

23 Jan 2007

[The will of God and doing what God wants](#)

Submitted by theshovel

I am definitely enjoying what I have read so far. I am sensing much agreement. From what I have read so far, it seems as if you are basically saying that Christ IS in us and living through us. We just have to realize this and rest in it and stop living under law. What about all the things the bible tells us we should and should not do? If, for instance, I am someone who is involved in sexual sin, should I continue in this or not? If I am someone who really enjoys getting drunk with wine now and then, how should I "not be drunk with wine" apart from law? I myself have a problem with knowing the will of God. I have left my second job in 8 months for "moral" reasons and am really frustrated with where I am at in my "career." Basically I have tried to discern the will of God in everything I have done and have kept myself from simply doing what I wanted to do (wanted for all the wrong reasons when I really looked at it: Pride, comfort, security, peoples praise) or thought was the "wisest" thing. I have even gone to the extreme of drawing lots to be sure it was handed over to his will (its every decision is from him after all). This assured me of my decision not being from my own fleshly desires but it also killed me by making it a law once I drew it. Anyway.... I am now in a position where I have a terrible resume and 4 kids to feed. I have no idea what God wants me to do and all the options I see make me miserable when I imagine pursuing them. When I pray for guidance, I get nothing. When I try to get off this "not my will but thy will" train and figure it out myself, I feel convicted and afraid of the consequences of my choices. I would really like to open up some dialogue if you have the time and the inclination. Thanks, John

Hello John, Okay, on to your questions:

What about all the things the bible tells us we should and should not do?

What makes you think the Bible is telling YOU to do or not do all those things? Do you think just because it's written down on paper in book form with your name possibly written on the cover that those things are directed at you and that you are somehow expected to fulfill whatever you happen to read? If so, you better get rid of that book before it kills you! :)

Let's face it, we've already figured out that we can't do many of the things commanded in the Bible because they pertain so specifically to certain individuals, times and/or cultures. But as we've been under the impression that the Bible is our instruction book we've had to grapple with determining which things we're supposed to be doing or not doing. Of course, we usually leave those determinations up to the preachers and teachers so we can focus upon what they have stated is our part. Why else do we think there are so many differences in interpretations and applications?

First of all, realize that it was Israel that was given the Law, and even then each individual was not being commanded by every word written in every book in the writings of Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets because many of the things addressed were specific commands to specific people over the course of many, many years. For example, the whole account of Gideon was not a set of instructions for all the people but for Gideon. Now, consider how we've turned the story of Gideon into a process for finding the will of God by using a "fleece" as he did. Funny thing is that Gideon's use of the fleece was that he wasn't trying to determine what God wanted him to do but to get around what he already knew God wanted him to do.

We've done this same kind of thing for every conceivable situation in the book that could possibly be applied to our guidance. Of course, there are countless ways we've interpreted the words to make them fit our own situations, and new denominations, church splits, doctrines, etc have sprung up to help define these different views and applications of the same words we've all been reading. Ah, the simplicity behind our confusion! :)

Let me ask a couple questions about your approach to the will of God. You say you're afraid of the consequences of your own choices, but then aren't you also expressing regret in the consequences of the decisions you believe God has led you to? Do you assume that God would not, could not be happy with anything you, his own child, might choose?

Thoughts?

Jim :)

Please share some examples of things we are told to do in the New Testament that we cant do? John

I am wondering if you are subconsciously aware that you misread what I wrote. I did not say things WE are told to do but things that were addressed to individuals living at the time of writing. Perhaps this appears as a small or unimportant distinction to you, but in truth it actually hits upon the very point I make. For the reason I suggested we couldn't do many of those things was that the possibility of even trying to do so has been long gone. We have so long read or heard the New Testament writings as a volume of commands having been written specifically to ourselves that we have great difficulty considering them for what is actually written. Depending upon our specific religious leanings or upbringings we have adopted new and inventive ways to make unrelated or even obscure segments and verses more applicable to ourselves.

