

DEPEND ON A 'SELF-LIFE' (OR LIVE BY THE SPIRIT)

S250R

WED/3/16/2022

(110 RDG)

In their Christian walk, as one comes to a better understanding of the Scriptures, they also come to realize that only two powers are working in the world to control the natural man. A person walks and acts under the power of the self-life (controlled by Satan of course), or they walk under the power and control of the Spirit (God's Holy Spirit). We need to understand the contrast of those two opposite courses to follow, and the importance of making the right choice to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance, instead of efforts of the self-life.

Jesus referred to that path as living in the flesh, which really Means the way of natural man, instead of living by the Spirit which gives Life. (John 6:63) Jesus explained "It is the spirit which gives Life. The flesh confers no benefit whatever. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and are Life. (64) "But there are some of you who do not believe." (Jesus said).

So, one can see that we must first believe Jesus words, and when a person does believe the Words of Jesus, then the Spirit will work within them, to enable them an understanding of His words. If one is sincere in their commitment to follow Jesus in their life, instead of the ways of man, then an understanding of Jesus' words (given by the Spirit), enables them to know what God's will is, and will enable one's sincere heart to follow the Spirit and do 'God's will' in their life.

In saying, "the flesh profits nothing" (NKJV), or "the flesh confers no benefit" (Wey.), Jesus was saying, that for one to follow the ways of man (or the world), there is no profit nor benefit. That was a wonderful thing for Jesus to tell His followers, for it draws aside the veil and reveals where all the trouble in the world originated (and of course, where all trouble still originates).

The ways of the flesh' (self-efforts of mankind) bring us no profit nor benefit spiritually, nor do they help us with the health of our bodies, nor benefit us in our homes, nor in financial matters. Everything we thought we would gain by following the ways of man, will eventually be lost, and the end result would be no gain whatever ... (most importantly, no spiritual gain).

It would be like a person starting out in business with a hundred dollars and every day they suffer some loss (the Pastor said), thus, very quickly they would have nothing left. That is why Jesus wanted to bring out this Truth very clearly, and why He said, "The Words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are Life." That is Life (with a capital L) meaning Eternal Life, of course.

So, when we take Jesus at His Word and believe in Him, we do not lose everything (spiritually or otherwise) as the result would be when following the plans of man.

Apostle Paul admonished the Galatians for falling back from obedient faith to the self-life (Gal. 3:3), "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now going to reach perfection through what is external?" (Trusting in plans of the self-life). When God answers our prayers and works miracles in our behalf, is it not the result of our having heard and believed (or trusted in God?)... like faithful Abraham. (Gal.3:6-7) "even as Abraham believed God, and his faith was placed to his account as righteousness?" (As God said to Abraham, Genesis 15:6). Notice therefore that those who possess faith ... are true sons of Abraham. (apostle Paul said). (Do we not want to be true sons in the faith??)

Having faith in or trusting in someone, or some plan, or something, is believing in that person, or plan, or thing. When we say we are trusting in God, while at the same time we are using, or agreeing to some human plan or remedy of man, then that is not believing in faith for what we need or want to have within God's will.

The apostle James confirmed what Paul said (James 2:14) "What good is it, my brethren, if a man professes to have faith, and yet his actions do not correspond? Can such faith save him?" (Vs 17)"In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

So, we have everything to gain spiritually and in every other way, with Eternal Life as our final reward, for believing in Jesus, and continuing to follow in faith the pathway of Christ Jesus, who always did His Father's will.

(Hebrews 10:), after explaining that Christ's eternal sacrifice had done away with sin (in vs 9), "He" (meaning Christ) then added "I have come to do Thy will" (O God).

Jesus instructed His followers (that includes us) that they must have the same commitment to His Father as He did Himself, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." (Matt.7:21) And, He explained (John 14:6), "I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

The "pathway of faith and active obedience", is the "pathway of Christ" that we want to see ourselves following. Sometimes we need to 'take a look at' our decisions and the commitments we have made, and with the Holy Spirit's help, determine if we are doing God's will (or is our trust (or faith) centered on something or someone else. We need to ask some questions of ourselves and give ourselves honest answers, to see if we are really believing.

(2 Cor.13:5) tells us to "Test yourselves to discover whether you

are true believers: put your own selves under examination. Or do you not know that Jesus Christ is within you unless you are insincere?"

How do we know what Gods will (or His way) is? The divine way is found in God's Word. Jesus told us that there is no profit in anything in the world, but profit (or benefit) can be found in His Word— The Words that He spoke. So, the divine way to decide and the path to follow in one's life, is found in the Word of God, not by following in the ways and plans of man, for there is no lasting benefit with anything of the world. However, life-giving benefits are found in God's Word when one heeds and follows it, for Jesus said, "they are Spirit, and they are Life."

The most important loss of all is the spiritual gain that one will have lost, by trying stubbornly to follow the will of the self-life, instead of submitting to the leading of the Holy Spirit and coming to know God better than we did before. The spiritual gain that one would lose, can be referred to as growth in holiness which is ever so important (as the Spirit-inspired writer to Hebrews brought out.) (Hebr.12:14), "Persistently strive for peace with all men, and for that growth in holiness apart from which no one will see the Lord."

[Striving for growth in holiness is not works (as one may be deceived to think). Rather, it is a very necessary part of the true Christian's life in Christ— to be like Christ by doing His Father's will (as the Holy Spirit directs us to do from God's Word), and so, we be prepared to meet Christ in the air when He comes again.] (through "that growth in holiness apart from which no one will see the Lord.")

