

Volume 5, Day 15: Simple But Profoundly Difficult

A **simple** statement of Jesus will always puzzle us if we do not receive it as **simple**. How can we be simple with the simplicity of Jesus? By receiving His Spirit, recognizing and relying on His Spirit and obeying Him immediately as He brings the word of God to us. Life will become amazingly simple when we trust God as simply as children trust their parents. Children assume that what the parents do is normal, even if it is not. "Consider," says Jesus, "how much more your Father Who clothes the grass of the field will clothe you." You never have to be concerned about life sustaining provisions.

The spiritual application of Jesus question is that you can trust God in relationship to always be trustworthy. Every relationship hinges on trust. Every time we have stepped out of communion with God has been because we have impertinently known better than Jesus Christ what is best. We have allowed the cares of the world (everything outside of our relationship with God) to come between us. We have essentially forgotten how much better we feel when we are up close and personal with Him.

Jesus says that if you are rightly related to Him and obey His Spirit that is in you, God will look after everything else. If we simply do what God requests, He will look after all the other things we need and provide them. How much time have we spent worrying God with questions when we should have been absolutely free to **simply do what He asks**? The greatest gift I can give my spouse is my time, attention and affection. I have separated myself from others in order to dwell with my spouse. Do you continually separate yourself to consider God in every decision you make?

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 16: Obsessed with Self and Common Sense?

A warning which needs to be reiterated is that the cares of this world (the **things that affect our reputation**), the deceitfulness of riches (the **financial, medical and material** possessions), and the lust of other things (the desire to be **in control or in charge** of others) having a high priority, will choke all that God puts in. God only puts into us **love** which is the basis for all relationships. It is these things that draw us away from relationships of all kinds.

We are never free from the desires of the flesh, **prosperity, popularity and power**. These things come and go in recurring tides and often drown the very thing we want most, to love and to be loved (healthy relationships). If it isn't about clothes, shelter and food, it will be about money or friends or lack of them, or it will be about difficult circumstances or aggravating people. It is one steady barrage all the time. Unless we allow the Spirit of God to take charge of our life, the floods will overwhelm us.

"Take no thought for your life." "Be careful about one thing only," says Jesus, "your relationship to Me." Common sense shouts loud and says, "That is absurd. I must consider how I am going to live. I must consider what I am going to eat and drink." Jesus says that you must not. Don't think for a minute that it's easy for Jesus to say because He is God and we're not. The One Who **is** God, Jesus Christ, knows us and our circumstances better than we do. We are to "...cast all our cares upon Him!"

How much evil has tempted you today? How many times does your mind wander into thinking, "What am I going to do next month or this summer?" "Be anxious for nothing," Jesus says. If your desire to do His will and not yours, it takes no effort or thought!

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 17: My Way Persecutes Jesus

Am I determined to do things **my own** way for God? We are never free from this tendency until we are completely surrendered in love and absolute trust of the Holy Spirit within us. Obstinance and self-will always stab the heart of Jesus. It may hurt no one else, but it wounds His Spirit. Whenever we are affected by our own ambitions, we will be hurting Jesus. Every time we insist on exercising our rights or achieving our own results, we are persecuting Jesus. Whenever we defend our dignity, we grieve His Spirit. And when we realize that it is Jesus Whom we have been persecuting all the time, it is the most crushing revelation to our ego.

Is the word of God tremendously seen in me as I pass it on to you, or does my lifestyle betray me and reveal that I do not live according to the things I profess to believe? I may teach doctrines of scripture or moral character and yet express rejection or hatred (the spirit of Satan). The Spirit of Jesus is conscious of one thing only - perfect emotional and relational unity with the Father. Jesus says, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." All I do should be motivated by genuine affection of the most intimate kind. Unconditional love will automatically produce grace (**undeserved** favor). When I am in perfect unity with God, I will "**love like Jesus loves.**"

When my unity with Jesus initiates every expression I make (words, deeds, body language or facial expressions), I can be made a laughing stock, manipulated, coerced or ignored without retaliation. This is what it means to be crucified with Christ, being persecuted like Him. However, my self-willed determination to look like I am godly reveals my contempt for Jesus and the work of the Cross.

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 18: My Own Convictions or God's

"The Lord spoke thus to me with a strong hand." There is no mistaking when Our Lord speaks. He always brings correction to the understanding. Have you heard the voice of God directly? If so, you cannot mistake the intimate insistence with which it entered your soul. He has spoken to you in the language you know best, not through your ears, but through your circumstances.

God must destroy our determined confidence in our own convictions - "I know this is what I should do." Suddenly the voice of God speaks in a way that overwhelms us by revealing the depths of our ignorance and selfishness. We have shown our ignorance of Him in the very way we determined to serve Him. We serve Jesus in a spirit that is not His. We insult Him when we try to defend His honor. It's almost as though we think that we have more credibility than He does. How foolish! Our words may sound right, but our spirit is that of an enemy of God. He rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of." The Spirit of our Lord, in an advocate of His, is described in 1 Corinthians 13 (the essence of love personified).

