

LIVING FOR GOD

Like Jesus, living a life led by the Holy Spirit requires a determination and commitment to turn from the world and focus our life on God and His purpose. We must decidedly turn from the life of self-gratification to a life lived for God and others in this world. A massive shift like this can only be achieved through a full commitment to God, daily turning away from all those things that reinforce the old way of life and daily turning to those things that will draw us closer to God.

The double-minded person is the one who lives a lukewarm Christian life, partly yielding to God and partly yielding to the world. Because the will of the person is not yielded totally to God, the person is seen by God as being disobedient. Partially applying our will and setting our minds on being partially obedient, as far as God is concerned, is not being obedient at all.

In the Old Testament we read why God removed the Holy Spirit from King Saul and set things up for his removal as king. It was because Saul was partially obedient. Although succeeding in battle, he then thought that he could vary God's specific instruction by keeping animals from His capture for sacrifice to God, rather than putting them all to death as God had instructed. Even though Saul thought his motive was reasonable, God saw his decision and action as being disobedient. God told Saul through the prophet and priest, Samuel, that He required obedience not sacrifice.

1Samuel15vs22 So Samuel said: " Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king. "

To God, partial obedience from a double-minded life is not obedience and Samuel tells Saul that disobedience is rebellion and stubbornness against God. It is no different to turning to witchcraft, iniquity and idolatry. This is a startling comparison and gives us an idea of how strongly God feels about disobedience. If we want to draw near to God and be in close communion with Him it cannot be possible if we at the same time do not make a heart-held commitment to living an obedient life before Him.

The double-minded person does not apply their will to know and obey God's will and therefore will never truly know it or find it. If we live in this way, there is little desire to live a strong spiritual life and by devoting little time to living by the spirit, we will be drawn to living according to our flesh. Even for a person who is single-minded about living for God, spiritual growth is found not to be easy nor development rapid. A double-minded person is likely to try it and give up. A change in heart cannot come from a double-minded approach to our daily living. James tells us that such a person should expect nothing from God.

James1vs 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

For any living a double-minded life, a close relationship with God will be elusive. This relationship can only come from a commitment to pursue a pure heart expressing love to God and people, a clear conscience before God and people, and a strong sincere faith that places full trust in God. Paul described these three things as being the main aim of his instruction from the Lord Jesus (1Timothy1vs5). If we persistently pursue them we will find that our life is directed to God, we refrain from evil and our mind becomes renewed. The more our mind is renewed and our emotions re-directed, the greater is our ability to develop a pure heart so that we can increasingly become more like Jesus, in our thoughts, words and actions.

1John3vs3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Believers who resign themselves to partially obeying God will limit their spiritual growth and fail to obtain all the blessings that God has for their life. Being poor ambassadors for Christ, their lives reflect little of the Holy Spirit within. As believers we must all come to realize that by calling ourselves Christians we take on the responsibility to carry the Holy Name of God in this world. God places a great importance on His Holy Name and as Christians we must recognize the responsibility that we take upon ourselves when we proclaim to the world that we are His children. We are seen by God as His specially chosen people who are a royal priesthood and holy nation before Him. We must see ourselves in this way and live our life accordingly (1Peter2vs9).

Christians represent God upon this earth before unbelievers and importantly to other believers. Moses was prevented from going into the Promised Land after leading the people of Israel for 40 years because He misrepresented God before the nation of Israel by striking the rock in anger to obtain water (Numbers20vs10-12). We must recognize our responsibility to represent God as He truly is. The knowledge, understanding and ability to do this comes from daily living for God, having a deep relationship with Him, an understanding of His character and living our life with a pure heart.

God has a specific purpose for your life but you can only come to know it and live it as you daily live in a close relationship with Him, placing Him first in your life and living for Him. None of us should neglect this for there is nothing more important. It is a great tragedy for anyone to go to their grave never having known the purpose that God had for their life and therefore not being able to fulfil it. In a position of whole-hearted living for God, when you ask and keep on asking God for His specific will for your life, He will reveal his personal plan for you.

Luke11vs 9 So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

The Creator of the universe takes a special interest in you, will give you His personal plan on how to live your life and is with you to help ensure that you fulfil it. But this requires you to be single-minded in the way you live your daily life. This single-mindedness that God requires is revealed by Jesus when He visited Martha and Mary,

the sisters of Lazarus. While Jesus is in their home, Mary was eager to cater to all His physical needs and was busy preparing food and making other preparations. In the meantime Mary was listening intently to Jesus' words spiritually strengthening herself. When Martha in irritation asks Jesus to tell her sister to come and help her rather than just sitting and listening, He told her the following words.

