the West Newton Ecclesiastical. You may be seated.

By the way, if there's anyone else who would like to symbolize their consecration with water baptism today, please come to the front row at any time during this service. To the baptismal candidates, I want to ask this question. Have you lost your mind? Don't. Don't worry.

We will explain. You see, the question, have you lost your mind? Can have two different meanings. The first is, are you crazy? Do you know what you're getting into?

And in a way, someone in the world could be justified in asking you that question. After all, you are basically signing a lifetime contract to serve the Lord. But you don't get to read the fine print. You have no idea what experiences the Lord is going to put you through, and you are no longer supposed to strive for worldly pleasures and success.

To someone in the world and even family members who don't understand what it means to walk in the narrow way, this would seem crazy, right? Well, it turns out there was an example of this very reaction in the Bible, and it's found in Mark 3. 21. When his own family heard this, they went to take custody of him, for they were saying he is out of his mind. Who are they talking about?

Jesus. At the beginning of his ministry, even the highly revered religious leaders said he is possessed by Beelzebub. But did the criticisms bother Jesus? Of course not. Nor should you ever be bothered if or when you are criticized for your decision.

See, walking in the narrow way is very different from walking in the worldly way. We say this is the greatest decision you'll ever make and the hardest thing you'll ever do. You will go through the same experiences as the world. The pleasurable, the painful, the joyful, and the sad. But a major difference between you and the world is your attitude during your experiences.

You know, nothing will happen to you that is random or an accident. Every experience in your life matters, and all things work together for good. You know, one of the things that worried me when I was first thinking about consecration was wondering if I was worthy of running for the prize of the high calling. I mean, so many other people were much more deserving than me. But here's how it was explained to me, okay, if you ever watch tv, if you ever go to the movies, if you ever play golf, if you ever go to Disney World, then you don't deserve to be called.

But wait, there's more. If you're married, if you're single, if you're over 6ft tall, if you're under 6ft tall, if you're male, or if you're female, then you don't deserve to be called. In other words, none of us deserves to be called. It is grace. It is a gift from the Lord.

How do we know? 2nd Timothy 1:9 he has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according but according to his own purpose and grace, which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity. After all, what started your consecrated walk? Was it you? No.

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John 6:44 tells us, Our Heavenly Father first draws us not because we are special, but because otherwise we might be tempted to boast. I like the phrase he doesn't call us because we are special. We are special because he calls us. Now, when someone gives you a gift, what do you say? Well, first Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks okay, so this is talking about everything that happens to us that is fun, pleasurable and comfortable, right?

Now let's reread the scripture. Does it say, in everything that is fun, pleasurable and comfortable, give thanks? No. It says, in everything give thanks. Why?

Why should we give thanks even for the painful and difficult experiences? Because the second half of that same verse tells us why. It says, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. After all, what is the end result of going through painful and difficult experiences? Hebrews 12:11 tells us, for the moment, all discipline seems not to be pleasant but painful.

Yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness, and what does that fruit look like? Galatians 5:22 23 but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control.

By the way, what do you do to make a tree produce even more fruit? You prune it, and by the way, what does the Lord do to make us produce more fruit? John 15:2 tells us, he prunes it. Thankfully, we are not our own workmanship, we are his workmanship.

And by the time he is done with us, we will produce the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

When we go through difficult trials, I don't mean inconveniences, I mean difficult, painful, lengthy experiences, and then another trial gets added on top, and maybe even another one after that. What should we do? We must have faith. We must trust our Heavenly Father. But who wants us to be discouraged?

Who wants us to mistakenly think the Lord has left us and that we were never worthy of running for the prize of the high calling anyway? And why are we wasting everyone's time with a losing battle? To me, Apostle Peter answers that question best in first Peter 5. Eight, when he says, the adversary prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour, and then how does Apostle Peter tell us we should handle this?

Have faith. Let's read the very next verse. First Peter 5. 9 says, resist the adversary, standing firm in the faith. Because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

And it's very important to remember we are not standing alone in our trials. Who is with us? And what is the end result of our trials? Well, the very next verse tells us first Peter 5:10, and the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.

