



Articles and Sermons :: Daily Devotions

Daily Devotions, on: 2010/10/19 7:04

1. Spiritual or Worldly Inclinations

Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version, unless otherwise stated.

Gal. 5:16-17 – “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

There is a serious obstacle in the spiritual lives of many Christians, and that is the uncrucified flesh. The flesh refers to the old, sinful nature of believers (the old man or the old self) and therefore represents worldliness emanating from a carnal mind. The flesh is only crucified in principle when one is saved, and this offers you the possibility of prevailing over it through the cross of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. The command in Gal. 5:16 is very clear: “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” But the next verse (Gal. 5:17) describes the obstacle of the old self that must first be overcome before you will be able to live unrestrained and victoriously in the Spirit.

The flesh and the Spirit are contrary to one another; consequently, you are not really free to follow the guidance of the Spirit and to doing the things that you wish. How should the obstacle of the old nature be removed? By crucifying it. You should fully surrender yourself to the Lord and ask Him to crucify the flesh with its lusts and desires – that old self who is still inclined to the world and to sin. If you do not fully surrender yourself you will never prevail over sin and make no progress in your spiritual life. This is a condition for the filling of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit cannot fill and control you before the old nature has been crucified. Paul says that he glories in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, “by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14).

After you have taken this step, the Holy Spirit will endue you with the new nature of Jesus Christ, which will allow you to daily grow up to spiritual maturity. Will you fully surrender yourself? Paul charged the Ephesians, “that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24). To the Colossians he said, “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man” (Col. 3:9-10).

Most people fail to take this step, as was also the case among the Corinthians. Paul reproached them for their lax attitude and said, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” (1 Cor. 3:1-3). We should be saved from this deplorable state if we wish to be overcoming Christians who walk in the Spirit. The flesh inclines us away from the Lord by confining us to a small world of selfish interests, sin and worldly pleasures. The Spirit, on the other hand, has come to introduce us to a deeper life of godliness, the joy of the Lord, and victory over sin. You will have to make a choice.

Prayer: “Thank You, Lord Jesus, that You did not only come to forgive our sins and to save us but that You also sent the Holy Spirit to give us power to prevail over the forces of the enemy, to guide us into all truth, and to endue us with your divine nature. Make each of us willing to surrender ourselves fully and to put down the old nature and all its works that separate us from You. We surrender the flesh to be crucified as he often causes us to stumble and draw us away from You. Fill us with your Spirit and guide us along the way of victory, godliness and the bearing of fruit which befit repentance. Amen.”

2. Full Salvation from Sin

1 John 1:7-9 – “If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

These few verses encapsulate the secret of a victorious Christian life. We should walk in the light of God's presence. God revealed Himself to us through His Word. The psalmist says, "The entrance of your words gives light" (Ps. 119:130). Jesus Christ is the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John. 1:4). We also see the Father when we see Him, because in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). We can only be reconciled with the Father by virtue of Christ's death on the cross: "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7).

To walk in the light means to immerse yourself in God's Word and to stay in contact with Jesus Christ to the extent that you will be conscious of His divine presence which always surrounds you. He sees everything you do, and even knows your most secret thoughts. Nothing can be hidden from Him. Never allow the knowledge of your sins and weaknesses to drive you away from Him, but remain in the light and confess all sins of which the Holy Spirit convicts you.

In the light of His presence we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus as He speaks to us through His Word, He guides us through His Spirit, and we talk to Him in prayer. We should immediately repent from all sins of which we become conscious. This principle has already been established in Old Testament Times: "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Prov. 28:13). Don't deny that you have sinned because that would be self-deception. Confess all known sins to the Lord Jesus and accept His promise that He will immediately forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

If you maintain an uninterrupted relationship with the Lord Jesus by always walking in the light, you will enjoy the continued cleansing from sin by His blood. You must live under the blood and confess all sins the moment you become aware of them. Then, there will be nothing between you and the Lord. Always remember the rule: walk in the light! Don't tread any of the dark paths of sin on which you know that the Lord will not accompany you, e.g. worldly parties where people use alcohol, swear and conduct vain discussions. Paul says, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (Eph. 5:11).