Because of the difference in the way you were taught to view certain verses I could provide you examples that might seem totally within the scope of possibility. However, if I were to quote Acts 27:31b, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved", would you see it as a command to try to follow in order to be saved, or would you be more inclined to consider that its meaning was intricately tied to the historical situation of the speaker? Or in John 9, with the healing of the man born blind are Jesus' words "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," to be taken as a command to us ... or seen as specifically spoken to the man in question? In other words, can we remain in a ship that has long since deteriorated without forcing it to mean something other than what it was? While I'm sure many have tried to reproduce the situation in John can we go wash in the pool of Siloam and have our blinded eyes opened? The fact is that if we were considering these writings in their context we would not even think twice about most of these things.

My point is about where we draw our line, for we can't help but draw lines--perhaps subconscious ones--in order to make it all fit and allow us to approach the "commands" of the Bible in a doable fashion. Does this help explain what I wrote?

You say you're afraid of the consequences of your own choices, but then aren't you also expressing regret in the consequences of the decisions you believe God has led you to?shovel quote

If my kid comes to me for instruction in something I am an expert in and I give him the best advice out of love I can then he would be wise to fear the consequences of not doing what I said would he not? Not that I would punish him, but that he would not be choosing the wisest path.

I am questioning where I am at after trying to be obedient to what I have felt is the bible's message of denying ourselves, following after him, doing what he says, living as he lived. Not my will but thy will, no longer my own but bought with a price. Questioning the results, the fruits, the place I am in. I am not in a place of regret YET... just scared and "unhappy." John

Your argument about children taking their father's advice is a good one, however, it overlooks the amazing distinction of the father who dwells within through his spirit. The commands, or advice, of a father to a child who would stray without such commands is exactly how Paul related to the Galatians in their falling back to law as their guide to life and living. Just as Israel was a child needing to be escorted around by a governor, so are those who approach life as a series of commands, even if it had not been given to them to follow.

I do understand your questioning, I've been there. I don't regret having been there, nor how long it took to get out, for it was through my experiences there that his miraculous life has become seen all the more clearly. One thing I

discovered was that my attempts at obedience to what I read in the Bible became very relative to my own perceptions of the very same things you mention: "denying ourselves, following after him, doing what he says, living as he lived". Do you want to know what disturbed me in the process? It was the striving for technicalities. After all, if I was going to be obedient to these Biblical things I had to know what it was I was being obedient to, and so I had to more accurately understand the meanings of "denying", "following", "doing", and "living". There are so many different views on what all that really means. No matter how well I thought I was doing I would meet a more Biblically sincere someone who made sure to let me know that I was seeing it wrong. Often the judgment would come less from what the other would say and more from my own inner comparisons.

Perhaps you're not at the point of regret yet, but you're sure leaning in that direction.

Do you assume that God would not, could not be happy with anything you, his own child, might choose?shovel quote

I dont think God needs anything from me. I do think those that are his have a path that has been laid out for them to walk in and that there is a difference between living a crucified life under His soveriegnty and one that is directed by what we want or feel is best.

Hebrews 3&4 warn us to not anger him and fail to enter into His rest as they did. Hebrews 2:1-3 also seem to clearly indicate that God might not be happy with choices and that there would be consequences for this. John

What if there is another path ... one of resurrected life?

The letter to the Hebrews is one of the most misunderstood in all the NT letters because it is not considered in view of who it was written to and the situation at hand. I have a few things written about this here.

Jim :)

Thanks for the response. I certainly do not think that the distinction you are making is a small one, and am glad to receive a clearer understanding of what it means to "walk in the same manner as He walked" (1John 2:6)

In Matthew 7:24, after much instruction, Jesus compares EVERYONE that hears THESE words of mine and DOES them to EVERYONE who hears THESE words of mine and DOES NOT DO them. Would you classify the teaching He is referring to here as historically and specifically oriented as Paul's admonition to "stay in the boat?" Do you see Paul's instruction not to get drunk with wine to be as singularly addressing the Ephesians as Jesus' instruction to wash in the pool of Siloam was to the blind man?

Are you also saying that the scriptures about "denying ourselves, following after him, doing what he says, living as he lived" were not addressed to us? the scriptures that say "deny"

Tell me more specifically about what you mean by the resurected life and how we find/get on/stay on that path you are referring to. Peace, John

Hello again John,

Regarding this:

In Matt. 7:24, after much instruction, Jesus compares EVERYONE that hears THESE words of mine and DOES them to EVERYONE who hears THESE words of mine and DOES NOT DO them. Would you classify the teaching He is referring to here as historically and specifically oriented as Paul's admonition to "stay in the boat?"