At the beginning of this service, we talked about how the phrase have you lost your mind? Can have two different meanings. The first meaning was, are you crazy? But the second meaning is a very important key to successfully walking in the narrow way. We lose our mind and our will by intentionally giving it up.

And what do we replace our own mind with? 1st Corinthians 2:16 but we have the mind of Christ.

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What does it mean to have the mind of Christ? Well, what was constantly on Jesus mind? One thing doing his Father's will, period. John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. My prayer for you, brethren, is that you eventually get to a point in your Christian walk where you are so focused and immovable that you can honestly say, I don't care what happens to me or around me, I will only do the will of the Lord.

Period. Now, having that attitude absolutely requires faith. But there's something else absolutely required, and you demonstrated it this morning by sitting here in the front row. Walking the narrow way requires courage. Were you feeling a bit anxious and vulnerable this morning when you arrived in the auditorium?

Probably. But you came up here anyway. Did the Lord help you have the courage? Well, you may or may not realize it yet, but the answer is yes, he did. So why are you getting baptized today?

We say baptism is an outward sign of something that has previously taken place within your heart. In other words, you've already offered yourself to the Lord and you desire to serve him by following in the footsteps of His Son Jesus, knowing if you're faithful unto death, then you will receive the crown of life and have the privilege of being resurrected as a member of the little flock. So where does that desire to follow Jesus come from? You might be tempted to think it was all your own idea, but to answer that question. In fact, to answer most of our questions, we should use the Bible.

John 6:44 tells us where the desire comes from, and this is the Amplified Bible. Jesus said, no one is able to come to me unless the Father who sent me attracts and draws him and gives him the desire to come to me.

And who does the Father draw? Well, we know from 1st Corinthians 1:26-28 that it's not the strongest, the smartest, the most righteous, but it is the weak, the lowly and the despised. Why doesn't the Lord call the best of the best 1st Corinthians 1:29 so that no one may boast before him.

Now let's ask this question. Is water baptism required if you want to meet with the Bible students? No. However, some Christian churches do require their members to get baptized, and that reminds me of a funny story.

This mother heard her five year old son talking in the kitchen and she wondered who he was talking to. Well, it turned out he was pretending he was a preacher and he was preaching to their cat.

Well, mom thought it was cute and she left and went about doing her chores. But later she heard the cat making quite a fuss so she went to see what was going on. The little boy was trying to baptize their cat in the kitchen sink full of water. Well, the mother told him that cats don't like water. The boy sharply replied, well, he should have thought about that before he joined my church.

You know, although we don't force those who are consecrated to get baptized, we absolutely do recommend it. That's because of what the Bible tells us. First, we know we're supposed to follow in Jesus footsteps. In Matthew 3:16, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. That was at the beginning of Jesus ministry on earth and at the very end of the Book of Matthew, after Jesus had been resurrected and appeared to the 11 remaining apostles, he says to them in Matthew 28:19, Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

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By the way, what does our baptism Represent. Well, let's read Romans 6:3. Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death? Okay, but what does that actually mean to us? In the next several verses, Apostle Paul tells us, now, unlike Jesus, we are all sinful because we are born in sin.

In fact, we are slaves to sin. How can someone be free from sin? Simple. They have to die. But let's explain how that applies to us by reading Romans 6, 6, 7, and 11.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Even so, consider yourselves now to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

By the way, can someone be called and baptized to something other than the little flock? No. Ephesians 4, 4 and 5 tell us there is only one body, one spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. Let's now give some practical advice on walking in the narrow way. Sisters, I'm going to start a sentence and I want you to finish it.

Here goes. Not my will be done, but thy will be done. What is the Lord's will? Well, let's think about the top two things our Heavenly Father wants us to do, and here's a hint.

They are not suggestions. They are commandments. The first one is found in Matthew 22:37, and it is considered the greatest and most important commandment. Jesus said, you must love the Lord your God with. With all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

And the second commandment is found in Matthew 22:39. You must love your neighbor as yourself, and to make sure we understand how important these two commandments are, Jesus tells us in the very next verse, Matthew 22:40. All the law and the prophets depend on these two commandments. In other words, everything in the Old Testament can be summed up by those two commandments.