Abide in the Lord Jesus and follow Him. He said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Prayer: "Lord Jesus, we realise that an uninterrupted relationship with You is the secret of daily walking in the light of your presence. We know that sins will separate us from You, and because of this we acknowledge the need to confess and forsake sins the moment we become aware of them. Keep us back from secret sins of which other people may not even be aware, such as evil thoughts, revengefulness, pride and the love of money. Together with David we pray: 'Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins. Let them not have dominion over me' (Ps. 19:12-13). We ask these things in your exalted Name. Amen."

3. The wonders of God's grace

John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

We cannot be saved without God's wondrous grace. All that is expected of us to accept in faith what the Lord is offering us. It is completely beyond the ability of man to save himself. This single verse refers to five divine wonders. These are all supernatural things which are outside the ability of human beings to accomplish.

The first is the wonder of God's love: For God so loved the world... This agape love only comes from God. It is a love which reaches out to supply the needs of others. It is so utterly self-sacrificing that it did not hesitate to pay the biggest price to save a lost world. This love is so big and magnificent that we cannot fathom its height, breadth or depth. It has a sublime nature which is completely different from the covetous love of fallen man, which is only aimed at exalting himself, promoting his own interests and dominating others. When the Lord saves our souls He pours out His agape love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

The second is the wonder of the gift: God gave His only begotten Son. There is nowhere on earth a perfect, sinless man who could offer himself as a substitute for sinners to pay the penalty for their sins. We were doomed. But Jesus Christ became man to sacrifice Himself as the spotless Lamb of God who died on the cross to atone for the sins of lost humanity. He is the supernatural God-man without whose sacrifice there would be no salvation to us.

The third is the wonder of faith. From God's point of view, all unsaved people are unbelievers whose minds have been

blinded by the god of this age, who is the devil (2 Cor. 4:4). The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and imparts to us the gift of faith to accept the Lord Jesus in faith as our Saviour.

The fourth is the wonder of preservation. Those who believe in Jesus Christ will not perish. Everything on earth is subject to ageing and perishing—nothing can escape this process. But the Lord offers us through His Son a life which will never perish. No human being can offer this to you, but the Lord extends this offer to all.

The fifth is the wonder of life: We can have everlasting life. All Christians receive the gift of eternal life from God. By His wondrous grace we receive a life which will continue forever in heaven. All unsaved sinners are subject to eternal death, but by grace we who believe received an immortal life.

Prayer: “Thank You, Lord, that You did not surrender fallen man to his fate. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, but by grace You freely saved all who believe in Jesus Christ. Work in the hearts of many people to accept this wonderful offer of salvation. Those who refuse it are faced with the grim reality of eternal death: ‘For the wages of sin death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (Rom. 6:23). We thank You for the precious gift of eternal life and accept it by faith. We ask this in Jesus’ Name. Amen.”

4. The Evil of Liquor

Eph. 5:17-18—“Do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.”

People’s lives are either dominated by sin which will drag them to hell, or by the Holy Spirit who regenerates and sanctifies them in preparation for a life in heaven. It is God’s will that we follow the way to heaven. If we don’t do that He calls us unwise people and fools who are responsible for their own spiritual ruin.

A big problem, also in ancient times, is drunkenness. Paul describes it as the opposite of a life under control of the Holy Spirit. Unlikely as it may sound, there are nevertheless people who try to justify the use of alcohol from the Bible. One of the most common arguments used by them is that Jesus made wine. It is a blasphemy to allege that the Son of God promoted the liquor industry by His miracle at the wedding in Cana. This act of Jesus was a miracle through which he demonstrated His deity. The Son of God would never have done anything that would detrimentally affect people’s lives. The same Jesus who warns us in His Word not to drink will not do anything which contradicts His teachings.

From the Old Testament it is obvious that different terms are used for liquor. This allows us to make a clear distinction between the types of liquor which God condemns and that which He recommends:

Jajin. This word occurs 133 times in the Bible and is consistently translated as wine. It is a well known fact that jajin was fermented, intoxicating wine. It is often condemned by the Lord (cf. Prov. 23:29-36; Hab. 2:15).

Tirosh. This term is used 38 times in the Bible. In 11 cases it is translated as new wine, 26 times as sweet wine and once in a neutral form. It is generally accepted that tirosh is unfermented grape juice, which is positively evaluated by the Lord (cf. Jer. 40:10,12; Ps. 104:15).