No, I would not classify this in the same way. There is definitely an historical and specific understanding to what Jesus was saying, however, that doesn't mean it doesn't speak to a similar situation beyond that, even to us today.

The problem we have had with these words (and most others like that spoken by Jesus) is that because we have forced these words to fit into our religious boxes we have turned them around. In context, who "does" them ... and who "does not" do them? The harsh reality of what Jesus said did not give the religious preachers some good sermon material by which to hammer their congregations, but instead it put the preachers and teachers in the spotlight as those who were demanding the people should do what they themselves did not do. This is a timeless message because it reveals "lip service" for what it really is. It also speaks of the miraculous reality of the work of God in those who actually do God's will. The examples of the ones who were hearing and doing undermined the professed teachings on doing God's work. Jesus spoke of those who were despised, those who would never be regarded as doing anything of worth. Images of sinners, lepers, homeless, and the blind were issued forth in what Jesus said because these were the ones who heard him and came to him. It was not the teachers and preachers and holy men of God. The same holds true today, but we have turned them right around to say the exact opposite most of the time. We've let the religious establishment tell us how to understand such words. Remember, the religious leaders of Jesus' day did everything they could to appear to be keeping God's words. But with men this is impossible, with God all things are possible. It is Christ in me by which I do God's will and keep his words. Forget the programs and the acceptance factors by which men judge this. If we hear these words as demanded by the same religious mind that Jesus was rebuking we will get caught up in the same fallacy of trying to do the impossible. In our desperation we have automatically reinterpreted Jesus' statements. They may read, "everyone that hears these words of mine and does them", but we hear, "everyone that hears these words of mine and tries to do them". He that has the son of God has the life, he that does not have the son of God does not have the life.

Do you see Paul's instruction not to get drunk with wine to be as singularly addressing the Ephesians as Jesus' instruction to wash in the pool of Siloam was to the blind man?

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, Ephesians 5:18

To tell you the truth I don't see Paul's comments about getting drunk with wine to be the crux of his point, and therefore, not an "instruction" as we usually read it. Paul didn't bring up the comparison of getting drunk with wine for the purpose of making an instruction but as a contrast to what he was really highlighting, "filled with the Spirit". It seems the KJV did a better job translating this by stating, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit". Was Paul telling them to do something, or was he relating their former well-remembered excesses to the reality of Christ's spirit? While you can get too much wine, you can't get too much of the Spirit. Don't let yourself be controlled by too much wine, but by the Spirit of God. No doubt to those who may have still imbibed in too much wine, Paul's comments would have put that continued excess into perspective by the insanity of living by the spirit of Christ, but his message really had to do with what he had already stated:

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Ephesians 1:17-23

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. Ephesians 3:16-21

Jim

The problem we have had with these words (and most others like that spoken by Jesus) is that because we have forced these words to fit into our religious boxes we have turned them around. In context, who "does" them ... and who "does not" do them?shovel quote

Thanks again for the thorough reply. I am somewhat confused about specifically what you mean regarding the "turning around" of the words that Jesus spoke regarding things such as give to whoever asks, turn the other cheek, do not resist an evil doer, do not do your works before men, or pray in public, or show that you are fasting, or seek first the kingdom and its righteousness, or sell all your possessions. Jesus tells us "woe to the rich, those whom everyone speaks well of and the comfortable (and tells us the story of the rich man and Lazarus). He says not to store up our treasures here on earth and gives us the parable of the man who enlarges his barns to "save up" for a comfortable retirement. Do these things have application to us? How do they get turned around? John

I say turned around because the religious mind is still making its pretended or exaggerated show of doing in order to compare one with another. It has created this whole illusion in which the doers seem obvious and that those who don't follow these hard and fast rules are made to appear as those who do not do. It has once again been turned around in the exact way as when the religious leaders condemned Jesus as a sinner in view of their own adherence to the Law. That which is born of God will always appear as a sinner to the religious mind, and this mind isn't satisfied unless you appear as a sinner to your own eyes. This mind uses the words of Jesus, the one who was judged as evil by the good he did, and turns them around to make us question the miraculous reality of God within us.

