

CHIEF MINISTRIES

February 2108

I have experienced the reality that “when I changed on the inside, immediately everything in my life begin to change on the outside.” But, changing on the inside often requires serious spiritual effort.

However, the message of effortless spirituality basically says this: “Don’t strive, don’t try to work at being spiritual. Jesus already paid the price. All you have to do is accept it. There’s nothing you can add to what He’s done. Don’t be legalistic. Don’t mix faith with works or grace with law. God wants you to rest and enjoy the ride. The old you is dead. The new you is seated on heavenly places, and you don’t need to do anything other than let the Lord do His work through you.”

There are parts of this message that are wonderfully true. The problem is that the parts that are not true - really, the parts that are missing – can prove fatal.

To be sure, it is gloriously true that Jesus paid for all our sins, and there is nothing we can add to His once-for-all sacrifice (Hebrews 9:13-28; 10:1-14). That’s enough to keep us rejoicing for the next trillion years. And it is time that God calls us to rest in Him (Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 4:9-10), to receive His peace (John 14:27), to put our trust in His keeping power (John 10:27-29; 1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 1:6), and to recognize that we are justified by faith and not by works (Romans 3:20-31; 4:1-16; Galatians 3:1-14; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 1:8-10; Titus 3:4-7). What glorious truths are contained in these wonderful verses! They are the foundation for my own walk with the Lord.

It is also true that as we abide in Jesus the Vine, we will automatically bear fruit (John 15:1-7). And it is true that God works miracles among us by faith and not by works (Galatians 3:5) and that, however hard we labor for the Lord, it is God’s grace working in and through us (1 Corinthians 15:10).

To really honor the Lord and do the right thing and constantly abide in Him requires determination and discipline, and there is often an intense battle involved in walking in full obedience to Jesus and saying no to the flesh and the world.

As Smith Wigglesworth, the “apostle of faith” famously said, “Great faith is the product of great fights. Great testimonies are the outcomes of great tests. Great triumphs can only come out of great trials.” This hardly sounds effortless. Could it be that some of these who embrace effortless spirituality are simply coasting and not resisting? Could it be that rather than sacrificing the flesh they are catering to carnality, floating rather than fighting? (I’m not speaking of all here: I’m speaking of some - and by “some,” I mean a considerable minority, if not a growing majority.)

The undeniable truth is that the New Testament is filled with exhortations to us, God’s people, urging us to make every effort to please the Lord, to run and finish our race, to fulfill our calling in Him. Will we accept the testimony of God’s life-giving Word? Can we let the Scriptures speak for themselves?

Allow me to share a number of New Testament Scriptures with you, and as I do, please examine your reaction to these verses as you read them. If you feel the need to explain them away, or if they threaten your theology, or if you find yourself getting defensive, then something is seriously wrong.

Let’s see what Jesus has to say about the matter. In fact let’s ask Him directly.

“Jesus, do you believe in effortless spirituality? I’ve read in Joseph Prince’s book “Destined to Reign” and Ben Dunn’s book “The Happy Gospel: Effortless Union with a Happy God” and even heard it preached and taught by outside volunteers and chaplains and countless others that get to hold the mic here behind the walls. Is this an accurate concept?”

"Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. (Luke 13:24 ESV) Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62 ESV) And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. (Luke 9:23 ESV) Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:27 ESV) So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:33 ESV) I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33 ESV)

“Lord, what about the issue of sin? Is our victory over sin effortless?”

And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. ^{v44} 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' ^{v45} And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. ^{v46} 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' ^{v47} And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, ^{v48} 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' ^{v49} For everyone will be salted with fire. (Mark 9:43-49 ESV)

“But Jesus, wasn’t Your spiritual walk effortless?”

"I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! ^{v50} I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! (Luke 12:49-50 ESV) And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (Luke 22:44 ESV)

Now let’s see what Paul has to say about the matter.

“Paul, do you believe in effortless spirituality?”

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ^{v25} Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. (1 Corinthians 9:24-25 ESV) Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:3 ESV) strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22 ESV).

“Paul, what about the issue of sin? Is our victory over sin effortless?”

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ^{v13} Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. (Romans 6:12-13 ESV). Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ^{v12} The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ^{v13} Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ^{v14} But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (Romans 13:11-14 ESV)

“But does that really require a conscious effort?”

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. (1 Corinthians 6:18 ESV). Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. (1 Corinthians 10:14 ESV). So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22 ESV). But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ^{v12} Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you

made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:11-12 ESV).

“So, are we engaged in some kind of spiritual struggle?”

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ^{v11} Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ^{v12} For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ^{v13} Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:10-13 ESV).

“But, Paul, wasn’t your own spiritual walk effortless?”

So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ^{v27} But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:26-27 ESV). that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ^{v12} Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ^{v13} Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ^{v14} I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:10-14 ESV). To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, ^{v12} and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; ^{v13} when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. (1 Corinthians 4:11-13 ESV). Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ^{v29} For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. (Colossians 1:28-29 ESV). I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7 ESV see also Acts 20:24).

“Could you share a few more details about what your own walk with the Lord looked like, including your ministry experience?”

