

Section Four - The Yielded Heart

Introduction

There are many ways to get blessed by God preached, often requiring that you give money to the preacher, but God's blessings are free and to receive them we simply have to do what He says.

blessed *are* they that hear the word of God, and keep it. [Luke 11:28]

God revealed to us how He wanted us to live through the Old Testament Law. Jesus said a very interesting thing about this law, when someone asked Him: "Teacher which is the most important commandment in the law?" He replied:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. [Matt 22:37-40]

Even though we have all failed to keep this law Jesus later even raised the standard He expects of us even higher.

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

[John 15:12-13]

So Jesus taught that to please God we must love like God loves. Therefore it is very important that we are all Set Free to Love. He also said that our first priority in life should be to seek the kingdom of God.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness (correct life style); and all these things (worldly needs) shall be added unto you. [Matt 6:33]

Jesus will come back to reign on earth and establish the kingdom of God on earth, but anywhere God is allowed to reign is also His kingdom. Paul taught that:

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Spirit). [Rom 14:17]

We see from this that God wants us to give top priority to seeing our lives flow with His life and love.

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. [Luke 12:31]

Now we have to appreciate that God is not stupid. He does not tell us to do things we cannot do. From this we can see that Jesus expects us to overcome our character weaknesses that cause us to be unloving and abusive to others and also to ourselves. This gives us a huge hint as to the awesome potential for change that is possible as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit working within us who we received when we became believers in Jesus Christ.

As we shall see the power of God to change us is freely available. To see it at work in our lives we simply need to just do as we are told, that is to seek and receive righteousness through faith. The word for believe in Hebrew means obey which demonstrates that disobedience is in effect unbelief.

Discipleship

Jesus Christ knows what is best for us. He is not being selfish or hard when He calls us to follow His teachings and to be His disciple. By being obedient to His teachings we open our lives to being blessed. Although it is important to ask Jesus to forgive our sins and be our Saviour this is only a part of how to be a wholehearted disciple of Jesus. To be a disciple we need to allow God to create in us a new godly lifestyle.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.
[Matt 11:28-30]

If ye continue in my word (message), then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. [John 8:31-32]

Obviously to be someone's disciple you need to understand what they teach. What Jesus and His early followers taught is only recorded in the New Testament of the Bible therefore we need to spend quality time studying it so that we get to know it well.

In the scriptures we are told that the early disciples became known as Christians. It is very confusing and a tragedy that today there are many that call themselves Christian who are not wholeheartedly dedicated to being disciples of Jesus Christ. Unwisely they either twist or ignore important things that Jesus taught. Jesus Christ is seeking those who will seek to understand His teachings without compromising them and follow Him wholeheartedly.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:
[John 14:21]

Obedience

Quite reasonably considering who He is Jesus Christ expects us to be fully obedient to His teachings.

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? [Luke 6:46]

If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings [John 14:23-24]

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. [1 John 5:2-3]

God loves us so much He never tells us to do something that is bad for us.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.
[Rom 8:28]

Sometimes something God wants us to do may seem difficult but Jesus has given us an incredible example of obedience. The scriptures make it clear that Jesus did not actually want to go to the cross but He did so in obedience to His Father so that you and I could be saved.

take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.
[Mark 14:36]

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities (frailty) of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification (being built up). For even Christ pleased not himself; [Rom 15:1-3]

Half-heartedness

God made us for Himself. In a right relationship with Him we can find our ultimate destiny and fulfilment. His very nature is perfect love beyond our comprehension in this lifetime. Nevertheless some hold back from wholeheartedly seeking after and surrendering to Him. We need to cast our fears aside and ignore the intimidating lies that tell us that we will be better off running our own lives.

Quite understandably God is offended if we are half-hearted or lukewarm.

your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. [Matt 6:32-33]

Jesus answered him, **The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.** [Mark 12:29-30]

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. [Eph 4:29-32]

Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. [Heb 10:38]

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. [Rev :15-16]

To seek God first means you do not treat Him like a hobby. There are also many that treat God like a doctor only visiting Him when they cannot cope with a problem by themselves and then after it is resolved they return to pursuing their own self-orientated life style. This type of half-hearted and self-centred attitude is actually not in our own best interest.

... be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. [Heb 6:12]

The half-hearted person in effect is presuming that those close to them should adapt to them and compensate for the problems that they cause. They are like a grown adult who is expecting others to change their nappy for them when they should have learnt a long time ago how to look after their personal hygiene for themselves. It really is that stupid and offensive.

