

WALKING IN LIFE

*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; **are ye not carnal?** Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.*

I. Corinthians 3:1-8

The subject of this chapter is the fact that the believers at Corinth were still baby (ie: carnal) Christians; and one of the signs that they were carnal was the fact that they were dividing up into factions with regards to who they felt was the greatest minister who was ministering to them at that time. Then they would *associate themselves* with that particular minister. Some thought Apollos was greater, so they were associating themselves with Apollos. Others thought Paul was greater, so they were associating themselves with Paul. When Paul realized what was going on, he said: “*You’re all wrong; you’re all acting like the people of the world act*”. Neither I or Apollos or anything. We are just messenger and servants of the Lord. Christ is the one who is to be magnified. Christ is the one who needs to be followed. You should identifying with Jesus Christ. Then he goes on to speak against the “wisdom” that was behind all the division and the exaltation of men.

*Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. **For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.** For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. **Therefore let no man glory in men.** For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*

I. Corinthians 3:18-23

Paul said: “...*let no man glory in men*” because it’s the wisdom of *this* world that causes both the believer and the unbeliever to glory in men. That’s the end of chapter thirteen, but it’s not the end of this subject. The next chapter continues the same line of thought. Paul starts out by saying: “*Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*” (I. Cor. 4:1-2). Then, in verses six and seven he says:

*And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us **not to think of men above that which is written**, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*

1 Corinthians 4:6-7

So everything Paul is saying in the previous chapter, and in this one, is for the purpose of getting these carnal believers to stop thinking of men “above that which is written”, so they themselves will stop trying to exalt themselves above each another. Then he says:

*For I think that God hath set forth **us** the apostles **last**, as it were appointed to death: for **we are made a spectacle** unto the world, and to angels, and to men. **We are fools** for Christ's sake, but **ye are wise in Christ**; **we are weak**, but **ye are strong**; **ye are honourable**, but **we are despised**.*

1. Corinthians 4:9-10

Let me read this passage from the Contemporary English Version.

It seems to me that God has put us apostles in the worst possible place. We are like prisoners on their way to death. Angels [wicked] and the people of this world just laugh at us. Because of Christ we are thought of as fools, but Christ has made you wise. We are weak and hated, but you are powerful and respected.

Contemporary English Version

Here Paul contrasts the experience of those who have paid the price to have *their own* spiritual life and those who are merely partaking of *someone else's* life. The experience of those who have paid the price which is required to have their own life is that they are:

- ~ *Appointed to death*
- ~ *Made a spectacle (in the eyes of the world)*
- ~ *Fools for Christ's sake (in the eyes of the world)*
- ~ *Weak (in their own wisdom and strength)*
- ~ *Despised (by the world)*

The experience of those who have not paid the price to have life, and thus have no life of their own, but who are feeding off the life of those who have paid the price, is that they are:

- ~ *Wise (in the eyes of the world)*
- ~ *Strong (in their own wisdom and strength)*
- ~ *Honorable (in the eyes of the world)*

It's very easy to get some Bible knowledge under our belt, and then take that knowledge and start a "ministry" with it. This is what happens all the time to people who go to seminaries. They go to these schools of learning and their minds are stuffed with Bible knowledge and the theology of whatever religious group that school is part of. Then, when they are done, they are given a piece of paper with fancy little titles behind their names and they go off into some kind of ministry.

And this kind of thing is not limited to those *inside* the Religious System, with their great centers of learning, where they focus on theology and Textual Criticism. It's done all the time by those *outside* the system. In fact, it's much easier to do it *out here* because out here we are not required to have a certificate with fancy little titles behind our names. We are not required to have the official endorsements of religious leaders or institutions. All we need is some religious wisdom, some Bible knowledge, and some *human* talent, such as the ability to speak or write.

Even when God gives us a "gift" that can be used for kingdom service, we still have to realize that having a *spiritual gift* does not necessarily mean we are walking in *spiritual life*. Many people have received a genuine spiritual gift from God—as gift of revelation; a gift of healing; etc.—and have used that gift to glorify themselves and build their own little religious kingdom.

