

### **Volume 6, Day 8: Comfortable Victory**

When Paul talks about separation from the love of God, he is referring to the 'non-spiritual' things that are likely to separate us from the love of God. Nearly everything we do which is not within the confines of our quiet, alone place with God tends to distract us from the love of God and His purposes for our lives. From God's perspective, nothing can wedge between us and His love. It flows incessantly and in torrents. However, our love for Him is often blocked by our own distractions or human loves which exceed our love for God.

The foundation of our Christian faith is the unconditional, unmerited, fathomless, incomprehensible love of God. This was indelibly etched in human history by the exhibition of Jesus' brutalized, abused, shamefully displayed body on a criminal's cross outside of Jerusalem. This is a love we never can or will merit. It is only ours by the grace (unmerited favor) which is a by-product of God's extraordinary love for us.

The manner in which we are 'more than conquerors' is that we not only achieve victory over sin and death, but also the super-victory of joy in the very circumstances which would otherwise overwhelm us with distress, anxiety and fear. The waves which the surfer seeks distress the casual swimmers.

In the same sense, the super-joy of surfing through our tribulations, distresses, persecutions without any of those negative sensations is the very victory that Jesus says, "overcomes the world," that is the natural human response. Thus, we are more than conquerors through Him in all these things, not in spite of them, but in the middle of the messiness and stress. The joy of the LORD is only, ever experienced by the saint in tribulation! The experiences of life, terrible or monotonous, are impotent to touch the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ!

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

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### **Vol 6, Day 9: I'm A Christian, but I Have My Rights**

No one is ever intimate with Jesus Christ until he is willing to let go of not sin only, but his whole way of seeing and doing things. Being born from above of the Spirit of God means that we must let go of self before we lay hold of God. In the first stages it is the relinquishing of all pretense. What God wants us to present to Him is not goodness, nor honesty, nor endeavor, but real solid sin; that is all He can take from us. And what does He give in exchange for our sin? Real solid righteousness. But we must stop pretending that we possess good character, all claim of being worthy of God's consideration.

Once we submit everything we are and have to God, or at least what we think is all, the Spirit of God will show us what more there is to relinquish. I must renounce all claims to my right to myself in every particular. Am I willing to release my grip on all I possess, my obsessions of my affections, my propensities regarding everything personal, and to be, as it were, crucified to death as Jesus was with His death on the cross?

There is always a sharp painful disillusionment to go through before we do relinquish. When a man really sees himself as the Lord sees him, it is not the abominable sins of the flesh that shock him, but the awful nature of the pride of his own good works and accomplishments for God that strike at the heart of Jesus Christ. When he sees himself in the light of the enormous love of God, the shame and the horror and the desperate conviction come over him.

When you are faced with the question of relinquishing all of your own agenda, goals and pursuits, rise to the challenge of this crisis. Let go of everything that is not God in you and God will make you fit for all that He asks or expects of you.

My Confirming Scriptures: "I am crucified with Christ."  
Galatians 2:20

Aligning Experiences:

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### **Vol 6, Day 10: Deliver the Love of God, Not Just Stuff**

We have not been saved in order to provide food, clothing, shelter and other earthly necessities and comforts. We have been saved to be Christ incarnate right here, right now! We are not simply spiritual guides to other believers. We were saved to become spiritual messengers to others who are not yet believers. In a sense, every Christian is called to be an evangelist, not by vocation, but by occupation!

When we say that love is action, we actually reduce love to pity for the less fortunate socially. When in other countries we find poverty far greater than in our homeland. Simultaneously we see men and women who are so deeply enamored in their love for God that it makes us look like spiritual dwarfs! The gospel of Jesus Christ heals the soul even if it never affects the body.

When we substitute charitable activities for the love of Jesus, we reduce Jesus to a social equalizer. Our testimony cannot be 'social kindness.' Even atheists and those of other religions do the same 'socially loving' acts of human kindness!

When Jesus said, "when you have done these things to the least of these, you have done them to me," He was talking about genuine affection. In Matthew chapter 7 Jesus declares that many who have given to the poor will be banished to eternal punishment! What is that about?! It's about giving the genuine love of God to those in spiritual need of redemption. The social gospel is a contrivance of humans as their access to God!

The natural human heart is inclined to goodwill. It takes the heart broken by conviction of sin, and born the second time in the Spirit to be reshaped into the purpose of God. Redemption, in Jesus, takes us out of our own plans and purposes and we are "hammered into shape and use," for God's purposes. The indwelling Holy Spirit made the disciples the incarnation of what they preached. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." And what is this witness of Jesus as He told His disciples in John 13:34-35? "Love Like Jesus Loves!" The salvation of God comes only through the love of God received and dispensed through the human lives it transforms.

## **Volume 6, Day 11: Relationship or Business Deal**

When we declare that we have left everything and everyone to follow Jesus, He reminds us that abandonment is not about what we are leaving behind, but Whom we are abandoned to. This can be seen in essence in our relationships with our most significant others. It is not about our sacrifice. It is about our devotion to another's interests above our own.

True relationships are forged, not by extracting what we want from the other. True relationship is 'other caring' and doing what we do to please the other person. Be careful not to make a business transaction out of friendship or any other personal relationship. This is especially important when we engage in relationship with God (Father, Son or Holy Spirit). If we think that "we are going to give ourselves to God" because we want to be delivered from sin, we are on the wrong track.