Now, if you examine any one of these "commands" of Jesus (or the whole list as you have compiled it) and end up concluding that you just can't do it, you would be right. However, this is the mind of the flesh, the wisdom of man that examines such things to determine the how or the if or the exceptions. For any one of these "commands" I'll bet you could find an overabundance of information written with one slant or another in order to somehow make the deed doable.

Jesus said these things directly in connection (or in opposition) to the fleshly system of man's religion that had so meticulously created a slew of loopholes in the Law in order to establish its own hierarchy and authority in the things of God. In truth, their system had nothing to do with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but only with themselves. They quoted from Moses, but they did not believe Moses, in spite of all their lip-service.

Consider his statement,

Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. Matthew 5:42

This is a wonderful sounding concept that stirs a wishfulness in people who imagine what life could be like if everyone treated each other this way, yes? What did the people at the time hear? Well, some were only stirred with fear or anger or resentment because they valued their possessions above all. Who were the most affected? The religious leaders. Why? Because they knew that the scriptures they had been put in charge of was filled with examples of such generosity, not only from God but from some who had so little to give. No doubt there were many among the common folk who also reacted in the same way, but the fact is that their sense of possessiveness (at the cost of others) had been strengthened and justified by the teachings of the same religious leaders who were in the hot spot.

The question remains, How many, even of the selfishly corrupt crowd, were stirred by a hope that pulled them out of the realm of impossibilities so that they could only imagine that it might really be possible? I'm sure many of them were filled with a yearning that stuck around for a short while causing them to respond as he said.

So Jesus said to them, 'For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light' These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. John 12:35-36

Yes, there was a temporary benefit to their following Jesus that only ended up accentuating the need for that which was about to come. They could not, would not have missed its significance, for they all fell away when Jesus was taken away to die.

Do not do your works before men Matthew 6:1

Let's expand this with the NASB:

Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 6:1

Hear this according to the context of the situation. There was no mistaking who was included in Jesus' words. Feel the tension between Jesus and the Pharisees (and scribes, etc), as well as that of the disciples who must have been wondering when the religious weight might come falling down on top of them. It may have been liberating for many of them to finally hear someone denouncing the public show of the religious elite, these "men of God" who flaunted their own righteousness before all men, but they also realized that these supposed authorities of God had a lot of power and were being called out in front of the little people of Israel. EVERYTHING done by those who paraded themselves around before Israel was done to be noticed by them. Perhaps most of the crowd already sensed this, but who was going to say anything to them? And then, what would anyone propose instead?

It makes little difference if we can spot hypocrisy in others, but what are we going say, what are we proposing to replace it with if all we've known is fear and hypocrisy? For all who approach God without the spirit of God will only end up discovering nothing but hypocrisy. Jesus' words without his very presence would mean nothing at all. It was only after his death and resurrection, and then the indwelling of the spirit he sent that put these words in their true context.

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.' John 12:23-24

And you want to know what? In spite of the fact that Jesus Christ has already been glorified in having died as a seed to bear much fruit we still read these words as if they stood on their own. But they don't.

The yearning for living as he did is fulfilled in us who walk in the spirit. Not because we learn which things to do or not to do, but because we have been set free from the bondage of sin and death, the bondage of self, the bondage of religion. While we don't need to be told how to live we don't have to fear hearing what his life is made of. That which can only appear as difficult commands to the mind of the flesh sound very much different to the mind of the spirit. We hear HIS spirit resonate with our spirits. We hear the encouragement of real life as it flows from God.

Well, enough for today. I'll send this off lest I stop again and don't send it for a while. I know I haven't address all your particulars, and perhaps I will cover more of them, but I know that the more you see of Christ in all this the more you'll find you don't need all the answers. And I don't mean that in any kind of a condescending way, but that just from experience I've had numerous end up telling me not to worry about many of their issues because they had ceased being issues. That doesn't mean they were then able to figure out the rest of their questions, but that in finding confidence in Christ they were ready to move on in freedom, with or without those answers. :) I'll be waiting to hear from you.