Luke10vs41 And Jesus answered and said to her, " Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her. "

In this story of Martha and Mary, Jesus showed us that even making ourselves busy doing things for God, like Martha was, can distract us from growing spiritually. Our spiritual growth must be our focus so that our service to God can flow from our ever increasing spiritual maturity.

We are cleansed by Jesus' blood but we still can fall into sin by living in this world. We need to have a clear conscience before men and God so that we can draw near to God in the knowledge that we can be fully transparent before Him. Even the best of Christians sin daily through thoughts, words and actions. We must go to God each day acknowledging our sins, repenting of them and seeking God to forgive them. Paul spoke of how important a clear conscience was to him and we must all recognize how important it is for our life.

Acts24vs16 This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

A pure heart can only be developed in us where there is obedience and a clear conscience before God and other people. With a pure heart, we are purely focused on knowing God, loving Him, understanding His will and obeying it completely. In this state we can always be assured that we can come to God knowing that prayer will be heard and answered.

1John3vs21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. 22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

God's desire is for us to live our life completely for Him, this means that God must be the focus of our life's desires and passion. A busy life is one of the greatest enemies of the spiritual life. God is jealous for our love and attention and desires to be the main focus of our life. The reason for our creation is to be loved by Him, to love Him and be in His family. Although God created so much in the universe, all was created for His prize creation, people. We must daily step up to the challenge of living as the people He wants us to be. As we each do, our world can become a place that is increasingly impacted by the presence of the kingdom of God. The more we individually decide to get serious about our Christian life and commit to living for God in a complete and obedient way, the more His light will shine in our own life and in the dark world around us. If individual Christians decide to do nothing about the state of their Christian life, the evil spiritual influences in this world will be allowed to impact this world in a far greater way than if they did.

All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing ²⁴

Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world and as long as people remain under the spiritual dominion of the world, God's will is done only by His spiritual children living in obedience. Although Jesus has all spiritual authority on earth and in heaven, His authority on earth is not comprehensively exercised by Him and evil prevails unless Christians live their lives by the power of the Holy Spirit and apply the spiritual authority that has been given to us.

The greatest evil comes from those who are the most self-focused and the greatest good comes from those who have so lost their self-focus that they now live their life for God and live it according to His will. This is God's will for your life applying your will to obeying His will, which is the same as giving up your old way of living and starting a new life, living each day according to His will. God's will cannot be done on earth unless each of us who are justified by Christ's sacrificial death and glorious resurrection also rise up with Him to a new life of obedience to God. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved the most and who had such great revelation from God, wrote to Christians telling them that the world was passing away and that only those who did the will of God abided forever with God (*1John2vs17*).

Living a spiritual life for God means that the self-seeking limiting life goes for we now live to fulfil God's eternal purpose. Also gone is the hopelessness of a life that ends with physical death for it is replaced by a life that leads to eternal life with God. We are preparing ourselves for a life filled with eternal purpose not one that will be blown out like a candle when our physical body dies. Gone are the many thoughts that sometimes contribute to a feeling of worthlessness for now God tells us that we are His children, we are very special and that He has a plan for each of our lives. From this new perspective we truly are new creations, overcomers and are free from the bondage of sin. We approach life on earth with a new vision and perspective. It is a far greater (higher, broader, deeper) Godly vision and perspective.

So many of us are unable to stop living the self-centred life focused only on ourselves, our immediate family and possibly extending to a few close friends and relatives. This form of selfish living of course is normal for the people who do not know God and who do not know His will but Christians must be very different. Jesus made it clear that selfish living that does no more than what unbelievers do is of no use to a person who calls themselves a Christian.

Luke6vs32 But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

Jesus stated that He was going to lay down His life for His friends. These would be all people who would believe in Him and be reconciled with God through His death. However He added that He only considered those who obeyed Him to be His friends.

John15vs13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

The teaching of the Holy Spirit is usually slow and gradual but with deliberate purpose, particularly designed by God for each one of us. He knows the best way for each of us to be taught, the lessons we need to learn and in what progression they need to be taught to specifically accomplish His will for our life. Although some of the teaching may at times appear confusing, it is like a tapestry that is woven revealing its beauty once the Master Weaver has finished His purposeful and meticulous work in each believer who draws near to Him with a true heart. His work is performed daily in each spirit-led person who diligently seeks to be near Him, who loves Him and who follows Him with an obedient heart.