Have I been making a mockery of Jesus by a zealous determination to serve Him **in my own way**? If I feel I have done my duty and yet have hurt Him in doing it, I may be sure it was not my duty, because it has not fostered the meek and quiet spirit, but the spirit of self-satisfaction. We imagine that whatever is unpleasant is our duty! Is that anything like the spirit of our Lord - "I delight to do Thy will, O my God."

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

**Volume 5, Day 19: Look for God's Purpose
in Every Circumstance**

God seldom speaks to us in a clear, booming voice, but in ways that are easy to misunderstand. We say, "I wonder if that is God's voice?" Isaiah said that the Lord spoke to him "with a strong hand," that is, by the pressure of circumstances. Nothing touches our lives for any purpose other than God Himself speaking. Do we realize that it is His plan or do we think it is only mere coincidence?

Say as often as possible, "Speak, Lord," and life will become a romance with God. Every time circumstances put pressure on you, say, "I'm listening, Lord". Make time to listen. Better yet, never stop listening! Chastening is more than a means of discipline, it is meant to get me to the place of saying, "What does this mean and what do You want me to do, Lord." Recall a time when you clearly heard God speak to you. Have you forgotten what He said? As we listen, our ear gets more acute, and, like Jesus, we will hear God all the time.

Shall I tell my mentor what God has shown to me? That is the greatest dilemma. When my obedience to God requires that I confront my own spiritual mentor, it creates a great dilemma. If I think that I should not offend my mentor and refuse to obey God to that end, it will prove to be an obstruction between my soul and God. When I disobey God so that I do not offend the most influential people I know, I grieve Him.

God's call to you may hurt your pastor, teacher or mentor, but if you try to prevent the suffering in another life, it will prove an obstruction for both you and the ones you try to protect from suffering. Never ask the advice of another about anything God makes you decide before Him. If you ask advice, you will nearly always side with your counselor. "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 20: Communicating the Gospel of God

Our calling is not primarily to be men and women living out the love of Jesus (loving all others without any conditions on their behavior or attitudes), but to be proclaimers of the Gospel of God. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God – the Gospel. The Gospel of God is about a sweet, loving awareness of the presence of God within. The evidence of our salvation is not human goodness, nor holiness, nor heaven, nor hell. It is our true affection for God because of our redemption from the penalty of sin. When we commit sin, our response should always be giving thanks for the forgiveness that has already been applied. It is this forgiveness which we receive which enables us to forgive all others. Redemption is the only Reality. If we place our faith in human goodness (the effect of Redemption) we will sin more, not less. **Personal holiness is an effect, not a cause.**

Paul did not say he separated himself, but - "when it pleased God who separated me ...". Paul had no interest in his own character. As long as we are focused on our personal righteous expressions, we can't experience the reality of Redemption. We get exhausted when we try to live righteously rather than abandoned to God for His use. When I strive to behave well and force other to do so, all I want is anything God can do **for** me to improve **my** reputation with people. Living like this is proof that the Gospel of God has not begun to touch me; there is no reckless abandon to God. God cannot use me while my interest is merely in my own character. Paul is unconscious of himself. He is recklessly abandoned, separated by God for one purpose - to proclaim the Gospel of God (cf. Rom. 9:3). The Gospel is not about 'self' righteousness. It is about the righteousness of God which I received by grace through faith in Jesus not of works.

Beware of thinking that the acts of kindness of the love of God are a silent witness of the Gospel. The Gospel must be expressed in words. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." -- Confirming Scriptures - Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 21: Declared 'HOLY' and Set Apart by God.

The call of God for all Christians is to preach the gospel. But remember what "the gospel" is. It is Redemption by grace through faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Redemption is having the consequences of our sins (all of them) paid by Jesus Christ. Unfortunately we often think of the Gospel as sanctification, which is: **being set apart for God's purposes with His declaration that we are Holy because our faith (not our works) has made us so.** The purpose of redemption is to know God in personal experience. The "gospel" is the acceptance of God's offer of a personal relationship with Himself which comes by faith in Jesus Christ.

Our testimony of redemption is that our desires become like God's. That is, we desire that "none should perish but that all should come to repentance." Repentance is not groveling in guilt, shame and fear for our wrong doing. It is **turning from** living apart from God and **turning to** living in a vibrant, intimate personal relationship with Him. True redemption (salvation) is demonstrated by dispensing the unconditional love of God to all people. In other words, it is to "Love Like Jesus (God) Loves." Only the Holy Spirit within us can do this. The essential requirement in establishing this personal relationship with God is the declaration of belief that Jesus is God Himself manifest in the flesh on earth.

It would be a shame to say that Jesus Christ suffered the anguish of the Cross just to make me a saint. The one passion of a true Christian is to proclaim the Gospel of God so that others can experience redemption. We can welcome heart-breaks, disappointments, hardships, and ruin when, and only when, we are abandoned to God because of our love for God and love for the Gospel of God.

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences: