

May 28, 2019

Dear Brethren, Co-Workers and Friends,

The subject of sustainability is being used a lot when talking about saving natural resources or referring to business practices. The word "sustainability" has the following connotations: "The ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level, such as: 'the sustainability of economic growth'"; or "the avoidance of the depletion of natural resources in order to maintain an ecological balance: 'the pursuit of global environmental sustainability.'"

In essence, when something is sustainable, it means there is no fluctuation, but rather stability. In gardening, there is a concept such as sustainable gardening. This means, the food grown is not harming the earth, so no harmful pesticides are used or methods that will destroy anything in the long run. In a business sense, a business that maintains sustainable growth does more good than harm. Unfortunately in the United States and in many other countries around the world, we see absolute greed and corruption in order to obtain money and wealth. There doesn't seem to be a care for sustainability in most areas. Some, however, have begun to realize now that things are starting to break down because of the practices that have been employed. But "too little, too late", as the saying goes.

As Christians, we too have to have the concept of sustainability firmly in mind and rooted in our lives. We have to live our lives as if we had a lifetime ahead of us, while concentrating on being ready now for God's Kingdom. And we must continue to learn how to sustain what we have, and apply the idea of growth as well.

Unfortunately, as human beings, we often fear change. It is easy to ignore what is uncomfortable and to wish to maintain our comfortable status quo. Obstructionist attitudes range from the denial of problems to indifference; to nonchalant resignation or to blind confidence in continuing to do the wrong things. We cannot fall into these types of mindsets.

Christ very clearly commands us to count the cost before we sign up to become Christians—before we commit to becoming baptized and walking God's Way of Life. In Luke 14:28–33, Christ tells us: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'? Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

But this is also a warning for us to continue, no matter what. Yes, we sin; yes, we fail; but even though we should not sin, when we do and repent and turn to God, we can appreciate God's great mercy and forgiveness, encouraging us not to give up; not to walk away because all appears to be too hard. We may be tempted to do just that, rather than digging in and working things out.

We cannot live this Way of Life without acknowledging that it takes constant effort and foresight. It is not easy to have a sustainable Christian life. It requires being willing to look at ourselves and to change. It requires being willing to stand out and be different in this world. It requires sacrifice and courage. It requires constant study, application of what we learn in the Bible, and prayer. It seems

that these things would be easy to sustain, but when one has a full-time job, 40+ hours of work a week, children, and all the other issues that pop up in life, it can be VERY challenging sometimes. And it is then that it becomes even more important to focus on God.

There are so many warnings about this in the Bible. Notice for example Revelation 3:11: "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown." And 1 Corinthians 9:25: "And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown."

We must "hold fast," "compete," do everything possible to win. This is why we have warnings (2 Corinthians 4:8-11; Matthew 5:10-12; 2 Timothy 3:12; Philippians 1:29). But we also have much encouragement (Philippians 1:6; 2:13; Psalm 138:8; 1 Corinthians 1:8; Hebrews 12:2). There is no end to encouraging Scriptures, but they can be hard to appreciate in times of trials. We need to remember that trials are there to test us. We are to become purified and stronger, and God wants to see where we will turn. Will we turn to despair and sorrow? Will we wallow in self-pity and doubt, thinking maybe we are not good enough, maybe we can't overcome our problems and deal with our issues? Maybe God really doesn't care about us?

In order to sustain ourselves in this Christian walk, we must continue to study the Bible and to pray about all things. Philippians 4:6-7 says: "Be anxious for nothing, but *in everything* by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 6:18 adds that we are to pray "always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints."

Do we truly see and understand that there is nothing which ought to hold us back from sustainability and growth? Do we believe that? It takes a lot of faith and courage. We have come so far. Why would we want to quit now? When we look at the pain and suffering we have endured, we can become encouraged and draw strength from the fact that God has helped us in arriving where we are now. Yes, we will have much more to go through and to accomplish, but with God's power in us, we can do this.

We have observed and celebrated the Feast of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, and we are now looking forward to the Feast of Pentecost. Let us continue in strength and find the sustainability in our lives to concentrate deeply on the meaning of that next Holy Day, and then onward to the other Holy Days that follow. We are encouraged to push on, and we can do this with God's help by remaining faithful, while our hearts and minds are fully rooted in the Truth. Then, we can pray with utter conviction: May God's Kingdom come soon!

With Christian love,



Kalon Mitchell