

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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Vol. 2 No. 1 Jan. 04, 2008

Phil 2: 13 – “For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”



ABSOLUTE SURRENDER

The radical disciple, who is walking the narrow road to holiness, cannot do so without absolutely surrendering all to God. What does this mean, exactly? What is absolute surrender? Madame Guyon, a 1700's French Christian and writer stated: "Abandonment means casting off all selfish cares in order to be altogether at God's divine disposal." That sounds like dying to self, doesn't it? The walk down the narrow road to holiness is the path one must take if he chooses to obey Jesus' command: "*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*"

Each of us must obey this command. We must deny the self; we must take up our cross (understanding what that means); and only then can we follow Jesus – on His terms.

In war, when an enemy is captured, he is made to reach his hands high above his head with fingers outstretched. The purpose of this action is so that the victorious soldiers can see whether he is hiding

any weapons until they can get close enough to search his body. Absolutely surrendering to God is similar. We cannot do so and attempt to hide something from God at the same time. We must come with our hearts and minds outstretched so that there is clearly nothing being held back. God sees our hearts and knows all things; but we must know, too.

Is this an easy thing to do? No, not at all; but it is a vital command that we must obey if we want all of God. He, first, must have all of us. "But what happens if I try and fail?" you may ask. Do you mean like Abraham and Moses; like King David and Elijah; like Peter and John? Did not each of them try and fail also? Each of us must learn that we cannot serve God, fruitfully, in our own strength. We must yield all to Him. He will then do His work in us. Yielding all to him *is* absolute surrender. It is a decision of the will. It is a determination that we are willing to serve God on His terms regardless of the cost, the pain, the suffering, or the embarrassment. It is the surrendering that becomes the yielding. It is what God does with us during the

yielding that brings about the difficulty. What then is difficult? **It is the obedience that is required of us when God begins to conform us to the likeness of Jesus.** He will change us and, as we know, change doesn't come easily. But it must come if we want to serve God on His terms. It is that obedience, in surrender, that constitutes the carrying of our cross.

THE PROPHET JONAH

You will not be the first person to groan and rebel when God commands you to do something you'd prefer not to do. Jonah was a prophet and there is no indication that he was a rebellious prophet. When God spoke to him about going to Ninevah to proclaim His word, it was too much for Jonah. It was too hard. Why? It was because he knew in his spirit that if he followed God's command, the Ninevites would respond to God's call. God would then have mercy on them and relent from the word that Jonah was to proclaim. And Jonah, in his own eyes, would become a fool. He was afraid to prophesy a disaster

that he knew would not come. Pride comes before the fall and Jonah, as we know, did fall. That pride and the unwillingness to let God be God is what caused him to run. But as King David said: Where can I run, Lord, that You will not find me? Oh, what happens when we allow the self to rule over us! Jonah's pride controlled his decision-making. Self is the exact opposite of God and it was proven so with Jonah.

So, Jonah ran away from God. But if God's hand is on you, friend, then running away accomplishes nothing. It was God that brought the storm that nearly capsized the boat on which Jonah was sailing. When Jonah realized that the sailors and other passengers were going to die because of his sin, he came to his spiritual senses, renounced his self, absolutely surrendered to the Lord, and gave up his life in order to save theirs.

You can run from God but you cannot hide from Him. You cannot get away and, much to your dismay, which you will find out soon thereafter, that from which you are running ran right along with you and is still with you when you finally stop running. Thank you, Jonah. You allowed God to use you to teach us a valuable lesson.

Let us run, but oh, let us run to God, not from Him. Run to him, in absolute surrender.

GOD ALREADY KNOWS

Psalm 139:16 states: *All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.* God knows everything about us; He knows our weaknesses and our strengths. He knows our desires and our dislikes. He knows when we're truthful and when we are lying. **God knows everything. So, when we yield to Him, we can do so with pure trust. He knows.**

You do not surrender based on your faith; you surrender based on His faithfulness.

The Scripture in Psalm 139 says: He has written down in His book all that you have said with your lips, all that you have desired in your being, and all that you have yielded from your heart. It is written in His book. There is nothing that He does not know. And if you have asked God to make you into that which He desires, there is nothing that He would rather do than honor that request. Yielding, then, should be a natural extension of that desire. You can trust God with your absolute surrender to Him. And remember, you do not surrender based on your faith; you surrender based on His faithfulness.

Absolute surrender is what Jesus did in His relationship to the Father. He only did the things the Father told Him to do. He only said the things the Father told Him to say. He was prepared to be obedient, even to death on the cross. And each of us, too, must surrender ourselves to God to do with whatever He pleases.