The more spiritual we are the more dependant we become on God for everything because we gradually become less self-confident and more confident in what God can do through us. The power of Jesus' walk with the Father was His prayer life, His complete dependence on God the Father and His complete obedience. For those of us who diligently follow the Holy Spirit, there is a continual battle in our minds to faithfully commit each day to living a life directed by the Holy Spirit, but with perseverance and commitment, the spiritual fruit appears, grows and ripens.

Jesus knew the Father's will and was completely and consistently obedient to it. When we claim to be followers of Christ Jesus we should also walk as He did, seeking to know God's will and being obedient to it so that His will can be done on earth as it is already and consistently done in heaven.

Jesus led the type of life that God originally planned for all of us. He had the Holy Spirit joined to His spirit from His birth to help, teach and guide Him. As a baby and young child He matured learning from the Holy Spirit. Unlike every one of us, His life was not stained by sin from birth nor was His heart wicked, hard and dark. He spent His entire life focused on living a life directed by the Holy Spirit. Although He also learnt from the outer person through His experiences in the world, this influence never dominated His mind, will and emotions. His physical life was sourced and directed spiritually by the Holy Spirit. Jesus was the perfect man in that His inner person followed the Holy Spirit in complete obedience. He lived the perfect life, a life completely without sin, holy and pleasing to God the Father.

By the life He lived and His teachings, Jesus Christ showed how each of us could live the spiritual life that God wants us to. He was absolutely committed to God, dependant on God for everything and spent much of His time in prayer. Jesus lived the life of perfection because He put His love for the Father first and loved people so much that He lived His life for them and then laid down His life for us. He lived a life that put God's kingdom first and He never acted in a way that was focused on Himself. It was a selfless life in that it put God first and all others next, it was a compassionate life that was lived for the good of others.

When Jesus lived on earth, He was perfectly and completely one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. His life was lived from a pure heart, in the exact likeness of His heavenly Father, focused on pleasing God the Father. Therefore there was never any turmoil or inner conflict within Him for He only always desired to do the Father's will and please the Father. He laid aside His will so that He could live according to the Father's will. His fears, desires and preferences were laid aside so that He could live His life for the Father's cause and purpose. In this way He was able to truly say that

He only did what He saw the Father doing. Because His nature reflected the leading of the Holy Spirit perfectly and completely, He was able to say that when people looked at Him they saw the Father. We read in the Bible that Jesus is the exact likeness of the Father (*Hebrews 1vs3*).

Jesus lived His life not for Himself but totally for God and we are to do the same (not my will but Thine be done). He demonstrated that people must know God, love Him and obey Him. We are called by God to live a Christ-like life, seemingly impossible from our perspective, but something that God is able to increasingly do in our life as we daily submit to Him. When we no longer live but Christ lives in us through the presence of the Holy Spirit, it can become "natural" for the person within, Jesus Christ, to be revealed in our outer life.

After Paul's conversion, He spoke of being called by God to have Jesus Christ revealed not only to him, as happened on the road to Damascus, but also within Him through the presence of the Holy Spirit. It was the spiritual knowledge and understanding that Paul received from the Holy Spirit within him that enabled him to be transformed and complete the call on his life to preach Jesus Christ among the Gentiles.

Galatians 1vs15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, ...

From our own perspective, once we are "in Christ", we are on a spiritual path of transformation, from "glory to glory". The Holy Spirit opens up our eyes to the spiritual realm giving us spiritual understanding. This is done most frequently as we daily read and meditate on the words of the Bible. However the transformation will only take place as we do this with the intention of obeying it. Otherwise, we may learn it with our mind but this learning alone will not do our spiritual life much good unless we apply it to the way we think about and live our own daily life.

James 1vs 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

As God is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit and as we develop a strong relationship with Him, we come to know a new life in the depths of our heart. It is a God-centred life and because Jesus Christ is the express spiritual image of God and the Holy Spirit within us, we are transformed more and more into His image through the Holy Spirit deep within us. Christ is revealed in each of us.

2Corinthians 3vs16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Although God knows everything about us and nothing is hidden from Him, our revelation of the Lord Jesus in this physical life is limited and therefore although through our obedience we are daily transformed into His image by the Holy Spirit, we do not see fully what we will become. One day we will not only see all that the Lord Jesus is but will also be individually perfectly transformed into His image.

1Corinthians13vs 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

24. Edmund Burke 1729 to 1769, British philosopher and statesman.

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