Jim :)

Jesus said these things directly in connection (or in opposition) to the fleshly system of man's religion that had so meticulously created a slew of loopholes in the Law in order to establish its own hierarchy and authority in the things of God.shovel quote

Are you saying that Jesus never intended for us to actually DO the things he said? I dont see that Jesus said these things "in opposition" to the fleshly system of man's religion. It seems more that he is saying this is how you should live. Help me see the connection to the fleshly system of man's religion please. Unfortunately, I have to stop here for now... I would really like to find some time to address a few of the other things you said in this letter. In the meantime would you mind addressing some of my other questions and thoughts? I would really appreciate it.John

John,

Do me a favor and more carefully re-read what I've written, as your reactions suggest you're not hearing me. Life in Christ is so much better than what you're imagining. Consider this from Paul's letter to the Romans:

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Romans 8:1-4

I know you've asked me to address some of your other concerns and I believe what you wrote here to lie at the crux of the answer you really need. And please know that I do appreciate how you've stated this because it does tell me that you realize you may have missed what his life is all about.

This concept of the resurrected life is interesting to me because it seems as though either Christ is resurrected and working in us (actually), or it is not worth more than any other shot at what God might or might not have "said." The yoke feels hard and the burden heavy, which tells me it is either 1.its not true 2. I have the wrong yoke and burden 3. I need to change my definition of easy/hard and light/heavy 4. I am on the right track and need patience to endure to the end (what if Moses would have "quit" and left the desert a few days before the burning bush episode was ready to happen?) John

If Christ is not actually working in us then his resurrected life is only a concept, and is not worth more than anything else. And though you may not have grown up in a traditional church you have come to a similar viewpoint concerning Christ and his life. The thing I've seen about the Christian religion is that it doesn't know what to do with Christ's actual working in us (without making some kind of a show of it, that is). It holds doctrines about his resurrection and the giving of the Spirit, but it holds to it as being a concept, rather than life itself. The resurrected life of Christ is not an interesting concept ... it is all there is for us. It is what makes everything else make sense.

The Christian religion does hold Jesus Christ to be its central figure only because it has named itself after him. This is the biggest reason the words of Jesus have been so skewed. We hold his words as being super important, but we've likened them to the words of Moses. And we've highlighted them in red in some Bibles to make sure we realize how important they are. We miss what he said because we see the trees and not the forest, so that what we get out of them is law on steroids. No wonder the yoke feels hard and the burden heavy. Changing your definitions won't change the fact that you've taken on something other than what Christ came to bring. And you know this, don't you?

Consider what John wrote,

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ John 1:17

How do we keep getting law out of Christ? But it's simple. His life in us is relegated as a "position" which helps us to contain it in order to better understand it. Or so we think.

The reason you get so hung up on Jesus' words (and therefore the words of the others) is that you don't see that everything he said and did was all driving to one end, his glorification. Take the account of John where it was stated numerous times (starting in chapter 2) that Jesus' hour had not yet come, (And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come") and it's not until chapter 12 where Jesus says, "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour." "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end."

We read his words without taking into account that his hour had not yet come. That's why there is such a drastic change in the things Jesus said after John 12. You find the same thing in the other gospel accounts when Jesus began to tell them about the coming events.

From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's. Matthew 16:21-23

Why do you think they had such a problem with this (and you'd better believe it wasn't just Peter who had the problem)? This is the offense of the cross. The reason it's so preferable to keep Christ's resurrection as a concept, is that it requires the condemnation and death of the cross first. If you don't read the accounts of Jesus with this in mind you will never understand why he said and did what he did. Instead, you'll get a lot of things you're supposed to do.

I agree that the resurrected life is not only an interesting concept. When I said it was interesting to me, I did not mean as a concept, but as an experience. From the beginning, it has always been about the resurrected Christ actually working in us literally that has been my inspiration. It is not about morality or "getting it right" to me, but about a new creation. The fruit that "killed them" was the knowledge of both good and evil. because I think when he said deny/pickup/sell. I dont think I have experienced the resurrected life, and would like to hear more about what it is to you experientially and practically. John

If it has always been about his actual life in you then how do you say that you don't think you've experienced it? Here you say always, but I see a real conflict when it comes down to your perception of real life. I mean, I'm right with you when you say it's about the new creation, I just don't see that panning out in how you view most of what you say.