The writer is saying, persistently strive to understand the will of God and do it, for 'spiritual gain' or growth we receive from doing God's will. We are to follow the leading of the Spirit, and 'make straight paths for your feet" (says vs.13), and "be carefully on your guard lest there be anyone who falls back from the grace of God." (vs15)

The spiritual gain that one forfeits, by following the will of a self-life, is lost or wasted time in a true Christian's life of faith. We are told to run the Christian race with patient endurance, "simply fixing our gaze upon Jesus, our Prince Leader in the faith, who will also award us the prize." (vs.1-2).

That is to be our reward for allowing ourselves to be led by the Spirit, and following Jesus with spiritual blessing included, instead of following the natural self-will of man, or efforts of the flesh, with no benefit whatever, as Jesus said.

Using the example of Esau (who parted from the will of God to get what he wanted via his own self-will, and thus, lost the blessing of 'spiritual gain or growth that he could have received from steadfast faith), the writer warns, that, Esau "found no opportunity for undoing what he had done, though he sought the blessing earnestly with tears."

(He could not make up for the spiritual growth that he forfeited by following the will of the self-life, instead of that of the Spirit.)

Apostle Paul referred to 'living in the flesh' (or ways of man), which carries every evil thing with it, and ends in destruction and the Lake of Fire, as opposite to living a life of faith guided by the Holy Spirit with Eternal Life as the result.

(Romans 8:6-8), "Following after the Holy Spirit leads to Life and peace, but following after the old nature leads to death, because the old sinful nature within us is against God. It never did obey God's laws and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their old sinful selves, bent on following their old evil desires, can never please God."

God spoke through the prophet (Isaiah 55:8-9) "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So, are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."

This is a very important Truth (the Pastor said), to understand that our good actions and ways of the self-life, do not make us righteous before God. God enabled Job and Cornelius to realize that, after they gave up their self-will and submitted to the leading of His Spirit). God made this very plain and emphasized it in both the Old and New Testaments. (Prov.16:25), "Before every man there lies a wide and pleasant road that he thinks is right (to the natural man, not to the spiritually minded man, the Pastor said), but it ends in death." (Even) "Hunger is good—if it makes you work to satisfy it!" (vs.26).

However, (Prov.3:) speaks about the pleasant rewards of allowing ourselves to be guided in our ways by the wisdom of 'God's Spirit'—instead of following our own stubborn self-will, (vs.17-18) "Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed." And, Psalm 40:4), "Happy the man who trusts in the Eternal, who pays no heed to loud and false apostates." (Apostates are 'backsliders' from the faith, unbelievers who are trusting in everything else but God for things and circumstances in life, even though in self-righteousness, they profess to be believers, and they call out in Christ's Name.)

This is illustrated plainly in the Bible, which shows clearly the difference between self-life (or flesh) and Spirit. Jesus had to admit that the scribes and Pharisees appeared to be righteous unto men. They appeared to be beautiful Christians outwardly.

In the case of Job, "If there ever was a man who tried to serve God, it was Job." Even the writer of the book of Job, had to admit that Job was righteous, humanly speaking; (the Pastor said)—but it was all the result of human efforts of the self-life. His righteous acts were all done in the flesh, although they seemed to be most

sincere and honest efforts that a human being could make. But (it was only an outward show of religion, and) it did not please God in the least.

We hear of many people taking the same attitude today, he said. And I heard a sister who was faced with many problems, say, I think, if there is anyone the Lord should help, it is me. We told her, Athat attitude will not help you the least bit. God came to help sinners (not people who think they are good and righteous). (Matt.9:13) Jesus said, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

[We can "The Pharisee, standing erect, prayed as follows by himself: "'O God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people—I am not a thief nor a cheat nor an adulterer, nor do I even resemble this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week. I pay the tithe on all my gains." "But the tax-gatherer, standing far back, would not so much as lift his eyes to Heaven, but kept beating his breast and saying, "O God, be reconciled to me, sinner that I am." "I tell you (Jesus said), that this man went home more thoroughly absolved from guilt than the other; for every one who uplifts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be uplifted."]

Job's self-righteous attitude eventually robbed him of everything he had. Even his wife and children would not respect him, and it almost cost him his life (except for God's merciful love). It was not the hurricane nor the bands of Chaldeans that robbed Job, rather, it was because of what God says in the New Testament, "the flesh (or self-life) profits nothing." It will eventually mean the loss of everything, if we are not willing to repent, as Job did. "Therefore, I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:6)

What Job was saying (the Pastor explained) was, "I give up my ways, my efforts, my plans, and I allow Thee to have Thy way with me. I allow Thy plan to prevail in my life and begin to live by the Spirit (instead of self). I desire to have no more of the self-life." As a result of that new and right attitude, God turned Job's captivity around (and delivered him from the bondage and control of the self-life). [Apostle Paul spoke of that bondage (Rom.7:21) saying, "I find therefore the law of my self-nature to be that when I desire to do what is right, evil is lying in ambush for me.']

So, Job (before that was written in the New Testament), learned that God's words "are Spirit and are Life." Life and peace that comes from following the Holy Spirit, does not mean a good feeling while you are in the Church meeting room (and then all sorts of trouble to face when you get home.) But it means, that with an inner peace that God bestows, nothing should disturb us or cause us to worry or be anxious (even when we are tempted). When we are truly trusting in God, then we know, and we really are believing that God is in control for us).