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ^{v9} persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ^{v10} always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. (2 Corinthians 4:8-10 ESV). but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ^{v5} beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ^{v6} by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; ^{v7} by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ^{v8} through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ^{v9} as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ^{v10} as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything. (2 Corinthians 6:4-10 ESV). For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn--fighting without and fear within. (2 Corinthians 7:5 ESV). Why are we in danger every hour? ^{v31} I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! ^{v32} What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." (1 Corinthians 15:30-32 ESV).

Somehow, I don’t equate descriptions like these (and there are plenty more from Paul) with the word effortless. But there’s still Peter - let’s ask him what he has to say.

“Peter, surely you believe in effortless spirituality, right?”

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ^{v6} and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ^{v7} and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ^{v8} For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ^{v9} For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ^{v10} Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ^{v11} For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-11 ESV). But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which

righteousness dwells. ^{v14} Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. (2 Peter 3:13-14 ESV).

“But Peter, we have effortless victory over sin, don’t we?”

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. (1 Peter 2:11 ESV). Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ^{v2} so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. ^{v3} For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. (1 Peter 4:1-3 ESV). Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ^{v9} Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. (1 Peter 5:8, 9 ESV).

“Are you saying that in some sense we are called to suffer for the Lord?”

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, (1 Peter 1:6 ESV). For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ^{v20} For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ^{v21} For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:19-21 ESV). But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, (1 Peter 3:14 ESV). For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:17 ESV). Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ^{v13} But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. (1 Peter 4:12-13 ESV). Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. (1 Peter 4:19 ESV). And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. (1 Peter 5:10 ESV).

“So, author of Hebrews, what do you have to say?”

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. (Hebrews 2:1 ESV). Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ^{v13} But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ^{v14} For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. (Hebrews 3:12-14 ESV). Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. (Hebrews 4:1 ESV). Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:11 ESV). Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ^{v36} For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. (Hebrews 10:35-36 ESV).

“Are you saying, then, that our walk with the Lord is like a race that we need to run with determination, just as Paul taught?”

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ^{v2} looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ^{v3} Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ^{v4} In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. (Hebrews 12:1-4 ESV).

This Christian walk requires effort! So, I ask you: In light of the consistent, clear, and abundant testimony of God’s Word, how can anyone believe in effortless spirituality? The Word of God utterly demolishes this false and exaggerated concept, and the same God who offers us rest in His Son also calls us to run.

And let's not forget Jacob (James), who wrote, "But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and pressures, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing" (Jacob [James] 1:25). Perseverance, along with "doing" rather than just "hearing," requires effort, and so, "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (Jacob [James] 2:17).

And let's not forget the witness of Judah (Jude) who said, "Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation. I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." (Judah [Jude] 3). So, there is a battle that must be fought just for the purity of the gospel.

There is also a battle that must be waged against sin: "Have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment sustained by the flesh" (Judah [Jude] 22-23). And note that Judah (Jude) wrote those words immediately before invoking the One "who is able to keep (us) from falling and to present (us) before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy" (Judah [Jude] 24). He will do His part, but we must do ours, which is why Judah (Jude) exhorts his readers to build themselves up in the faith and keep themselves in God's love (vs. 2-21).

That's why Paul wrote that God "has reconciled (us) by Christ's spiritual body through death to present (us) holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation - if (we) continue in (our) faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel" (Colossians 1:22-23). God's grace goes hand in hand with our obedience.

Bishop J. C. Ryle, a 19th century theologian from his book entitled: "Holiness: It's Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties and Roots" wrote:

"It would not be difficult to point out at least 25 or 30 distinct passages in the Epistles where believers are plainly taught to use active personal exertion, and are addressed as responsible for doing energetically what Christ would have them do, and are not told to "yield themselves" up as passive agents and sit still, but to arise and work. A holy violence, a conflict, a warfare, a fight, a soldier's life, a wrestling, are spoken of as characteristics of the true Christian. We must fight. There are no promises in the Lord Jesus Christ's Epistles to the Seven Churches, except to those who "overcome." Where there is grace there will be conflict. The believer is a soldier. There is no holiness without warfare. Saved souls will always be found to have fought a fight. It is a fight of absolute necessity. Let us not think that in this war we can remain neutral and sit still..... We have no choice or option. We must either fight or be lost. It is a fight of universal necessity. The foe we have to deal with keeps no holidays, never slumbers and never sleeps. So long as we have breath in our bodies we must keep on our armor, and remember we are on an enemy's ground. "Even on the brink of Jordan," said a dying saint, "I find Satan nibbling at my heels." We must fight till we die."

Paul encouraged the believers in Corinth that their "labor in the Lord" was not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58) - and labor is the exact opposite of effortlessness! So, finding a place of rest and security in the Lord, and empowered by God's grace, let us work; let us run; let us fight; let us overcome in Jesus' name. The effort will be worth the reward. Rest and run!

I'll leave you with one of my mom's favorite things to tell fellow believers. "Get off your can and do something for the kingdom!

In it to win it, and to take as many as I can with me!

Chief

If you want to know more about CHIEF Ministries or would like to be a part of this, please go to www.chiefministries.com and www.chiefshouse.org

Christ's

Heart

In

Every

Felon