

# WE LIVE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT (OR DEPEND ON A 'LIFE OF SELF')

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As one continues to come to a better understanding of the Scriptures in their Christian walk, we also come to realize that there are only two powers working in the world to control the natural man. A person walks or acts under the power and control of the self-life (controlled by Satan, of course), or, under the power and control of the Spirit (meaning, God's 'Holy Spirit'). We need to understand the contrast of these 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 it as living in the flesh, which really means the way of natural man, instead of living by the Spirit which gives 'Life'. In (John 6:63), Jesus explains, "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).

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

In saying, "the flesh profiteth nothing" (KJV) or "the flesh confers no benefit" (Wey.), Jesus was saying, that in following the ways of man (or the world), there is no profit or benefit. That was a wonderful thing for Jesus to teach His followers, because it draws aside the veil and reveals where all the trouble in the world originated, (and of course, where trouble still originates).

The ways of the flesh (self-efforts of mankind) bring us no profit or 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...(but most importantly, no spiritual gain).

It is like a person starting out in business with a minimal amount of money, and every day they suffer loss, 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 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 is the result of following the plans of man.

The 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), Aeven as Abraham believed God, and his faith was placed to his account as righteousness? (referring to what God said to Abraham, Genesis 15:6). Notice therefore that those who possess faith, are true sons of Abraham. (Apostle Paul said). [ 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.]

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."

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

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

Jesus instructed His followers (that includes us) that they must have that 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." (That's very clear, plain warning from our Savior.)

The pathway of faith and active obedience is the pathway of Christ on which we want to see ourselves. Sometimes we need to take a look at our decisions and 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 some- one 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), says, "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 God’s will (or 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 “they are Spirit, and they are Life”, Jesus said.

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. This 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 the 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 thus, be prepared to meet Him in the air when He comes again.] (With that growth in holiness—apart from which no one will see the Lord.)

The writer is saying to persistently strive to understand the will of God and do it, for the spiritual gain or growth we receive from doing so. We are to follow the leading of the Spirit, and “make straight paths for your feet”,(vs.13 says), and, “be carefully on your guard lest there be anyone who falls back from the grace of God.” (vs.15).

The spiritual gain that one forfeits by following the will of the self-life, is lost or wasted time in a true Christian’s life of faith. We are told (Hebr.12:1-2) “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.”

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 to the Hebrews warns, 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’(ways of man) which carry every evil thing with it, and it 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. (Rom. 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 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.”

(MP) [ This is a very important Truth (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 this, 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. (Proverbs 16:25) “Before every man there lies a wide and pleasant road he thinks is right (to the natural man, not the spiritually minded man),...but, it ends in death. (Even) “Hunger is good- if it makes you work to satisfy it” (vs.26 tells us).

However (Prov.3:) speaks of 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;(meaning God’s Word), “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 their life, even though in their self-righteousness they profess to be believers, and they call out in Christ’s name. ]

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

Christians, outwardly. And, 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; 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 the 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 (the Pastor said).

“You may hear many people taking the same attitude today,” he said. I heard a sister who was faced with many problems, say, “I think, if there is anyone the Lord should help, it is me.” I told her, “that 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 recall the story of the Pharisee and the tax-gatherer Luke 18:11, “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 or the bands of Chaldeans that robbed Job, rather, it was because of what God says in the New Testament, “the flesh (or self-life) profiteth 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 bondage of the self-life). He learned that God’s words are “Spirit and are Life.”

Life and peace that comes from following the Holy Spirit, does not mean a little good feeling while you are in the meetings, and 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 to be anxious (even when we are tempted). When we are truly trusting in God, then we know and are believing’ that God is in control for us. Everything can go to suit us, and be easy, and pleasant for us, when we are following the Spirit of Christ. (John 14:1) “Let not your hearts be troubled. Trust in God: trust in Me also.”

That is not the case when one is living in the flesh (or under the carnal nature of the self-life), for anything we gain in that way is not permanent nor lasting, ..as it is when we are guided by the Holy Spirit to act and decide things in our life. We are told in (Rom.8:13-14) “For if you so live, death is near; but if, through being under the sway of the Spirit, you are putting your old bodily habits to death, you will live. For those who are led by God’s Spirit are, all of them, God’s sons.”

To be God’s sons is to be accepted by Him as sons, because we are willing to be led and guided by His Spirit, to follow the example and pathway that His Son has set for us to follow. When God says, Although being under the sway of the Spirit, you will live, means that He will not reject us and say “begone from me, I never knew you.” Instead, we will live with Christ, as He told us, “because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19). And (John 10:27-28), “My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them the Life of the Ages, and they shall never, never perish, nor shall any one wrest them from my hand .” [ That is some Promise from God, for us to be willing to allow God to guide us by His Spirit (instead of us following the will of the ‘self-life’). It means ‘Eternal Life’ for us!!

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SOME MAIN POINTS OF... S292RR) WE LIVE BY THE SPIRIT? OR SELF-LIFE" ARE...

1./ The need for a true Christian to understand that the self-life (carnal nature) that each one has been born with (since Adam), is under the control of Satan, not the control of the Holy Spirit... (and there is no middle ground with only two powers to control).

2./ Following the will of self (our own plans and efforts) to gain things we want in this life, only has temporary results, and has no spiritual value whatever.

3./ Also, that one's good actions done in self-righteous spirit, are not acceptable in God's sight.

4./ The example of Job is used to explain this, and how he had to lose everything he had gotten by his own self-will,... and, how, after Job repented, God delivered him from his self-righteousness, and bestowed His peace and every blessing on Job and his family.

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