None of this has anything to do with the kind of ministry that comes from a vessel who has paid the price to have, and to walk in, the actual *life* of God. Knowledge about God and/or His plan, knowledge about the Scripture, and even receiving a spiritual gift, does not equal having the *life of God*. There is a price that must be paid in order to have life. In several places—one of which is in this chapter—Paul gives us a glimpse of what that price consists of. He says:

*Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day. **I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.** For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. **Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.***

I. Corinthians 4:11-16

Paul's list isn't very pleasant is it? Most Christians would never willingly embrace situations where they were thirsty and hungry; where they are naked and buffeted; where they had no certain dwelling place; where they are reviled, defamed, and made as the filth of the world; and where they are the offscouring of all things. In addition, most of today's preachers and teachers and apostles and prophets would not cotton up to the idea of laboring or working with their own hands!

In another passage, when Paul is forced to defend his own authority as an apostle, he gives some more examples of the price that's required to have life;

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

II. Corinthians 11:22-33 NIV

Here's another list that isn't very pleasant. And again, most Christians would never willingly allow themselves to be put into situations where they were frequently imprisoned, severely flogged, and repeatedly exposed to death. Most of us would *resist* things like receiving thirty nine lashes five times, or being beaten with rods three times, or being stoned once, or being shipwrecked three times, one of which we ended up spending a whole day and night (probably clinging to a piece of wood) drifting at sea. Most of us would resist situations where we were constantly on the move, or where we were in danger from rivers, from bandits, from other Christians, from the unsaved, from those in the city, from those in the country, etc. And few of us would relish a situation where the mayor of a city sends the police to arrest us.

But this is exactly the kind of experience Paul wishes the believers at Corinth would have when he said: "...*be ye followers of me*". He wasn't just telling them to accept his teachings or his ministry. He was telling them to follow *his example*. He was telling them to embrace the kind of life God was leading him into, by way of all the suffering he experienced. This is why he could say things like:

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Romans 8:16-17

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.

Philippians 1:29

*That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that **we are appointed thereunto**. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that **we should suffer tribulation**; even as it came to pass, and ye know.*

I. Thessalonians 3:3-4

*It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: **If we suffer, we shall also reign with him**: if we deny him, he also will deny us...Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

II. Timothy 2:11-12 & 3:12

In order to have spiritual life, we must die—and death entails suffering. Paul understood this. That's why he said if we "mortify (mortify means put to death) the deeds of the body" we would live spiritually; meaning, we would have spiritual life. But if we live "after the flesh" we will die spiritually; meaning, we will have no spiritual life (*Rom. 8:13*). We may have knowledge; we may have gifts; but we won't have *life*.

That's also why he said we must bear about in our bodies "*the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest*" in us (*II. Cor. 4:10*). It's why he said he wanted to partake of the Lord's sufferings and be made conformable unto his death (*Phil. 3:10*). He knew that *resurrection life* only comes out of death. We have to make a trade—our life for His.

This is also why he said he *took pleasure* in infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions and distresses. What? Remember the two lists we just looked at, regarding all the things he suffered? And he said he took pleasure in experiencing those things! Who in their right minds would say they take pleasure in all those horrible things? The answer is: the man who realizes that these things were crucifying *his* life, and as a result, *God's life* was being released in and through him. And remember, none of these things were happening to Paul because he was living in sin. All this was coming upon him because he was serving God with all his heart. All these things were happening to him precisely because he was being absolutely faithful to God!

The Corinthians wanted to walk in the *kind of* life and power Paul had, but they weren't willing to go through the suffering (pay the price) Paul did in order to get it. That's why Paul first tells them all the things he suffered, and then tells them to follow his example. It's certainly not a pleasant reality to face, but it's the truth: suffering is the *only thing* that brings God's life forth in us.

Today's Christians face the same dilemma. They would like to walk in the life and the power the apostle Paul walked in, but few of them are willing to go through what Paul did to obtain that life and power. We would all like to have the kind of impact on the world that Paul had. But few of us are willing to *pay the price* that Paul did, in order to *walk in the kind of life* he walked in, so we would have *that kind of an impact* on the world that he had. So without realizing it, we unconsciously bargain with God. We bargain with Him through our daily choices and decisions, the sum of which amounts to this: I'll give up *some* of my own desires and *some* of my own life, in order to get *some* of Your life and *some* of Your power.

*For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For **even hereunto were ye called**: because Christ also suffered for us, **leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.***

I. Peter 2:20-21

The reason Paul could tell the Corinthians to follow his example is because he was following Christ's example! Peter said when we are punished for our faults and we take it patiently there is no glory in that. This is expected. We shouldn't whimper or complain at all when we are punished for wrong doing. But when we are *doing right*, when we are *obeying God* and serving Him faithfully, and we suffer for *that* and we take it patiently, then we have something to glory in, for that is what Jesus experienced. He was sinless, yet he took the punishment for our sins. He was persecuted for being faithful to God. He was reviled for obeying God. He was condemned for freeing God's people from the bondage of evil spirits. He suffered that the life and power of the Father might be revealed *through* Him, "leaving us an example" that we should "follow in his steps".

