

Focus on Jesus

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

At different times and in different ways, Satan confronts Christians with burdens: things to distract us, to keep us from focusing on who God is and what Christ has done. The god of this world knows that we can lose our focus through confusion and wrong priorities, As a result, we will begin to bear the image of Adam, making it difficult to maintain that very personal relationship with the Lord.

Adam's image is inside every one of us, and he has a very definite image. But when we are focused on Jesus Christ and our focal point is His Word, we rest in who we are in Christ, seated far above Adam.

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM OF LOSING YOUR SIGHT

In the Garden of Eden, before Eve partook of the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam was silent. He was right there, but he was silent. He did not express the Word of God at all. He did not speak up. And in his silence, he became passive. As Eve partook of that fruit and offered it to Adam, he did not say a word, though he knew it was wrong. In his passivity, in his silence, he simply took the fruit, "...and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6).

In marriages where one or both partners become passive, they have the wrong focal point. Eve was not focused and Adam was passive and silent; he "went along to get along."

One of the most important things in all the world is to focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me"

(John 6:45).

The apostle Paul said, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them” (2 Timothy 3:14). In other words, we should do the things that we have learned and continue in the truth.

Eyes Trained to See beyond the Obvious

We have learned so much, and we are always learning something more. Here, the Word of God is emphasizing that we should continue in the truth we have received. That means we are to stay focused, having the Word of God as our focal point, with Jesus Christ at the center. When Eve disobeyed, Adam’s silence changed his relationship with God. His passivity destroyed his relationship with his perfect environment.

With that understood, Psalm 25:9 says that God wants us to learn by being taught in meekness: “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.” That is, not just knowledge found in words, but the impartation of life itself.

In Psalm 71:17, David said, “O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.” The orig-

inal language implies, “You have taught me, and I have enjoyed learning.”

It is such a joy to walk on a pathway illuminated by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God with the resurrection life of God.

Dechomai (translated as “receive,” in James 1:21) means “to receive by deliberate preparedness and ready reception by being hungry to learn.”

Many Christians have demonstrated a tremendous hunger to learn. The Greek word *prosdechomai* (‘receive’ in Romans 16:2 and Philippians 2:29) means “to receive with approval.”

Occasionally I have preached some rather difficult messages. When people who are having problems receive those messages well, it is a great blessing. They approved of being convicted. Furthermore, they approved upon their conviction. They were convicted because of wrong decisions, but they approved of the messages because the Word released them as it brought them into the light.

The Greek word *didaskolos* (Ephesians 4:11) refers to one who instructs the students so they can continually learn to be like Christ and thus make disciples educated in like manner. This comes from the root word *didasko*, which means

“to educate, to train, to develop mental skills and talents, without jeopardizing your individuality.”

Don't Be Weary—Get Rest

“And [the fourth beast] shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws...” (Daniel 7:25a).

The Word of God reveals to us in Daniel 7:25 a necessary verse to comprehend. Satan is continually trying to make the saints weary—to wear them out, get them confused, and burn them out. He goes after people who have been on the road for years, trying to wear them out with the details of life, to take away any spiritual skills they have, and to take on the worldly skills of pride, passivity, or silence toward God.

Regarding Satan's attack to make the saints weary, Galatians 6:8 says, “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Then, in verse 9, Paul says, “And let us not be weary in well doing.”

Do not get weary in being right with God. Don't become weary in making good decisions. Don't become weary in being a good person in

Christ.

The whole purpose of Satan is first to cause a person to be weary or silent toward God, to hinder an active dialogue mentally or emotionally. Satan would love to have a person become passive toward the Promises, toward obedience, toward being a servant. The devil would love to see a person become passive toward an intimate love relationship. Satan likes to make people strive in their flesh.

Occasionally, Christians become weary. The temptation is to say, "I've been faithful for many years." For them, the Christian life became wearisome, and they did not continue to receive a fresh capacity to be spiritually healthy in their Christian life. That is why the Lord said through the apostle Paul that we should not be weary in our well doing, "for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

Chapter Two

THE ANSWER TO STRIFE: COME UNTO ME

“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth [(weighs)] the hearts” (Proverbs 21:2).

According to Galatians 5:17, when we bear the image of Adam, the flesh wrestles against the Spirit, and the Spirit wrestles against the flesh. A person cannot wrestle forever without eventually getting tired. In fact, no one can wrestle without eventually becoming exhausted.

We are living in a time when just to stay in Christianity and feel accepted, many sincere believers feel they must act a certain way to make a good impression. Galatians 6:12 says, they “make a fair show in the flesh....” Why would they do this? “...only lest they should suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ.” Instead of having Christ as their focus, their goal is to maintain a good reputation in the eyes of the world. Yet,

while they are making a fair show in the flesh, they grow weary. And though they lack the power or the provision to do what they are doing, they do it anyway, in the energy of the flesh.