Shekar. This term is encountered 29 times and is always translated as strong drink or intoxication drink. The Lord condemns it, e.g. in Proverbs 20:1, where He says: “Wine is a mocker and intoxicating drink arouses brawling, and whosoever is led astray by it is not wise.”

In the Greek terminology of the New Testament, no distinction is made between the various types of liquor, and they are only translated as wine. But from information in the Old Testament one can easily determine which kind of wine Jesus would have made at the wedding in Cana—definitely unfermented tirosh.

The allegation that Jesus made intoxicating wine contradicts the whole Bible, and such allegations come straight from the devil. He is the big liar who comes in a highly deceptive way as an angel of light to deceive people (2 Cor. 11:14). It is in his nature to justify intoxicating liquor, and to defend and promote its use.

Who influences and controls your life? Is it the god of liquor, Bacchus, the god of money, Mammon, or any other idol or sin? “For by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage” (2 Pet. 2:19). The Lord Jesus has come to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). He sets us free so we don’t need to be slaves of sin. In the new life

which He imparts to us we are filled and controlled by His Holy Spirit.

Prayer: "Lord Jesus, give us the determination not to become slaves of sin, but to trust You for salvation and to live lives under the guidance of your Holy Spirit. We don't want to live licentious lives but lives which are well pleasing to You. Help us take the right decisions against sin and to always pursue your righteousness. Amen."

5. Self-destruction by Sin

Heb. 3:12-14 "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called Today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end."

Paul clearly indicates the destructive influence of sin. It is a cancer of the soul which, unless it is stopped, rages on until it has destroyed your whole life. Certain Hebrew believers are here addressed as brethren, but because of persistent sinning their hearts were hardened and they were on the verge of departing from the faith. That is the result of sin in your life: it attacks your faith in God and changes it into a weak, doubting faith which finally ends up in unbelief. Then, you only cling to an outward form of godliness, e.g. church membership and a confession with your mouth that you are a Christian, but in truth you are an unbeliever and a slave of sin.

When such people who call themselves Christians start treading the path of sin they should earnestly and repeatedly be warned against the disastrous consequences of their licentious lives. If that is not done, they will become harder and more unapproachable – even to the extent of getting cold and hard hearts which will determinedly resist the gospel. Exhort one another daily lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. The further a person strays from the Lord the more difficult it becomes to repent again.

Fortunately there are those who come to their senses during their wanderings, like the lost son who strayed from his father's house to lead a life of sin the world. Liquor, parties and immorality were the order of the day. When all his money was spent he also lost his worldly friends and did not even have food to eat. He eventually obtained work as a labourer on a farm. There, among the pigs, he realised what he has lost by yielding to sinful desires and defecting from his father's house. He came to his senses and said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you'" (Luke 15:18). His many sins were forgiven and he was completely restored.

Backsliding of this nature should be averted by persevering to the end on the way of the Lord without deviating on wrong tracks. Paul said that we should hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. This message was again repeated to the Hebrew believers, among whom this was a very common problem: "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:1-2). That is the narrow way of life. Do not fall short of the grace of God, but continue steadfastly on the way of the Lord without turning around and getting lost on wrong paths.

Prayer: "Lord, keep us from backsliding caused by wilful and persistent sinning. You warn us against the serious consequences of believers who again follow the ways of sin, and how they become spiritually indifferent and hardened during their wanderings. Thank You that You are merciful and pardons abundantly when such people return to You and kneel down before your throne of grace. Guide us along the paths of righteousness and teach us to cling to the hope of the gospel. This we ask with thanksgiving in the precious Name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen."

6. The bright and Morning Star

In Rev. 22:16 the Lord says, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

This Scripture firstly refers to the human origin of Jesus as a descendant of His earthly father, David, and then also to His heavenly origin, from where He descended to earth like the light of the morning star that shines upon the world from on high. He became man in the royal family of David to be able to sacrifice Himself as atonement for the sins of all humanity. We don't need to struggle on as slaves of sin and unrighteousness – the Son of David has come as Saviour to set us free. "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Jesus is not only man, but also God. Apart from His earthly father He also has a heavenly Father who sent Him as Saviour to a lost world. He came like the bright morning star which appears in the darkest part of the night, shortly before the breaking of day. Apart from the salvation and forgiveness of sins which He now imparts to people, He is also our hope of

a new day that will soon dawn upon this dark world. Then, the sun of righteousness will shine, driving away sin, unrighteousness and all the evil works of Satan. The saints will inherit the earth and, together with Christ, rule over it during His millennial reign.