Father God thank You for everything that You have done for me. Please help me to study and understand Your teachings. Please help me follow You as a wholehearted and obedient disciple. I am sorry

that I have held back from You. I ask You to show me how to love you with all my heart. Amen

Self

If we do not love and obey God as we should then we are obeying our own selfish desires instead. Jesus has made it clear that if we live to please ourselves we will loose out and if we live to please God we will be a winner.

And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

[Luke 9:23-25]

From the Old Testament especially it can be clearly seen that God really hates it when men worship idols. However even if we have not bowed down to an idol of an eastern religion we have all committed idolatry because we have all worshiped ourselves by seeking our own comfort and pleasure before seeking to please God.

To worship God and not ourselves we need to make Him the complete Lord (owner) and Master (mentor) of our lives. This means that we humble ourselves and become His servants so that we no longer live for ourselves but for Him. Sometimes instead of satisfying our selfish desires we will need to choose attitudes and behaviour as revealed to us in the scriptures and through His Spirit moving upon our consciences. When we first come to Jesus much of our selfish nature is undisciplined and as Jesus teaches us to walk in His ways it is inevitable that He will ask us to do things that we do not really want to do. Whether we obey Him or not demonstrates who is our Lord and Master.

To follow Christ we not only make Him our Saviour but we also make Him our Lord and Master.

Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for *so* I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

[John 13:13-14]

it is interesting to note that the opposites of the strongholds of rebellion and control that we discussed earlier are submission and obedience. To make Jesus our Lord we obey Him and stop rebelling. To make Jesus our master we wholeheartedly submit to him and yield control of our lives wholeheartedly to Him.

Some try to accept only the parts of His offer that they find easy and attractive. To make Him our Lord and Master means that He will be the focus of our lives before anything else. We will serve Him before even our own needs, desires and problems.

To be a truly wholehearted disciple of Christ we need to yield to Him every area of our lives. We can only do that if we dethrone the previous master, which is the addictive power of our selfish ambitions and desires that used to rule our actions and thoughts. We need to yield to God not only our thoughts feelings and desires but also our future, job, spare-time, relationships, home, possessions and wealth.

If we do not surrender ourselves to God in this way we are in effect trying to make God our advisor or simply our assistant and not our Lord. If we are not careful we can easily slip back into living our lives according to our own self centred preferences and we do not seek first the Kingdom of God or walk in His plan and destiny for our lives.

Victimitus

A particularly insidious form of self-pity is where someone sees all the problems in their life as being due to them being abused by others and things outside of their control. Unknown to themselves they react to all their problems as though they are a helpless abused victim while in fact they are the one who is being abusive to others.

While unable to protect themselves in their early years their vulnerability was taken advantage of by those that should have protected them. They were abused and their personal boundaries were violated and their innocence was taken away. The distress this caused went very deep and has never been properly healed. Anything that stresses them now is reacted to as though they are being abused and they display stress to demand their own way in everything. Victims are usually members of the 'Whine Club'. Anything that disturbs their wounds is complained about. Complaining can become their major way of talking about anything. If you complain about their complaining they will treat you with contempt and probably become verbally abusive towards you.

In their eyes they are the innocent one who is being so abused, how else can they respond, what else could anyone including God expect of them in their circumstances. They see themselves as a product of their circumstances and refuse to accept any responsibility for the ungodly way they treat others. It is a form of escapism.

They have perfected acting the martyr. No one suffers like them yet they are hardly aware of the suffering they cause. They hate to apologise, why should they everything is always somebody else's fault. They are persuaded that they are suffering far more than you are so you must bow down and worship their needs like they do. They demand your love but are unable to give any back.

In effect they are waiting to be rescued from their circumstances without taking responsibility for their own condition. When someone they hoped would rescue them fails, as they inevitably will, they are then treated as their abuser.

Whatever we have done or had done to us God is able to restore us so we can achieve in our lives everything He has ever wanted us to. In one way we are all victims as we never chose to be born or nurtured in the way we were but to act the victim is to insult the greatness of God's immense salvation and gives the Devil credit for having the power to afflict us when he only has that power because we gave it to him. I pray that the prayers suggested in the next section will enable you to overcome all the Devil's schemes to keep you from obtaining all that is available to you in Jesus Christ.