When that happens, the self-pity usually comes back, wounds come back, and bitterness comes back. A Christian who is living in the flesh will feel confined, like a prisoner, all because his flesh desires something that it cannot fulfill because of what it knows about God. So this person will then try to do good, but evil will be present, and here we go again.

Listen and Learn so You Can See

But the Lord Jesus Christ puts it in a simple and beautiful way, and He says it so well:

“Come unto me” (Matthew 11:28a). That’s all. He says, “Come, and learn of Me. There is something about Me that you haven’t learned yet, so would you come and learn of Me? And by the way, I am meek and I am lowly in My heart. So you don’t have to worry or fear Me in the wrong way.”

Then He says, “Here is what you should do. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me. Go ahead—take My yoke. You will find rest unto

your soul, real rest that comes from Me. Not rest that comes from being away from problems. Not rest from getting out of the furnace. But you will find a tremendous release that you'll get from *learning* Me, not learning about Me but *learning* Me. And what are you going to learn? That I am meek, that I am lowly in heart, and that I will give you rest." But that is not all.

Yoke up with Meekness

"I want to tell you something so you will not be disturbed at all. I want to tell you this. My yoke is easy. My burden is light." Then He mentions that word "rest" again.

It is often difficult for pastors, because we always want to identify with people and to be very fair and loving and listen well when people are going through a hard time. A godly pastor desires to give them respect and honor, and to cherish what they are going through—to identify. Matthew 11 says it so simply:

"If you are struggling, *come*. If you have sinned, *come*. If somebody has hurt you, *come*. And as you come, learn of Me. You need to know these two things more than anything else: That I am meek and that I am lowly. That is what you are going to learn. Therefore, take My

yoke upon you, because it is a yoke of meekness and humility. That is the yoke you are taking on. It is not a heavy burden. My burden is very light.”

Having lived on a farm, I learned that if you yoke up two animals, there is always one that is more aggressive. They always learn to work together well, as you know. But one is stronger and more aggressive while the other will follow and cooperate. If the load is heavy, the stronger one will always be the leader.

When we are yoked up with Jesus Christ, the test is to trust Him through what we know of Him, having a Spirit-filled heart and the Word of God dwelling richly in us. We yield to those simple words that Jesus said, “Come unto Me.” That’s all!

Notice that He did not say, “Get right.” He didn’t say, “By the way, you don’t go soul winning.” He didn’t say, “You don’t love your wife or your husband properly.” He didn’t say, “You watch TV too much.” He didn’t say that.

He said one thing: “Come unto Me, that’s all. And learn of Me, because you are going to learn what I will be like in your situation, in your need right now. I am meek, humble. And during what you thought was such a severe

trial, you will suddenly find rest. You will find that the yoke in your situation is easy, and you will discover that the burden is very light.”

Chapter Three

SEEING GOD IN EVERYTHING

“And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?”

“And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

“And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kings 6:15-17).

We do not teach idealism, and we do not try to impart an idealistic response in people. Rather, the Bible teaches us to walk by faith, with a response to the revelation of Christ’s ideals through grace.

The Bible explains positional truth in Eph-

esians 2:5-6. As Christians, we who were dead in our sins are now raised up and have already been seated “together in heavenly places in Christ.” So now, regardless of our situation, our position is above it all. It is not someday, but right now. While positional truth is idealistic, it is also very realistic. Therefore, it is relevant to any situation because of a revelation in the reality of faith.

There are times when we must assess our goals. We have to assess our schedules to make sure that we are not so overwhelmed with details that the reactive emotions within us are in control. When our emotions rule our thought life, we will become weary trying to preserve something in Adam. We find ourselves saying words that normally we would never say about anything or anybody. They kind of “slip out,” and we realize that we really shouldn’t have said anything.

It is quite wearisome to try to preserve Adam, since God already took care of him—convicted him, condemned him, and crucified him on the Cross, two thousand years ago. That is an idealistic yet relevant truth in the light of the Resurrection and positional principles. But there we are, trying to preserve Adam, while he just

causes more trouble, more striving, and more burdens.

This is what happens in some marriages. While they may not live in overt sins, when sincere people live in Adam, wounds from the past get in between them and the ones that they love. Sooner or later, they will blame people they love for their problems, when in fact it is past wounds acting up in Adam.

We are not our sin (Romans 7:20), but we do need to be released from the sins that so easily beset us (Hebrews 12:1).