But what about the New Testament? Do we have any new commandments in the New Testament? Yes. John 13:34. A new commandment.

I give you love one another as I have loved you so so you must love one another. Well, loving the brethren sounds pretty easy, right? But here's a lesson in Bible study. Sometimes there can be more to a scripture than what we initially read. For example, how far should a person be willing to go to show their love for their brethren?

John 15, 12, 13. My commandment is love each other As I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this. To lay down one's life for one's friends. That, brethren, is the ultimate sacrifice.

Our very lives. So let's go back to our first commandment. What does it mean to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind? A word we can use to describe that kind of love is worship. Well, what does that mean?

Well, there are folks that worship the Green Bay Packers. Their life revolves around that football team. They have memorized the players. They've memorized statistics. They've memorized highlights of past games in their home.

They have collected memorabilia so they can look at it on a regular basis. It brings them joy when they see their collections, and who do they like to hang out with? Other people who worship the

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Green Bay Packers. They feel a bond, a camaraderie with these people.

Do you know what gets in the way of them being able to worship the Green Bay packers full time? Typically, it's that they have a job, a family, and duties outside of football. But whenever they have free time, it is spent focusing on the Green Bay packers because that brings them joy and purpose. You could say they are fanatics now. Likewise, when we love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind, we too become fanatics.

Our life revolves around the Lord. We have memorized names of the characters in the Bible, their stories, the parables, the prophecies. We even memorize verses that have special meaning for us. Although we don't collect memorabilia, we do appreciate our Bibles, the different translations, reference books, devotionals, things that help us understand the Scriptures more clearly. Some of us may even have framed Scriptures on the wall.

And I know a few brethren that have a pillow or two on their sofa with a Scripture on it, and who do we like to hang out with? Others who love the Lord with all their heart, soul and mind, and do you know what gets in our way of being able to worship the Lord full time? Nothing.

That's because we are always in his service. Now, let's explain that by reading Colossians 3:23. Colossians 3:23. This is from the Amplified. Whatever your task may be, put in your very best effort as if it is something done for the Lord and not for men.

When I read that verse, I got excited because prior to reading that verse, I wondered, how could I ever do anything of great significance like the apostles or prophets did? But now I understand. We can be running a corporation or washing the dishes, and when we do our best with our responsibilities, whatever they are, on on that day that is pleasing to the Lord, that is doing his will, and that brings glory to the Lord. Jesus said to his father in John 17:4, I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do, and this brings us to another requirement.

Obey the Lord.

Jesus said in Luke 11:28, Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it.

You know what gets in our way of obeying the Lord and doing his will? Having a mind of our own. When we truly lose our minds and replace it with the mind of Christ, we will resist temptation.

How do we gain the mind of Christ, that wisdom that comes from above? Brethren, don't just read the Bible, study it, consume it. Make it a part of you.

How did Jesus counter the temptations from the adversary? He quoted Scripture. How can we counter the temptations from the adversary? The same way quoting scripture, second Timothy 3, 16 and 17 from the Phillips. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for resetting the direction of a man's life and training him in good living.

The Scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God and fit him fully for all branches of his work.

When Jesus came to earth and took on the form of a servant, he demonstrated our next requirement, humility. Sometimes people who are used to being smarter, stronger and more successful than others have difficulty being humble. But why is humility so important in the Christian walk? Because when we are humble, we are teachable. There is a lot to learn, so we

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must have the right attitude at the beginning.

And what is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge? The first part of Proverbs 17 says, the fear of the Lord or reverence and highest respect. That is the beginning of knowledge. Well, wouldn't everyone want knowledge from our Creator? No.

The second half of that verse tells us, who does not want says, fools despise wisdom and instruction, and that comes full circle to being teachable. At what point in your consecrated walk do you no longer have to be teachable? Never, and what is our best form of instruction?

The Word of God. The Bible. Now, a lot of people in the world have Bibles, but how do we gain understanding from the Lord? Through His Holy Spirit? See, the key is to stay close to the Lord all day long.