In Jesus we have a hopeful future, like the promise of a new day which the morning star brings. We should study biblical promises and look forward to this wonderful time. These prophecies shed light upon the present dark world in which we live, and also ignite a strong hope on His second coming in our hearts. Peter says, "We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as to a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1:19).

Is the Lord Jesus in your heart, and do you have a strong expectation of His second coming? During His first coming He left His heavenly glory, came to the world and took the form of a servant to seek and save those who are lost. Although His love and saving grace were fully revealed to us, His glory as King and God were only partially revealed, like the light of the morning star during a dark night. At His second coming He will be fully revealed as King of kings and Lord of lords. In his vision on Patmos, John beheld Jesus in all His glory as the rider on a white horse, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and His hair were white like wool and His eyes like a flame of fire. Nothing is hidden to them. The question is: do you also expect Him and are you ready to appear before Him? To be able to appear before Him without spot or blemish your life must be washed in the blood of the Lamb. He is the heavenly Bridegroom and His true church includes all those who are born again. They will share in His glory.

Prayer: "We thank You, Lord Jesus, that You, who came to the world long ago to die for our sins on a cross, are coming again in power and majesty to rule over the world. We are looking forward to that day, when You will transform our lowly bodies to be conformed to your glorious body. We have already seen the bright morning star above the dark horizon of our earthly existence, and accepted its message in our hearts. We now wait for You to come as the sun of righteousness to dispel all darkness from the earth. What joy to belong to You and to be part of a wonderful kingdom which You have prepared for us. The hope on your coming is an anchor of our souls, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the inner part behind the veil where You intercede for us. Our hope is to remain faithful until that day. Keep us from acting like the foolish virgins whose lamps went out because they did not have enough of the oil of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Strengthen us to let the lamp of our faith shine brightly in this dark world until You come again. Amen."

7. The Need for a Clean Life

Eccles. 9:8 "Let your garments always be white, and let your head lack no oil." According to Ephesians 5:25-27 the Lord Jesus gave Himself to die on the cross in order to save and sanctify the church so we can appear before Him at His second coming in an unblemished garment.

The moral and spiritual aspects of our lives are often likened to a garment in the Bible, and the Lord Jesus says that this garment should be clean. It is of no avail trying in our own power to keep our garment clean as the weakness of our sinful nature does not allow for that. Isaiah 64:6 says that all our righteousnesses, i.e. all our best efforts, are like filthy rags. How should this garment then be kept clean? By the blood of the Lamb. We read in Revelation 7:14 of sinners who repeated: "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." John says, "The blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanses us from all sin." This is an ongoing process.

After our lives have been cleansed during repentance and salvation we should take care that they remain clean. We have an obligation to remain under the blood and refrain from wilful sinning. We cannot do this without the help of the Lord, who empowers us to holy living through His Holy Spirit: "Let your head lack no oil." That refers to the oil of the Holy Spirit, who alone can anoint and enable us towards holy living. The Lord poured out His Spirit on Pentecost so all of us can be filled with the Holy Spirit. He does not only convict us of sin but also gives us the power to resist and overcome sin and temptations.

Have you been washed with the blood of the Lamb and did you trust the Lord for the filling of the Holy Spirit to enable you to keep yourself pure from sin by His power? The Holy Spirit makes Jesus Christ a conscious reality in our lives so we can heed the command of Paul in Romans 13:14, where he says, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts."

Prayer: "We thank You, Lord, that You called us out of darkness into your marvellous light. Help us to walk worthy before You, that our garments will always be white and that the oil of the Holy Spirit will not lack in our lives. Cleanse us with the blood of Christ from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and help us to walk in the Spirit so as to be strengthened not

o yield to temptations. Make us more than conquerors that we may have confidence to appear before your throne. We are full of gratitude to You, Lord Jesus, that You came to destroy the works of the devil in our lives. Help us trusting You for complete victory over the flesh and sin. We ask this in the Name above all names. Amen.Â”

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