The Scripture is very clear—we are *called* to suffer; we are *appointed* unto suffering. When God calls us to become a believer, He is calling us a life of suffering, self-denial, loneliness and eventually *death*. This is exactly what Jesus said:

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Matthew 16:24

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:27

There is no ambiguity in the Lord's message. He made sure we would understand exactly what He is demanding. The cross is an instrument of suffering and death. So when Jesus said we must take up our own personal cross, He is telling us we have to embrace a life of suffering and eventual death. The cold-blooded reality is, Jesus said He wants us to suffer! He wants us to suffer because, like Peter and Paul, He knew that the only way God's life can come forth in us is if our life dies; and our life will never die as long as the carnal nature is having all its desires fulfilled. This is why the "*You Can Have Your Best Life Now*" message is the opposite of the true Gospel.

The difference between the Old Covenant & the New Covenant.

~ Old Covenant - the faithful were given a good Adamic life

~ New Covenant - the faithful must crucify the Adamic life to have God's life.

It's easy to talk about the need to suffer. It's easy to repeat these verses of Scripture and their implications like a tape recorder, day in and day out. What's not easy is to let God actually bring us into that kind of

a walk. It's *so* easy to *talk* about the need to lose our life while at the same time, refusing to actually give it up. It's also easy to talk about losing our lives when we really have no idea *how much* of that life we are supposed to lose or *how* we actually lose it. How do you lose your life anyhow? What does losing your life entail? How do we lay down our lives in the areas of:

- ~ Job?
- ~ House?
- ~ Career?
- ~ Marriage?
- ~ Past Times?
- ~ Hobbies?
- ~ Entertainment?

Does “losing” it mean it’s actually taken away from us? Does “losing” it mean we can never experience the normal things in life. Well, what did Jesus say to the disciples when they asked Him what they would get in return for all the things they gave up?

*Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, **we have forsaken all, and followed thee;** what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And **every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.***

Matthew 19:27-29

“*We have forsaken all*”, said Peter. Take a close look at how Jesus responded, for it goes against the grain of today’s church culture. What He said is diametrically opposed to *everything* we have been taught in the system. Part of the “all” that believers will be called to forsake includes natural relationships—even up to and including our children and our wives. Since divorce is common these days, leaving a wife behind is no longer a big deal. But forsaking *children* is still a big taboo. Forsaking children would not even be a consideration in today’s family-oriented church culture. Virtually all religious leaders tell us that God would never lead us to forsake our children, regardless of what happens! Well, I guess they never read this passage, did they? So yes, literally forsaking natural relationships is part of the price that is required to walk in life.

Just a side note: We know Peter had a wife, and that he didn’t literally forsake her because later Paul talks about Peter taking his wife with him on ministry trips (*I. Cor. 9:5*). But I’m sure their relationship was not the normal kind of marriage relationship. And particularly not the “Blondie & Dagwood” thing we Americans are accustomed to. Moreover, we also know that Paul *didn’t* have a wife and he said he wished that all men were as he was in this regard (*I Cor. 7:7*).

We know that Peter literally forsook his fishing trade to follow the Lord. So yes, sometimes forsaking a *career* (not necessarily a job) is part of the price that is required to walk in life. Part of that “all” has to do with “houses” and lands”. Didn’t Paul say he had “no certain dwelling place”? Didn’t Jesus say: “*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head*”? (*Matt. 8:20*) So yes, sometimes forsaking houses and lands is part of the price that is required to come forth in life.

But losing our life doesn’t always mean we have to literally forsake things. Many time it just means putting the things that are legal and moral in our life *under the government of God*, so that He is the one who is in control of them.

Jesus was willing to lose *all* His life in order to fulfill the purpose God had planned for Him. He never married and had children. Though he learned a trade, it was not a *career* to Him. When it came time to enter His ministry, He didn’t left it all behind. He never thought about whether or not He would lose His customer base. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was the exact opposite of “*Having Your Best Life Now*”.

So how much life do *we* want to have and walk in? How serious are we about fulfilling the destiny God has laid out for us?