And we do that through prayer. If you want to measure someone's spiritual maturity, just look at what percentage of their waking hours are spent in communion with the Lord. Now, at the beginning of your consecrated walk, the percentage of time will be lower, naturally. So here's a recommendation on how to increase that, you only have to focus on three different times of the day. Number one, the beginning of the day when your head is still on the pillow and you first wake up.

Number two, the end of the day when your head is on the pillow and you're about to go to sleep, and number three, everything in between. Now, number one and number two are easy, but number three requires practice. As you're waking up in the morning, make it a point to say good morning, Lord. Thank him for the safe night of rest.

Pray that he blesses the day and guides the words you speak and the things you do, and if there's a specific issue going on in your life, talk to him about it. Also, pray that he overrules your decisions and your will because he knows best. Once you're out of bed, read something in the Bible that gives you at least one scripture to think about during the day. Some brethren like to read a psalm every morning.

Personally, I like to include reading the manna for the day, and anytime you make a decision, large or small, pray for the Lord's guidance. Now you might say, well, you don't need to ask the Lord which brand of toothpaste to buy, and that may be true, but maybe the Lord wants you to interact with someone at the store, and if so, pray that His Holy Spirit guides your words, even if it's only hi there or Good morning.

Another recommendation is to always watch for the hand of the Lord in your life. You may not always see it, but it is always there. After all, what percentage of the time is the Lord involved in your life? He is with you every breath you take, and the more you mature spiritually, the more often you will see his hand working in your life.

And that will increase your faith exponentially. At the end of the day, when your head is on the pillow and you're about to go to sleep, thank the Lord for the day for watching over you and keeping you close to Him. Also, ask forgiveness where you fell short, and pray if it's his will that you have another safe night of rest. Now, we talked about some things you should do, but now let's talk about some things you shouldn't do. We're all familiar with the list of seven things the Lord hates in Proverbs 6, 16:19 a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that creates wicked plans, feet that run swiftly to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one

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who spreads rumors among the brethren.

And here are three more that are very important, especially at the beginning of your Christian walk. Number one, don't judge others. God is the judge. Besides, you don't know everything that's going on in that other person's life. Number two, do not take part in class divisions.

And if you happen to be in a class that splits, don't let anyone force you to pick a side, and finally, don't worship any of the brethren. It's good to respect. It's good to appreciate, but never idolize.

Sisters, let's remember, everything temporal that is acceptable should still be in moderation. As we walk in the narrow way, remember we are being watched not only by the Lord, but we are a spectacle to angels and to men. So let's live a lifestyle that is always pleasing to the Lord.

Will the candidates for baptism please stand?

We want to ask three simple questions. Number one, do you recognize you were born in sin and are a member of of the fallen human race under Adam?

Two, do you recognize Jesus as the only means of salvation, and have you accepted him as your Savior?

Three, have you made a full and unreserved consecration to do the will of the Heavenly Father even unto death? Yes. Based on your answers, I'm going to come down to give you each a scripture and extend the right hand of fellowship. Would you walk a little closer to the center now?

Sister Eileen, the scripture I have for you. Reverence the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart. For consider how great things he hath done for you. 1st Samuel 12:24.

Sister Kathy, the scripture I have for you. Psalm 91:4. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust. His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Sister Marisha, the scripture I have for you is Colossians 3, 23 and 24. Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men. Knowing that of the Lord, ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance. For ye serve the Lord Christ.

But don't sit down yet.

I will now close this service by saying to the candidates the words from Numbers 6, 24, 26. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face toward you, give you peace.

Dear Heavenly Father, we are so thankful for this day for the privilege that we've had of sharing in the baptism process with our three new sisters. Father, we pray that you would keep them close to you. We pray that you would guide each of us to help them walk more closely to you in the narrow way. We pray forgiveness where we fall short. We pray that we may use this time in ways to bring honor and glory to your name.

We thank you for our brethren throughout the world. We do pray for the coming kingdom and we pray also for the immersion service. We pray all of this in Jesus name, Amen.