

Be Holy In All Your Behavior

by Hendrik Joubert

While discussing the level of commitment and dedication of the apostle Paul I once made the point that he would be considered a religious fanatic by most. A brother reacted by saying: *Surely the Lord does not expect us to be like Paul.* It would seem that many sign up for a *limited plan* only, some being more blatant in their attempts at negotiating a deal with God than others.

Although the apostle left us with a great example to follow, he is not our ultimate example. That honor belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostle acknowledges this. ***Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1. Surely the Lord does not expect us to be like Him? For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,*** ²² ***WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;*** ²³ ***and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;*** ²⁴ ***and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 1 Peter 2:21-24***

Through the apostle Peter we also learn that we will be held to a high standard of conduct: ***As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,*** ¹⁵ ***but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;*** ¹⁶ ***because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."*** **1 Peter 1:14-16.** That is the example the Lord left us.

Is it unfair to expect us to follow His example? It is rather easy to deny the humanity of Christ by thinking, or suggesting that He had *super powers* which prevented Him from sinning – He could not sin, how could we be asked to be like the Lord? ***For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15.*** This statement would be phony as well as misleading if it was impossible for Jesus to sin. Earlier the writer made the following statement: ***For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. Hebrews 2:18.***

We must be careful not to use passages like **1 John 1:10: *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us*** to justify our lack of commitment to overcome sin. John does not promote the idea that *we have to deal with the reality that we are going to sin*, that *we may as well give up the fight against sin*. John exhorts us not to *practice sin*. ***No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 1 John 3:9***

If anyone is caught in any trespass (Galatians 6:1) is different from sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, (Hebrews 10:26) or practicing sin. Through James we learn: ***For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. James 3:2.*** Realizing that we are bound to stumble should not cause us to simply *live* with our sins. Often we find ourselves saying that we are *working* on a *problem* (sin) in our lives, and it continues for years and years and years. It would seem that we have learned how to live with it, rather than working on *overcoming* it.

The foolishness of the idea that we may negotiate a *limited commitment plan* is obvious from yet another statement by the Hebrew writer: ***Although He was a Son, He learned***

obedience from the things which He suffered. Hebrews 5:8. The Son **learned obedience from the things which He suffered** – He had to do what was necessary in order to make atonement for sin. In Paul's letter to the Philippians the Lord teaches us that He had to become obedient to the point of death, and that upon a cross: **Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Philippians 2:8.**

In obedience to the Lord we have to exercise self-control as we submit our will to His. Notice the reason for preaching the gospel: **We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,... 2 Corinthians 10:5.** Consider the idea of obedience. **Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? Romans 6:16**

Obedience involves exercising self-control to do what God desires and not what I desire. We should grow weary in our struggle against sin: **Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:1-**