

Can life be better in Christ?

Does God bless obedience or disobedience?

Luke 11:27-28 • English Standard Version (ESV) • (The Apostle Luke)

²⁷ As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” ²⁸ But he said, “**Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!**”

In this passage, a woman in the crowd was trying to draw attention to the mother of Jesus for the works that she had done. Jesus has to publicly correct her and use this event as a teaching moment.

If then obedience, obedience to what? Your Pastor, your elders, your fellow saints, our own flesh?

So is it our flesh we're to live by?

Colossians 3:1-11 • English Standard Version (ESV) • *Put On the New Self* • (The Apostle Paul)

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

In this passage the apostle Paul tells us that a life of obedience to the flesh, is no longer a way to live, now that we have been renewed in Christ.

A teacher of mine summed up much of the confusion, as he stated the following:

“Getting guidance from God is not like punching the keys of a computer. A certain continuous relationship must be established with Christ, in order for one to interact with Him in life direction and purpose. Many Christians live, pretty much, in the flesh—doing whatever they want. And then they scramble about for some “signs from heaven,” when confronted with hard decisions. Consulting God only when it suits one’s fancy to do so, is like consulting the stars. It is a matter of chance. There is really little basis for understanding what God wants, even if He were to speak to them. The mind can become so cluttered with the sounds and misconceptions of the world, as to make it quite difficult to sense the Spirit of God, who tends to speak to us in the “still, small voice.” God does not make a habit of shouting at us through the barriers of world cacophony. Satan tries to make such a din that the believer cannot hear the voice of God.” (David Morsey • *On Being Led by the Spirit*)

So do we follow our Pastors, elders, fellow saints?

John 10:7-18 • English Standard Version (ESV) • (The Apostle John)

⁷ So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

This passage clearly speaks against following anyone but Jesus Christ.

So, do you now think, that this passage, answers the question,
“Are we to follow our Pastors, elders or fellow saints in the church?”

Now for a new Christian it is entirely acceptable for them to only know Christ through your example. But I would contend that after two years of watching and learning from the body of Christ, that it is time for mature Christians to force these new believers into a personal relationship with their Creator so that they learn to follow Christ via knowledge in God’s Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit. So... that they’re no longer following you, but hearing the small, still voice, of their Creator. This is what a healthy church would look like.

The Church has been monstrously savaged and divided by the pursuit of Christianity, instead of being primarily involved in the personal experience of life with Christ. Christianity is a matter of theological concepts. Life with Christ is a familial matter. We are in fact, grafted in, members of the family.

Acts 5:27-32 • English Standard Version (ESV) • (Luke the Evangelist and beloved physician)

²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

**So... is it perhaps obedience to His written Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit?
Is this what we’re supposed to be obedient to?**

Matthew 11:28-30 • English Standard Version (ESV) • (The Apostle Matthew)

Jesus Himself declared:

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

So... where is this Jesus for most of you?

Can any of you say that your yoke is easy and your burdens are light?

If not, perhaps we can look to God’s Word to teach us how to get there.

God has given us a tremendous gift when we join the family of Christ. The gift of the Holy Spirit.

What does that do for us you ask?

Well let’s take a look at the Fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16-26 • English Standard Version (ESV) • (The Apostle Paul)

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

God’s Holy Spirit takes up residence in our spirit and gives us the power to overcome the flesh.

If then we have this power on tap and ready to go.... How do we proceed? What does that look like?

2 Peter 1 New American Standard Bible (NASB) • (The Apostle Peter)

1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: ² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; ³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

⁵ Now for this very reason also, **applying all diligence, in your faith** supply **moral excellence**, and in your moral excellence, **knowledge**, ⁶ and in your knowledge, **self-control**, and in your self-control, **perseverance**, and in your perseverance, **godliness**, ⁷ and in your godliness, **brotherly kindness**, and in your brotherly kindness, **love**.

⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹ for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Is it possible that if we work on being a moral person first, then work to acquire knowledge in God's Word, then practice self-control, then learn perseverance, then work to reflect the kingdom of God (godliness) by being light and salt, showing brotherly kindness and ultimately learning to love one another as God loves us, is it possible that this will result in the life of peace and rest that Jesus promised us in Matthew 11:28-29?

1 Thessalonians 5:12-24 • English Standard Version (ESV) • (The Apostle Paul)

¹² We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. ¹⁵ See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil.

²³ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

And remember this proclamation from the Apostle Paul?

Philippians 1:6 • English Standard Version (ESV) • (The Apostle Paul)

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, be confident that God has begun a good work in you and He will finish it if you live a life of obedience to what you have learned in His Word and to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Final Thoughts:

So,... why do we slip? Why do we do the things that we do not want to do? (Romans 7)

We slip because we're weak in our flesh. Following the leading of the Spirit is at times difficult due to the world around us, crushing us with distractions from Christ.

I believe that we fall back into a place that we knew to be a place of comfort in our past. This place that we slip back into, more than often, is a place in the flesh.

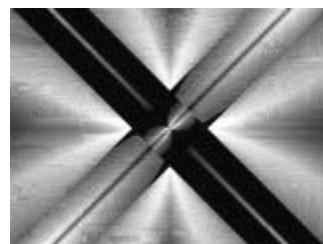
But God Himself has paid the price to free us from that place.

It is by **habit** that we fall back into a place that we should not go.

We are no longer slaves to our flesh, we have been made free in Christ.

Let's stop letting our past failures define us. Let's instead, remember that we are a new creation in Christ and that with His help, we can overcome and live in victory. We have been promised this, let's trust God to be true and work towards who we now are.

Children of the Most High God.



Unless the Lord builds the house...

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