"Being made holy or righteous" is the result of being right with God. But that spirit is not of the essential nature of Christianity. Abandonment is not for anything at all. We have become so self indulgent that we only go to God for something from Him, and not for Himself. It is like saying, "No, Lord, I don't want You. I want myself. But I want myself to be full, comfortable, happy, respected and influential. I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I want to be on display in Your showroom so that I can say, 'Look at me!' This is what God has done for me!"

If we only give up something to God in order to get more back, it is only miserable self-interest. That we gain heaven, are delivered from sin, are made useful to God - these things never enter as considerations into absolute abandon to God. Abandon is a personal preferential choice for Jesus Christ to be sovereign over us and abandoning our own sovereignty.

When we come up against the barriers of natural relationship, where is Jesus Christ? Most of us desert Him in order to please our human significant others. Most of us know abandonment in theory or vision only.

### **Volume 6, Day 12: Both Abandoned in “Marriage!”**

Salvation is not merely deliverance from sin, nor the experience of personal holiness. The salvation of God is deliverance out of self entirely into union with Himself. My experiential knowledge of salvation will be essentially deliverance from sin and personal holiness. However, salvation is that the Spirit of God has brought me into touch with God's personality, and I am thrilled with a relationship with someone infinitely greater than myself. I am overwhelmed and obsessed with the love God.

If we believe that we are called to proclaim holiness or sanctification, we have been misguided. We are called to introduce others to a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. The fact that He saves from sin and makes us holy is part of the effect of the wonderful experience of falling in love with God.

Abandonment never produces the consciousness of its own effort, because the whole life is taken up with the One to Whom we abandon ourselves. Don't go around telling others you are abandoned to God when you know nothing about it. And you will never know anything about it unless and until you have realized that John 3:16 means that God gave Himself wholly and absolutely to us.

In our abandon we give ourselves over to God just as God gave Himself for us, without any reservation or hesitation. We are 'all in' to this 'up-close-and-personal' love affair with Him. The consequence of abandonment never enters into our minds because our life is taken up with Him.

Salvation is the initiation of a marriage of sorts, wherein each partner commits to put the interests and needs of the other ahead of one's own. Anything less than the highest of all human relationship commitments will produce neither salvation nor relationship. Jesus gave His all. We must give our all in return. Then and only then is the relationship established. And once it is established, no one can break it up.

### **Volume 6, Day 13: Everyone Is A Slave to Someone**

In order to know whose slave I am, I must determine by examination of my attitudes and feelings who dominates me. It can be my most significant other, myself, my sports star, God or any other. Then I must admit the unwelcome fact that I am the responsible party who made the choice. If I am a slave to myself, I am to blame because at some time in my past I decided to follow the rules of my own making, for my self appointed sovereignty, me. Similarly, if I primarily obey God, I do so because I made a cognitive choice at some point to do so. All of us will yield ourselves to sovereignty every moment in life. And it is obvious at those moments whom we chose to obey!

Yield in childhood to selfishness, or in childishness in adulthood and you will find it the most miserable binding tyranny on earth. There is no power in the human soul of itself to break the bondage of a disposition formed by yielding. Yield for one second to anything in the nature of lust whether it be the lust of the flesh or the lust of the mind - once yield and though you may hate yourself for having yielded, you are a slave to that thing. (Remember what lust is: "I must have it at once." Or to put it another way, "The essence of Lust is getting and lust can't wait to get! The essence of love is giving and love can wait for the right time to give!")

There is no release in human power at all. Release from lust (self-indulgence) is only possible through the Redemption of Jesus Christ. You must yield yourself in utter humiliation to the only One Who can break the dominating power of lust.

You discover that to be true in ridiculously foolish thoughts and expressions, "Oh, I can give that habit up when I like." No, you cannot! You will find that the habit absolutely dominates you because you yielded to it willingly and persistently. It is easy to sing, "He will break every fetter," and at the same time be living a life of obvious slavery to yourself. Yielding to Jesus' Holy Spirit within you will break every form of slavery in any human life!

## **Vol 6, Day 14: The Morphing Relationship with Jesus**

At the beginning of our new life in Christ we were sure we knew all about Jesus. It was quite natural, a delight actually, to sell all we held dear and to cast ourselves wholeheartedly to Him out of passionately overwhelming love. But what on earth happened? Now we are not quite so sure we really knew what we were doing. At this point, after myriad disappointments, Jesus looks strange to us.

There is an aspect of Jesus that chills the heart of a disciple to the bone and makes the whole spiritual life gasp for breath. This strange Jesus with His face set like a flint in striding determination, strikes fear into me. He is no longer Counselor and Comrade. He now seems to hold a point of view I know nothing about. It scares me! And I am puzzled by Him.

At first I was confident that I understood Him. He was all about loving me! But now I am not so sure. I realize that there is a distance between Jesus Christ and me. I can not feel that wonderful familiarity with Him. He is ahead of me and He never turns round. I have no idea where He is going. And the goal has become very strange and distant.

Jesus Christ had to feel the effects of every sin and every sorrow man could experience. That is what makes Him seem strange. When we see Him in this light, He is very different to us. We don't recognize one feature of His life now, and we do not know how to follow Him. Our comradeship with Him has dissipated.

Take heart! The discipline of dismay is essential in the life of a disciple. Through the discouragement of unexpected adversity and calamity, we will see more of Who He is and how deeply He loves us. Once we experience His sustaining power over our dismal and discouraging circumstances, it will kindle a new fire of enthusiasm that will increase our trust and desire to be more like Him. When the darkness of dismay comes, endure until it is over, because out of it will come that following of Jesus which is overflowing with unspeakable joy.

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