

tinue to live still in so much failure?

Alone with the Lord, I was unhappily recognizing again my unsatisfactory level of obedience to Him. I realized that after all He had taught me about His absolute trustworthiness, my problem still was my feeble trust of Him. I was afraid of what might happen if I always obeyed Him. So I scribbled in my journal, "Everything God asks of me is good"

The consequences of obeying God are never bad! They are always good. They may sometimes be difficult or painful, but never bad.

Will I accept the difficult consequences, the painful consequences of obeying God? If not, I do not trust Him. I'll find myself yielding often to my will, rather than His, and to temptation. I'll be spiritually depleted and weak.

My heart must say, "Everything He asks of me, or ever could ask of me, is good. Anything He would take from me is bad for me, even if it seems good" Obeying Him then will be easier.

### **Every Thought a Prayer!**

You may find a considerable asset in quietly, comfortably, yet earnestly, seeking to commune with the Lord throughout the day. We're constantly thinking and talking to ourselves. These conversations with ourselves don't generally tend to be filled with God, or love, or worship of Him or even with selfless concerns to benefit others. They are largely me-centered.

We talked earlier about the need of God getting our attention. You may have tried to turn more of your thoughts toward Him, but without much success. The main benefit may have been to show you how much you really want your own thoughts and your own way, rather than His. The result should be to cast you on Him to change this.

Trust Him, then, to place Him increasingly in the center of your thought life. Let Him teach you to quietly converse with Him so habitually that every thought may become a prayer. Commit it to Him in quiet confidence that He will do it.

Then look to Him to see if He would have you apply yourself energetically to the practice. Be prepared under His direction to diligently seek to turn your thoughts, one by one, toward God. Be equally prepared for Him to direct you to rest in Him to do it.

You are uniquely His. He is uniquely yours. Let Him direct you uniquely. But be sure to ask Him to make you sensitively aware of His guidance. Let Him choose the means of putting Himself at the center of more and more of your thoughts until, at last, your thinking becomes truly praying.

### **Communion Based on Transformed Attitudes**

Let Him change your selfish desires into unselfish ones, your self-centered thoughts into God-centered thoughts. May your communion and communication with Him become the reflection of transformed inner attitudes, attitudes that are loving, trusting, meek, unresisting, needy, dependent, receptive, quiet, and peaceful; attitudes that God works in us as we trust in Him to do it and accept His direction of our responses.

Remember that the more genuine, honest, and open this conversing with God becomes the better. Otherwise, even your conversation with God will tend toward selfishness and pretense, and will be filled with tension, worry, and fear. Becoming an obligation of the flesh, it will be a source of bondage rather than the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

However little your progress may seem to be in seeking to turn from conversing with yourself to conversing with your Lord, never relinquish it as a vital goal. Keep it before you in rest and peace. But if it comes to a choice, let there be no contest above all focus on Him, His praise, His glory, His rest, and His peace.

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By: Pastor Ron Marr

*"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."*

Philippians 2:12-13 KJV

We may find it strange if we discover that even having the golden key to the golden secret seems not to be enough to secure that closeness to the heart of God in love, rest, and peace that our renewed spirits long for. We may still find ourselves returning repeatedly to a sense of failure.

If we do, may we let our continuing failure merely reinforce our recognition that all is of God, nothing of ourselves. He alone is our hope. Nothing we think, do, or say is of any benefit or value whatever unless it is born of His Spirit and enabled and empowered by Him, not at this crucial point in our journey with God any more than it is at any other.

From the beginning we have chosen separation from God, not He from us. From the beginning He has sought us out and drawn us to Himself. It is He who continues to do so.

Still, we need to be reminded that this provides no room for spiritual laziness, carelessness, or irresponsibility on our part. The Spirit of God has placed within us the desire to live in holy harmony with Him. So He places within us the desire to do those things and maintain those attitudes that make it possible for us to avoid that which distances us from Him and maintain those attitudes that assist us to better respond to His drawing.