How do you see my viewpoint concerning Christ and his life as simmlar to the traditional church? John

I thought I stated that rather clearly, but let me try again. It is this: You are not real sure how Christ's life is supposed to fit in with real life, but because you assume it's supposed to be of major importance you view Christ's words very much as you do Moses' words ... but with more emphasis. Consider how the author of Hebrews says something similar to this:

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at

the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. Hebrews 2:1-4

In what way were these Hebrews being told to pay much closer attention? Did it have anything to do with following stricter commands than what was found in the Law? What is this "so great a salvation" being spoken of? The answer is found all through the letter of Hebrews, and it has everything to do with how amazing and complete Christ's deliverance really is, and yet somehow we still think in terms of following the new set of Christian commands. That's what I'm mostly hearing from you.

The yearning for living as he did is fulfilled in us who walk in the spirit. Not because we learn which things to do or not to do, but because we have been set free from the bondage of sin and death, the bondage of self, the bondage of religion.shovel quote

Then why did he tell us that no one can be his disciple unless they deny themselves, pick up their cross, and sell all of their possessions? John

This is one place where you seem to be totally missing what I've written, especially in the last letter. It's as if you're ignoring the distinction of CHRIST'S cross while asking about his statement where he told them to take up their cross. Don't you see that the one is meaningless apart from the other? Consider this: Why did Jesus say a lot of things about following the Law of Moses if he was going to free us from its bondage and then send his witnesses to tell us that we were dead to the Law and alive to God? Consider the fact that those he spoke to did not have the spirit of God in them, for Christ had not yet given his life. He even told his disciples that they would come to understand his words when the spirit was given. If we are trying to understand the meaning of Christ's words in a way that may have made sense to his disciples before they had received the spirit then we will be as confused about those words as they were.

Check out the articles from the Shovel Writings on Taking up the Cross.

What if we have not been set free? John

If Christ has set us free then we have been set free. What are you really asking?

While we don't need to be told how to live we don't have to fear hearing what his life is made of. Do you mean we don't have to fear getting "his life" wrong? If not, please explain what you mean that we don't have to fear hearing what his life is made of. John

That fear would indeed fit within what I was saying, but there is something more behind it. Hearing what his life is made of can come from anywhere. We can hear his life in the everyday world, in our everyday lives, from those who would deny his very life. How? Through his spirit in us. We can hear his life through a movie or in a song that has nothing to do with him because in him we already have that life flowing through us. We can hear his life even in the commands of the law ... despite the fact that the preaching of the law brings death. One is the mind of life, the other is the mind of death. When we hear the words of Jesus demanding that their righteousness must surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees we can know that he was speaking of the miracle to come, the miracle of his life that is now within us. We don't have to wonder why Jesus or Paul spoke of the law, nor why they used the law to show the superiority of faith in Christ.

That which can only appear as difficult commands to the mind of the flesh sound very much different to the mind of the spirit. We hear HIS spirit resonate with our spirits. We hear the encouragement of real life as it flows from God.shovel quote

What if we dont hear this? John

Do we not hear it or are we chalking it up as being something else?

Are you saying that with the mind of the spirit we dont hear a command when, for instance, Paul says dont get drunk or Jesus says dont resist/sell your possessions," but instead we hear encouragement in that we dont want to do those things? I am still so lost on where you stand on how we live and why they said these things if they have no practical application. For instance, in addressing Matt. 6:1 about practicing your righteousness before men, you emphasize the tension between Jesus and the Pharisees, and their inclusion in this group of those who do what they do to be notices by men. While I dont disagree with your assessment of what may have been going on, I am not clear on what your point is regarding whether or not this is an instruction. Practically speaking, what does this have to do with us. John