There is a world of difference between walking in God's perfect will and walking in our own will with God's blessing (or so we think). Asking God's blessing on *our* work is not Christianity. It is serving God on our own terms and hoping He will accede to it. God has no desire for us to do His work for Him. He didn't need our help creating the world or running it; and He doesn't need our help running the Church, either. God wants to do His own work, but He wants to do it through us. That can only happen if we are yielded to Him.

Absolute surrender imparts a freedom found in no other experience; creates a relationship with God found in no other way; and transforms us into that for which we were created found by no other means.

THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE

Having yielded to God, we will soon look back and say, "How could I have been so

stupid, so stubborn, so unresponsive, and so selfish? I was like a goldfish in a small bowl, swimming from one end to the other, not even realizing that I wasn't getting anywhere. I was hemmed in, limited by that which I had allowed myself to become. That which I thought was freedom was, in fact, rebellion and selfishness. That which I thought was weakness and irresponsibility is, in fact, true freedom." Think about that!

Throughout Christian history, the greatest of our spiritual giants, from Paul and John to the present, have all echoed what the Scripture says so succinctly (and yet, what we gloss over so crassly): Obedience is the path to spiritual growth. Obedience is better than sacrifice. Even prayer cannot be an acceptable substitute for obedience. Obedience comes through yielding all to God, allowing God to be the All in All. When we ask God to change us into the Christians that he wants us to be, He can only do so as we are obedient to that which He attempts to do in us.

Phil. 2: 13 – *"It is God who works in us to will and to act according to His good purpose."* Think about that Scripture as it pertains to yielding, to absolutely surrendering all to God. When we yield totally to Him, God chooses to work in our lives; He both wills and He acts according to His

divine, perfect purpose for us. And what is that purpose? It is to conform us to the likeness of Jesus (Rom. 8:29). Why can He do this? It is because we have yielded all to Him. We have asked Him to do it – on His terms.

If there is any hesitancy because of fear or concern, please hear this. God is faithful! **It is not your strength that is at risk here. It is God's faithfulness that is at risk. It is not your faith, or lack thereof, that is at risk here. It is God's faithfulness that is at risk. It is not your fear of the unknown that is at risk here. It is God's faithfulness that is at risk.** Is God's faithfulness really at risk? It can afford to be. It has never failed and it will never fail.

We need a yoke that is less burdensome, that doesn't weigh us down and oppress us.

COME TO JESUS

Matt. 11:28-19 – *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

One of the reasons we must yield to the Lord is to get out

from under the devil's iron yoke. We need a yoke that is less burdensome, that doesn't weigh us down and oppress us. In Jesus' time, the oxen were yoked, two together, for purposes of plowing the ground. The stronger ox carried the responsibility of plowing in a straight line; the weaker one, being yoked to the stronger, just followed along. He had no other choice. Jesus tells us to take on His yoke. It is easy and the burden is light. Why is this? It is because He is the stronger one and we will be yoked to Him. He knows where to go and how to get there. We just tag along. When we yield completely, we are attaching ourselves to the Lord – to go where He goes and to do what He does. The gospel of John tells us that being attached to Jesus is what allows us to bear fruit. *"Apart from me you can do nothing."* (John 15:5) He is the vine and we are the branches; and our responsibility is to stay attached to Him. As He tells us in the Scripture in Matthew, we then can have rest from the burdens of life because we are out from under the oppressive worldly yoke. And with His yoke, we will learn from Him and we will find rest for our spirit, as well.

In this day and age, it will become increasingly more difficult to serve God half-heartedly and maintain any semblance of true Christ-

ianity. God is looking for men and women who He can use to bring Heaven to earth. That has always been the case but now, the time is short. **There is a call coming forth from the heart of God and those who hear it must respond.** God is not looking for strong Christian men and women. He is looking for weak Christian men and women. He will supply the strength. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”* (Matt. 5:3)

Heaven is full of vaults of answered prayer, waiting to be released onto the earth.

THE PROMISES OF OBEDIENCE

The Scripture is full of great and wonderful promises to those who choose to be obedient. Heaven is full of vaults of answered prayer, waiting to be released onto the earth. Physical healing, spiritual healing, peace, joy, love beyond measure, safekeeping and power are among the wonderful things that God wants to bestow on every person on the earth. Why can He not do so? It is because too few, among us, choose to serve Him on His terms. Though we say we do, we really do not believe all that the Bible says. If we did, we would obey it. The Bible

is full of rich and glorious promises, but all come with conditions. If we do not meet the conditions (obedience), we do not get the promises. We simply need to be obedient to the word of God.

When we choose to yield to the Lord, to absolutely surrender to Him, we have embarked on a walk that requires obedience. And obedience ushers forth the promises of God.

Be obedient, dear friend. Yield to God. Absolutely surrender all that you are to Him. He is trustworthy.

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