### **We Must Do the Responding**

As we once responded to His dying love, so must we respond repeatedly to His living, undying love. Phi-

## DAY BY DAY

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Philippians 2:13 can't be separated from Philippians 2:12. It is the God who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure who asks us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

God does all He can to induce us to respond in love to Him. The one thing He won't do is respond for us. He has left that to us.

### Burning the Trash

The God of love is also the God who is a "consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). Sooner or later to be purely love, He must consume or commit to eternal fire all in this universe that destructively resists His love and grace. Until He does, no restoration of universal love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance can occur. Until He does, there can be only a continuation of the world's hurt, pain, agony, and anguish.

Always remember this: His love demands that all be made right in final judgment. But we need not wait for that day to receive many of the benefits of His love and end much of the pain attendant on refusing it.

### Sins Aren't the Accident of Circumstance

*"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"*

~Jeremiah 17:9

The Hebrew suggests that the heart is crooked and slippery, treacherous and untrustworthy, turned against God. Sins are a natural effect of the character of the unregenerate human heart, not simply the accident of circumstance. Sinful rebellion against almighty God remains the character of the old man of the flesh even in the redeemed child of God.

Positionally, the old man was crucified with Christ; but in everyday practice, something has to change. In the final analysis, this isn't something we can do. God must effect the change if it is to be accom-

plished.

The Lord must bring us to the end of our self-righteousness, self-effort, and self-dependence. In reality this comes only by the cross through pain, suffering, and death. Paul longed to "know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10). So must you and I.

God sends or allows in our lives troubles and trials, difficulties, sickness, separation, loneliness, financial loss and deprivation, loss of reputation, uncertainty, and failure. As we stop resisting and resenting these, as we accept them as His gifts of love, we become weak, needy, and dependent. In this is our hope.

### His Strength in Our Weakness

Paul asked God to take away his thorn in the flesh only three times. Once the Lord had showed him it was sent for His eternal benefit, he stopped asking. As nearly as we know, he lived contentedly, even gratefully with it the rest of his life.

God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). To paraphrase, God was telling Paul, "If you want My strength, you're going to need to be constantly reminded of how weak you really are. If you're going to depend on Me, you're going to need to be reminded how futile it is to rely on yourself."

Paul accepted God's wisdom and chose to value the infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses the Lord permitted to be his. (See 2 Corinthians 12:10.) Paul realized it was only as he was made weak that his foolish, sinful heart was willing to take its life and strength from the Lord.

The God of the entire universe waited within willingly, lovingly, longingly, to give Paul all he needed. Just so, He waits in us. May God enable us to make Paul's choice ours.

### Hope Even for Us

Have you found it extraordinarily difficult to grasp what you've been reading so far? Has there seemed to be little desire in your heart to put it into practice? Perhaps you haven't yet been prepared by the humbling of your pride, the breaking of your stubborn rebel will. You haven't yet been brought down to a place of need sufficiently deep to desire what the Lord has for you in Himself whatever the cost.

Tell God it's so. Give Him permission to tear away all the crutches of the flesh and to make you really needy. Ask Him to create in you a nonresistance to what He sends your way, even the least humanly acceptable. Ask Him that you may someday be able, by His grace, to welcome all that tears you from other loves than Him. Ask of Him grace that you may be able to begin hugging to your breast whatever He sends as His messengers of love.

Whatever the circumstances, He can teach you increasingly to accept them from His own good hand of love without resistance. He can enable you to thank Him that, in them all, He seeks ultimately to bring you more of Himself. As you lovingly yield to Him and His eternal purposes, He will give you Himself more fully.

### Embracing Change

Let's remember that He is in us, our hope of glory, and that we are in Him where we can rest at peace as we embrace His transforming work. Let's give Him our attention. Let's withdraw peacefully into the chapel of our spirits, relinquishing all to Him. Let's remain there as much as possible, residing and abiding in Him, His love and peace, receiving of His life. Let's cast ourselves into His arms of love.

Let Him teach us to let Him have the place where He belongs' fully in charge of drawing us to Himself and of all else, too. Let Him teach us to take the place where we belong, trustfully at rest in Him, relying on Him to draw us to Himself and meet every need we have of whatever kind.

### What Hinders?

Why do we try to make this our practice, yet con-