Consider what Jesus told the rich young man who asked him what he needed to do in order to be saved: sell everything you have and follow me. Why did he tell him that? Was it so that we would know how to be saved? Many Christian folks think so. But they could only consider it that way as long as they ignore what Jesus told his disciples later. "Who then can be saved?" You have to catch the whole thing to get past the idea that in order to follow Jesus we must sell everything we have. What Jesus told the man had everything to do with his professed self-righteousness, for he told Jesus that he had done everything that the Law required. "All these things I have done since my youth, so what else do I need to do?" The man wanted Jesus to validate his claims of fulfilling the law by also succeeding to do whatever else Jesus would add on. Jesus didn't add on, he instead revealed the man's inability to fulfill the law he claimed to have kept. Had he truly loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself? His concept of keeping the Law was merely in form, he followed rules in an external manner. He probably did a great job at it. But in all his "keeping" his real life was untouched, because he thought his life consisted of what he possessed. Jesus could have given him the command to "stop thinking that your life consists of what you possess" and the man could have added that to his list of rules to follow. Jesus instead left him EXACTLY where he wanted him: He left painfully aware that he could not do what was required! The truth of the matter was that Jesus disciples were also left in the exact place he wanted them. They had assumed the very same thing anyone in Israel would have assumed. If this rich, obviously blessed-by-God, law-abiding man could not be saved, then who possibly could be? What's the answer? What do you hear?

If Jesus told the crowd not to obey God according to the currently taught and accepted practicing of righteousness in order to be seen by men ... then what was the alternative? The fleshly mind really doesn't understand what it means outside of doing it before men in order to be seen. HOW does one NOT do this? There is a more fundamental reality behind this than in adopting it as a command to try to follow. It DEMANDS something miraculous, it demands reality and truth and life. They were made to long for this miracle. Surely many of them were made to hunger and thirst for TRUE obedience to God, which is something from the heart.

Follow the whole account of Jesus past the point where he gave these supposed set of Christian commands. Discover how the exact same people who were all Gung-ho ended up little by little rejecting him. They also discovered that they didn't have it in them. They thought they were keeping the Law ... Jesus said, let me tell you what the Law really demands. They understood outward compliance. I think many of them also knew that the scribes and Pharisees were a bunch of hypocrites, and for sure they knew it after Jesus and John the baptizer publicly denounced them so often. They came running to Jesus in great hope that he would rescue them as a nation, but all they ended up seeing was that he was their greatest disappointment. It was exactly where they needed to be. And then came the miracle!

Regarding Paul's comments about not being drunk. Drinking to excess is insanity; even unbelievers have come to understand that. Perhaps that was our own experience. I'm not saying his statement is not full of wisdom in his comparison, for it is. I love hearing his comparison and contrast in these words. It witnesses to my spirit of the absurdity of the flesh, especially in terms of the insanity of fleshly fulfillment. There is no such thing, and it will always, always disappoint. In hearing Paul's words, I'm sure the people reflected on the insanity of their former lives (what they were according to the flesh) in trying to satisfy something that could not be satisfied. Just to hear, "Don't be filled with wine but be filled with the spirit" was real life to them because their former experience of being filled with wine not only testified to the sanity in not being drunk, but more importantly it testified of the true satisfaction of the spirit. While you can get too much of anything fleshly, you simply cannot get too much of Christ.

If you don't see real life application in that you need him to open your eyes to see it.

Jesus said why do you call me Lord, and do not do what I say. Do you think that is for anyone who would call him Lord? Do you think this applies to the teachings we have in the bible? John

What I'm going to say should sound very repetitive to you ... because it is. WHO was calling him Lord ... and WHY was Jesus calling attention to them and what they were claiming? It is exactly for the reason that they were making false claims. They were supposed to be the "spiritual" people, the leaders of Israel in things of God. They needed to hear Jesus say this to them, and so did the people who were hearing him slashing into their "righteousness". The people of Israel were under the impression that, despite all their complaints against their leaders, that they still spoke for God, and therefore they needed to do whatever their spiritual leaders told them to do. Jesus took the very scriptures their leaders used and made it perfectly clear that God had nothing whatsoever to do with their form of fleshly obedience. What did the people come to say about Jesus? That his teaching was not like that of the scribes and Pharisees, but that Jesus spoke with authority, that is, as one who REALLY spoke for God. It was the contrast to the hypocrisy the people had experienced, the same that they tried to emulate in order to be like them, that made Jesus been seen as no other.