Our Cross

In the scripture above [Luke 9:23-25] it also mentions that we need to take up our cross daily. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:31 said that he died daily to himself. There are other scriptures that stress the importance of this too.

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. [Matt 10:37-38]

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. [Luke 14:27]

The cross was a method of execution. Even though we may have wholeheartedly repented of being self-centred we can restart being selfish at any time so to die to self is something we need to do every day.

Verily, verily, I say unto you. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

[John 12:24-25]

To stop being self-centred is actually the most selfish thing we can possibly do because it pleases God and leads us into the highest quality of life we could possibly live now and in the age to come.

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

[John 10:10]

To take up your cross means to stop living to please your selfish desires and to start living to please God. We need to love God above everything else including any other person, possession or pursuit. Some astute person once wisely said that if you have not found something you are prepared to die for you have not found anything worth living for.

The Flesh

In the scriptures the word flesh is used to refer to our physical bodies but it also has another meaning not used in everyday English. When the focus of our life is on God's gracious and loving ways we are called spiritually minded but when we focus on self-centred things we are called fleshly or carnally minded. The original Greek word for flesh in the scriptures is also sometimes translated as carnal.

For they that are after the flesh (selfish nature) do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal (selfish) mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh (selfish nature) cannot please God.

[Rom 8:5-8]

Now the works of the flesh (selfish nature) are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication (sexual immorality), uncleanness (impure desires), lasciviousness (shameless lust), idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance (contentions), emulations (aggression), wrath (anger), strife, seditions (divisions), heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (self control): against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh (selfish nature) with the affections and lusts. [Gal 5:19-24]

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh (selfish nature), but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. [Gal 5:13-17]

When we first come to God we are all to some degree carnally minded.

... but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. [Rom 7:14]

A major cause for not breaking free of habitual sin is that we have not turning away from being carnal (self-centred). We are in effect being superficial or half-hearted. To yield our selfishness to God and see our flesh dead on the cross is of primary importance in living out our new life in Christ successfully. Jesus won the victory over our flesh on the cross for us but we are responsible for receiving by faith and applying that victory.

So how do we work with the Lord to put off the flesh and get our mind renewed?

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized (immersed) into Jesus Christ were baptized (immersed) into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man (selfish nature) is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. [Rom 6:3-6]

reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. [Rom 6:11-13]

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. [Rom 12:1-2]

God has made it so simple but if we are hardhearted we can find it tremendously difficult to do. To change all that is required is that through faith in God we repent of, present and yield our old nature to God. We can try to deny ourselves in the strength of our own will power and not by faith but this is doomed to failure.

If we consider the urge to act self indulgently to be like an accusation made against us in a law court that is claiming we cannot endure life without satisfying this desire, then to deny self can be seen as making a denial before that court that the accusation is not true. If we stay silent we will be sentenced as guilty. If we deny the accusation (temptations urges) we will overcome because the evidence on our side is the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. We need to state our case to overcome.

Lord there are passions stirring in me that demand I behave selfishly. I confess, renounce and repent of obeying the flesh and I yield myself to You. By faith in Jesus Christ I proclaim my flesh is crucified on the cross in Jesus. I declare that I desire to live a godly life in the Holy Spirit and that I choose to no longer obey the tempting lusts of the flesh. I resist and break all my ungodly desires and habits in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Many stumble because they do not fight in this manner and keep silent and secretly welcome the temptation to overcome them. More about this in Section Six - The Victorious Heart.

Brokenness

as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured *it* on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, **Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.** [Mark 14:3-9]

the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, **Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.** [1 Cor 11:23-24]

Jesus let His physical body be broken for us. Now in service of Him He asks us to allow our old self centred nature be broken so that His attitudes may be able to grow in us and flow from us instead.

Before our nature is renewed and transformed by the Lord our inner man can be compared to a crippled person who has several broken bones that never healed correctly. To heal us God needs to reset our spiritual bones. It sounds frightening but the heavenly physician knows how to give us just the right amount of anaesthetic that we need to help us through, His love.

If we refuse to let our selfishness be broken we are not able to have our hearts made whole. This can also stop us receiving physical healing too. This is not the whole story though there are several other reasons why problems can linger in our lives. Many of those reasons will be found in the next two sections.

The majority of the prayers suggested are grouped together in Section Five - The Restored Heart. This has been done in an attempt to make them easier to refer to after someone has read the whole book.