

"FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH"

Most of our study has been on making decisions: the decision to trust in Jesus, the decision to become a Christian, the decision concerning where to work and worship. After such decisions are made, then comes the hardest task: living the Christian life day after day.

I can only touch on this challenge in our present study. Most of the New Testament is about how a Christian should live. A Christian spends a lifetime learning how to conduct himself as a follower of Jesus.

THE CHALLENGE

Even those who do not know much about the Bible know that a Christian is supposed to live a more godly life than those around him. Paul said, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2a). Jesus expressed the challenge in these words:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:14–16).

In Galatians 5 Paul listed negative qualities to avoid and positive characteristics to cultivate:

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things

will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:19–23).

Does this mean that you must live a perfect life? No, the only One who ever lived a perfect life is Jesus. It does mean that you should strive to be like Jesus. You should be the best you can possibly be. Paul commanded, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God" (2 Timothy 2:15).¹ The NIV has "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, . . ."² We read that God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6; KJV)³—not "perfectly seek him," but "diligently seek him."

THE REALITY

Unfortunately, at times even followers of God do not live as they should. They are not always what they could be. The Bible is full of examples of God's people who sinned—from King David, who committed adultery (2 Samuel 11), to the apostle Peter, who denied his Lord (Matthew 26:69–75). John wrote to Christians, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make [God] a liar and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:10). What is a Christian to do when he sins?

Repent

He is to repent of his sins and ask God to forgive him. When Simon sinned, Peter said, "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you" (Acts 8:22). True repentance includes correcting past mistakes as much as is humanly possible.⁴

Confess Sin

An essential part of repentance is being willing to admit sin. The Christian always needs to confess his sins *to God*. John said, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Sometimes he needs to confess his sins *to others*, especially if those sins are known to others or if they have hurt others. James wrote, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another,⁵ and pray for one another so that you may be healed" (James 5:16a). As a general rule, confession needs to be as public as the sin.

Pray

As seen in the passages quoted, always there should be prayer: *The Christian* needs to pray (Acts 8:22), and sometimes he needs to ask *others* to pray for him (James 5:16).

THE ASSURANCE

One of my favorite passages in the Bible is 1 John 1:7, which says that "if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." The passage uses the present tense, which, in the Greek, indicates continuous action. The verse literally says that if I *continue* to walk in the Light, the blood of Christ *continues* to cleanse me of my sins.

This is an exciting truth. When someone comes forth from the waters of baptism, all his sins have been washed away (Acts 22:16) by the blood of Jesus (Revelation 1:5). Then, as he "walks in the Light," the blood of Jesus continues to wash his sins away.

What does it mean to "walk in the Light"? To "walk in the Light" is to live as God wants His children to live.⁶ This does not mean that church members live perfectly, because then they would have no sins to be cleansed. The key word is "walk." A Christian's walk is his lifestyle. The one who wants to be saved must have a Christian lifestyle.

The one who is walking in the light is not perfect, but his heart is centered on God. He is committed to doing His will. He may stumble on the Christian pathway; but when he does, he will repent, confess, and pray. Then he will pick

himself up and resume his journey with God.

THE PROMISE

No one can live the Christian life on his own, but God has promised to help (Acts 2:38; Romans 8:13, 26). The one who relies on the Lord has this promise:

You are from God, little children, and have overcome . . . because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith (1 John 5:4).

Jesus gave this challenge and this promise: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10b). The "crown" spoken of here is the crown of victory. "The crown of life" is the crown consisting of life, eternal life.

In the introduction to our study, we defined our purpose like this:

GOAL: ETERNAL LIFE

Jesus promised that if we are faithful to Him until death, He will give us eternal life. Thus our goal will be reached.

CONCLUSION

We are almost at the end of our study. It is time for you to make personal application. Do you want eternal life? Do you want it enough to commit your life to the Lord? Are you willing to make an until-death commitment? ❖

¹Emphasis mine. Instead of "be diligent," the KJV has "study." Long ago, the word "study" could be used in this sense: "put forth diligent effort" or "do your best."

²Emphasis mine.

³The NASB simply has "seek him," but the Greek word translated "seek" indicates that halfhearted seeking will not do; it must be a *diligent* search.

⁴You may want to review the teaching on repentance in the lesson "What Must I Do?"

⁵This does not refer to confessing to some religious official in a "confessional box." This is *mutual* confession between Christians.

⁶"God is Light" (1 John 1:5), so to "walk in the Light" is to walk with God. Jesus is "the Light of the world" (John 8:12), so to "walk in the Light" is to walk with Jesus. God's Word gives light (Psalm 119:105), so to "walk in the Light" is to walk according to His Word.