Realize that there is a night and day difference between one who calls Jesus "Lord" because it is required, and one who calls him Lord because of the spirit. EVERYTHING is different. It only sounds the same according to the flesh. It is a theme in 1 John regarding the claims of the deceivers versus the reality of those who are born of God. The one desperately wants to appear so and loves to flaunt it over another, while the other find himself questioning it because what he sees in himself doesn't seem to compare. One is form, the other is reality.

It may help me understand if you could address these two thoughts from before:

I am somewhat confused about specifically what you mean regarding the "turning around" of the words that Jesus spoke regarding things such as give to whoever asks, turn the other cheek, do not resist an evil doer, do not do your works before men, or pray in public, or show that you are fasting, or seek first the kingdom and its righteousness, or sell all your possessions. Jesus tells us "woe to the rich, those whom everyone speaks well of and the comfortable (and tells us the story of the rich man and Lazurus). He says not to store up our treasures here on earth and gives us the parable of the man who enlarges his barns to "save up" for a comfortable retirement. Do these things have application to us? How do they get turned around? John

I say turned around because the religious mind is still making its pretended or exaggerated show of "doing" in order to compare one with another. It has created this whole illusion in which the "doers" seem obvious and that those who don't follow these hard and fast rules are made to appear as those who do not do.shovel quote

--OK, it seems you are saying the religious mind "turns it around" to indicate the "righteous." Am I correct? The question about whether or not these things have application to you and I remains unanswered by this. John

"Application" has more to do with trying to make something fit that we don't really think does fit. We keep trying to make Biblical application because it doesn't appear real to us. Application is more times than not just another way to apply law.

In this case, how could the truth of what I've written NOT seem real? Comparison is what drives the flesh, especially religious flesh. If you don't know this as truth you still know it as a reality. You've lived it, you've compared yourselves to others in your attempts to satisfy that nagging suspicion that you are not very spiritual. The truth is good news to you. It testifies a reality your heart longs to be convinced of, and that is that despite how well others claim to be doing you are not less because of it. It should free your mind from the lie that keeps you always comparing. Hey, I know this in my own experience. It was the thing that ate my lunch! Compare, compare, compare! My father testifies the truth to my heart that I don't have to be intimidated by what others say or do or think. I don't have to listen to the lie of the religious mind (especially not my own) that condemns me!! Neither do

you.

While I agree with you about Paul encouraging being filled with the Spirit, I don't see where that changes the fact that he said NOT to get drunk with wine. According to the United Bible Society Handbook Series "The verb is the present tense of the imperative and so may be read "Stop getting drunk with wine" John

See how they say that it MAY be read that way? Perhaps they assume it reads that way because it fits with what they believe about living life according to Christian principles rather than according to faith. You probably realize that all of the writings in the NT section of the Bible have been turned into Christian rules and regulations.

Help me to see how that is not instruction. I do not mean to be argumentative AT ALL. I agree with your point about the emphasis being on the filling of the Spirit INSTEAD. I just don't see how Paul was not also saying stop when he said stop. While I might want to be filled with the Spirit, that does not mean that I don't enjoy and desire to be drunk on wine as well. When faced with the opportunity and desire to imbibe, what to DO? Would Paul say, that was not my point, if he were asked by someone about to drink heavily about what he should actually do? John

I really don't think Paul was so shallow as to play into an obvious set up. But would he tell someone that a certain view based upon his own words was not his point? Why not? He seems to have indicated that very sentiment on more than one occasion (for example, read the end of 2 Corinthians where he slams those who compared themselves against Paul or in Romans 3 where he wrote, "And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), 'Let us do evil that good may come'? Their condemnation is just.")

Paul was obviously more concerned with WHY the believers perceived things as they did, for he knew what drove a law-breaking mentality. It was the LAW itself. And that is exactly what he insisted to them over and over again. If a believer really wants to get drunk then the real issue is WHY? What's behind it? Do you really think it's just a matter of following the principle of not getting drunk? A command to not get drunk will only end up playing into one's downfall into that very thing. Those who get drunk are trying to escape reality, unsuccessfully so, but that's what they are attempting. If someone came to Paul who was truly struggling with an uncontrollable urge to drink himself into drunkenness he would know better than anyone that to give the brother a command would only stir up the urge to do that very thing as soon as he had opportunity. Paul would want him to discover true freedom from his insanity.

Jim :)

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