

## Stay to the Right

What would happen if you decided to drive on the left side of the road rather than the right (assuming you're driving in America), especially if it was a busy roadway? It would likely be a disaster. It's not that the traffic is any worse than usual. It's that you are violating the driving laws meant to protect you, and creating your own chaos.

Without realizing it, this is exactly what many of us do regarding spiritual laws meant to protect our spiritual lives as believers. We're operating on the wrong side of our own lives, which leads to stress, worry, depression, fear, sin, and doubting God. Is it possible to live a life above these things? Not only is it possible, but it's essential, and the Lord expects us to. So how do we do it?

The first thing to do is to understand which side is which.

Each of us has a carnal side, referred to in the New Testament as the flesh. "For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will." (Rom. 8:7, NLT) This is the side of us that hates God, hates that we submit to God, and wants to do its own thing. It battles against our spiritual side, and seeks to conquer our souls (the mind, will, and emotions). If the carnal mind can conquer our souls it will get us on the wrong side of the road in our thinking, in our speaking, and in our actions.

On the other hand, the spiritual side is reborn, redeemed and recreated in Christ. God lives in us by the Holy Spirit. Our spirits love God, trust God, and desire to serve and please God. When the spirit controls the soul, we walk in the Spirit, walk in holiness, fulfill God's plan, and live a victorious Christian life. This is living on the right side of the road.

Don't expect the flesh to roll over and allow you to live victoriously.

"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Rom. 6: 22-23)

"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." (Gal. 5: 17)

The flesh is relentless and deceptive. Don't be deceived. We already have the victory in Christ, and we have to enforce that victory when it comes to our carnal nature. God shows us in His word how to do it.

### 1. Walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh.

"This I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." (Gal. 5: 16)

This sounds good, but how do we walk in the Spirit?

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (Gal. 5: 22-25)

The way to walk in the Spirit is to develop ourselves in the fruit of the Spirit. This means to keep our minds on the things of the Spirit. When we keep our minds on spiritual things, we move in the direction of what fills our minds.

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” (Rom. 8: 5)

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things.” (Phil. 4: 8)

We don’t have to produce the fruit of the Spirit in ourselves. The Holy Spirit does that. We are to bring what’s in our spirits into our souls by meditating on God’s word and God’s work (what He’s doing in us and around us).

Remember, the flesh seeks to deceive us into thinking about how bad things may be. But remember, those thoughts are the flesh. That’s not the real you. The real you knows better. It’s like sunlight. Even when there’s a storm all around you, the sun is actually still shining. It never stopped. You just have to rise above the clouds to see it. The storm is temporary. The sun is constant.

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Col. 3: 1-2)

## 2. Walk by faith, not by sight.

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Cor. 5: 7)

Our hearts believe God. Our flesh does not. When we doubt, when we fear, when we worry, that’s not our hearts, that’s our flesh, which we are allowing to influence our minds and our emotions. We must recognize this and get back on the right side of the road, walking by faith.

We must learn what God promises in His word, believe it, and obey it. We are also to speak it consistently. (Matt. 17: 20; Mk. 11: 23; Lk. 17: 6)

In Mark 11: 23 we are told that if we don’t doubt in our hearts, but believe that what we say will come to pass, we will have what we say. There are two important truths to understand here.

First, doubt in our hearts is not the same as doubt in our minds. We may have doubt in our minds and still believe in our hearts. This is because the bible is clear that when something is in our hearts it produces actions (Matt. 15: 18-19). So even when doubts arise in our minds we can continue to believe

in our hearts, no matter what we see, what we hear, what we feel, or what it's been. When we continue to trust God in our hearts, He will bring it to pass.

Second, speaking what we believe is essential. Jesus said much about this, including in this passage. Our confession is like a skyscraper in the spirit, that rises above all else going on around us, and gets the attention of heaven.

The Freedom Tower, a/k/a One World Trade Center, is a symbolic 1,776 feet high (The year the Declaration of Independence was signed). It opened in 2014 and it's the tallest building in the western hemisphere, 104 stories high. I was working in lower Manhattan when they were building it, and took the Path Train every day, getting out at the WTC. It was easy to see the massive construction going on above the city, but what was not visible was the depth of the foundation being created below the city.

The foundation goes down 70 feet, which is deeper than the Empire State building at 52 feet. This is just as important as the height. It can withstand earthquakes and hurricane force winds. The Lord recently showed me a picture in my mind of this tower as I asked what difference my confession of faith makes. He showed me that my words, spoken in faith, rise above all else, and when my foundation is right (hearing and doing His word), He will honor my words, and redirect me whenever needed to stay in His will (Matt. 7: 24, Phil 3:15).

When our lives are built on knowing, loving, and living His word, we gratefully shift our desire for something else when our confessions is not in His will (Phil 2: 13).

### 3. Trust and Follow

Once we are walking in the Spirit not in the flesh, and walking by faith not by sight, we can trust God to handle it His way, in His time, for His glory. He honors those that honor Him (I Sam. 2: 30). He rewards those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11: 6).

Keep God's faithfulness in mind. If He could bring water from a rock, quail from the sea, and manna from heaven for his people for 40 years, He can meet our need as well. Don't try to figure out how He'll do it, because He's God and we're not.

"And Moses said, the people whom I am among are six hundred thousand men on foot: yet You have said, I will give them meat, that they may eat for a whole month. Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to provide enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to provide enough for them? And the Lord said to Moses, has the Lord's arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not." (Num. 11: 22-23)

We can't always know how God will do what He promised, but if we trust Him, He will. Trust that what He promised, He will do. Just follow His directions. Do what He says. Follow Him faithfully and do what you can control. Trust Him for what you can't control. "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us." (2 Cor. 1: 20) He is faithful to bring His word to pass.