Acting Out the Fall

A Christian who bears Adam's image continually (which is Satan's whole goal) will have days when he is angry, and in two minutes he can destroy someone's trust. He may say something way off, demonstrating the fall of Satan and the fall of man. Then, to cover himself, he tries to bear Adam's image of self-preservation.

God does not want us to control relationships or to make others dependent upon us. If a husband possesses his wife and if she becomes completely dependent upon him, that is not a good marriage. He may feel the need to control her because that gives him a sense of self-worth,

but he leaves her feeling worthless.

Remember that a good relationship does not just happen. A godly relationship comes by having choices, giving people freedom to use God's gift of free volition. If a man sees his wife as a gift from God, he will trust her. People must be free to express themselves and to live unto God in a godly way.

When the Lord Jesus Christ wants to teach us something through our failure, He says, "Come to Me. Yoke up with Me." Commit to Him the area that causes you to suffer. If you have a bad marriage, make a real commitment to God for that marriage.

Whatever problem you are having, make a serious commitment to God and to the Cross. A commitment is something you act upon. It is a decision. It is an act. Make it real.

The Value of a Promise

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee...." Think of that for a moment. Fear not, because I am with you. It's a simple thing. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God" (Isaiah 41:10a).

That is a personal promise. "...I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I

will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10*b*)—speaking of our Finished Work approval at the right hand of the Father.

So He is saying, "Do you understand what I want to do for you as you yoke up with Me? Do not fear, do not be dismayed. I will help you. I will uphold you." That is a wonderful promise.

According to Psalm 37:24 and Psalm 145:14, the Lord upholds the godly ones who fall; His hand is underneath so they do not utterly fall. Furthermore, He raises up the heads of those who are bowed down.

Our God is saying, "Do not fear. I am with you. I didn't leave you last night. I didn't leave you when you started to become negative. I wasn't able to help you because you wouldn't focus on Me. But I am right here to help you if you want Me to. So fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, I am your God: I will strengthen you, I will help you, and I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness."

How can you possibly get a better promise from the Holy Spirit than that verse? It is a tremendous verse. "I am with you. Don't fear, I'm with you. I am the only God, and I am with you. I am the only One."

“Do not be dismayed....” That means, “Don’t become disoriented. Do not be confused. Do not be disturbed. I am thy God, and I will strengthen you. I will help you.”

A Breath of Life

That is how I get very close to God, with so many days and hours on this journey. I take up a verse like that, embrace it, and then inhale it. Breathe it in. Without striving, simply accept what the Lord said. He said, “I will help you. Don’t be afraid. I will strengthen you. I didn’t tell you to change. I told you to let Me in with the yoke. My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. I didn’t tell you that you are on trial. I just said *Come*, that’s all. Come.”

He will uphold us with His right hand. Throughout the Scriptures, “right hand” always speaks of acceptance. Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:3). That means that He has been accepted in heaven as a Man, perfected in glory. Deity?—Yes. He is seated. The work is finished. And because it is finished, we can rest just as we are. That is why He is seated at the Father’s right hand.”

If I have power in my life from the Finished

Work—power that is pertinent, relevant, unchanging, personal, with meekness and lowliness, rooted in my soul (Colossians 2:7, Ephesians 3:17)—then the yoke is what? Easy. Why? Because I am properly focused.

My focus is on Jesus, my focal point is the Word, and my center is the Spirit glorifying Christ. If I lose my focus, I simply come right back and get focused. A person can be sincerely troubled, and he can find sincere people to listen to his story. But whoever listens must look unto Jesus and focus. He can hear everything and be caring and loving, but he must remain focused.

The Lord Jesus Christ has never, ever let down a person who will focus on Him. He upholds us with such divine love, meekness, lowliness, and *rest!*

We can carry on the duties that made us weary in the flesh, and now the yoke is easy and the burden is light. The very things that made us weary now take on a brand-new vitality when we focus on the Lord.

CONCLUSION

The whole goal of this message is to encourage us, with all of our hearts and with all of our minds, to follow God's way, live in God's truth, and experience God's life.

Any time He was in a room (Luke 4:20), all eyes were upon Jesus. Even on the Mount of Transfiguration the disciples saw only Jesus, and Moses and Elijah disappeared (Matthew 17:8).

When Philip witnessed to the Ethiopian eunuch, he turned to the book of Isaiah and said, "I will teach you about Jesus." That's all. Philip just taught the new convert about Jesus.

Someday we will meet the Lord in the clouds. We will become His bride forever with a great celebration at the marriage supper of the Lamb. But for right now, there isn't a more wonderful thing than to fall in love with Jesus Christ and to have a wonderful engagement time, getting to know Him intimately. Focus on Jesus. Let Him be your everything.