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Daily Devotional, Friday, June 16, 2017 - The Unconditional Love of God

JUNE 16TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Romans 5:6-8

New believers may find it difficult to accept that God loves us just as we are. Much of the world operates by conditional love, which offers approval and acceptance on the basis of performance. So when we first come to Christ, there is often a natural tendency to assume we must strive to “earn” blessings—such as monetary wealth, loving families, and solid careers.

Divine love, however, can never be earned by human effort. There’s absolutely nothing we can do to make our Father love us more. Nor can we influence Him to ever stop loving us. (See [Rom. 8:38-39](#).) Many believers understand this intellectually, but they may have trouble believing it deep down in their heart.

No matter what has occurred in your past or what you feel right now, God’s love has always been freely given to you. Our heavenly Father pours His love upon us without exception—no ifs, ands, or buts. It’s not as if He postponed loving you until the moment you invited Him into your life. Nor did He begin loving you when you first started going to church or when you rose from the baptismal waters. In truth, the Lord never *began* to love you at all; He simply always has. From the creation of the world, God knew you and loved you ([1 John 4:19](#); [Psalm 139:13-16](#)).

Are you rejoicing in the Father's love? Do you exude peace, or are you focused on what-ifs? Is your life characterized by power and purpose or by fear? Recognizing the amazing truth of God's unconditional love is life-changing. Prayerfully open your arms to His love today.

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Daily Devotional, Thursday, June 15, 2017 - Understanding the Christian Life

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[Galatians 1:11-17](#)

Have you ever wondered why some new Christians seem to soar in their new-found relationship with the Lord while others nose-dive within a few weeks? Let's consider what makes the difference.

Those of us who have been Christians for a long time might forget that salvation involves a change not only in lifestyle but also in thinking and understanding. Shortly after encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul pulled away to Arabia for a time. Before the apostle could start his ministry, his mind had to be reprogrammed, so he needed to learn from the Lord ([Rom. 12:2](#)). Similarly, new believers coming into faith with old misconceptions need to understand what salvation really means.

Let's look at some terms that help explain what is meant by "being saved":

Born again ([John 3:3](#); [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). New birth means new life. It implies starting over; the old life isn't simply renovated but is actually replaced by a new one.

Converted ([1 Thess. 1:9](#)). Converting something means changing it, like money that's exchanged from one currency to another, or energy that's changed from one form to another. The Christian life must involve change.

Receiving Christ ([John 1:12](#)). We often think of salvation as something God gives us, but it is more than that. When someone trusts in Christ, that person welcomes the Lord to live within his or her heart.

Think about how you thought and lived before you knew the Savior, as compared with now. In what ways do you see genuine change? Ask God to reveal areas in which the life of Christ needs to become more evident.

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Daily Devotional, Wednesday, June 14, 2017 - Only Obedience Will Do

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[1 Samuel 15:1-35](#)

The most obvious way to step out of God's will is to commit deliberate sin. In fact, this is so apparent that you might wonder why I'm pointing it out. The reason is that I often hear believers try to justify partial obedience.

King Saul tried to justify ignoring the Lord's instructions. After God ordered the Israelites to utterly destroy the Amalekites and all their holdings, they spared the choicest beasts as well as the leader, Agag. Pleased with himself, Saul announced that he had done as commanded. But when Samuel questioned him further, Saul tried to blame the people ([1 Samuel 15:15](#)). A king's subjects, however, cannot act in so brazen a manner without his knowledge and permission.

Saul didn't stop there. He argued that the animals had been saved so they could be sacrificed to the Lord. He must have sounded quite righteous to his own ears. But Samuel was not fooled. He called Saul's action by its proper name—insubordination (v. 23).

Our reason for partial obedience may sound logical, but that doesn't change the fact that we're still in rebellion. Excuses and justifications won't sway God in the slightest. He doesn't alter His will to accommodate human desires or common sense. Instead, He looks

for and takes delight in a faithful follower.

Are you trying to rationalize a decision or behavior? Perhaps you've offered reasons for pursuing a certain path. Or maybe you tried bargaining with God. I assure you He isn't moved by any arguments. Remember: Partial obedience is disobedience in His eyes. And no sin is worth being outside His will.

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Daily Devotional, Tuesday, June 13, 2017 - Getting Out of Step

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[1 Samuel 13:5-14](#)

Saul had everything going for him. Besides being the son of a highly respected man, he had good looks and a nice physique ([1 Samuel 9:1-2](#)). Since God chose him to lead Israel at a time when the nation had some formidable enemies, we can surmise that he was also a courageous and charismatic leader. Even the prophet Samuel was impressed and spoke admiringly at Saul's coronation: "Surely there is no one like him among all the people" ([1 Samuel 10:24](#)).

But despite Saul's many positive attributes, he tragically spent much of his reign out of step with God. The king's errors in judgment were mostly due to an inflated sense of self-importance. One blunder would set off a sin-filled chain reaction, as we see in his desperate quest to kill David (chapters 18-26).

The Lord hates arrogance. When people think more highly of themselves than they should ([Rom. 12:3](#)), they stop relying upon divine guidance in making decisions. Terrible consequences result from such wrong thinking. For example, the king thought so much of himself that he ignored the law and offered a pre-battle sacrifice in Samuel's place. Because Saul refused to submit himself to God's command, the Lord handed the kingdom over to a man who would ([1 Samuel 16:13-14](#)).

Pride always drives a person away from God's path. With each misstep, an arrogant man or woman wanders farther into a spiritual wilderness. Nothing of lasting value can be found in such a desolate place. But the Lord will gladly welcome back the wayward. Blessing and joy await those who walk in step with Him.

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Daily Devotional, Monday, June 12, 2017 - God Has a Purpose for Storms

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Psalm 119:71

Perhaps you've seen a TV show in which a distracted person is about to step in front of a moving vehicle. Then suddenly another character races onto the scene, tackling him to prevent a catastrophe. Stunned and indignant, the near-victim fumes and swats at his rescuer—that is, until realizing he has just been saved from a far worse outcome. What at first seemed like a bad thing turns out to be very good.

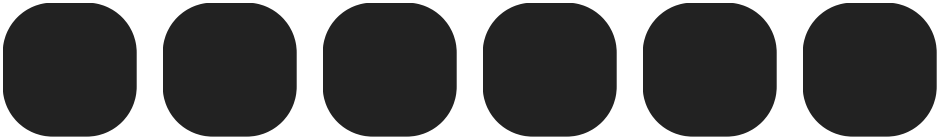
Storms in our life can at times serve a similar purpose. It's easy to get so caught up in the daily grind or preoccupied with chasing a goal that we miss the good that the Lord has in mind to give us. When we're this focused on our own desires, we also become more vulnerable to making choices that don't align with His Word.

But wanting the best for His children, our heavenly Father will go to great lengths to make sure we are positioned for His blessing in our life. That's when we may suddenly find ourselves in the middle of a storm—where life was once sunny, we are now faced with turmoil or even pain. Disappointment like that can catch us off guard and make us wonder, *Why is God letting this happen to me?* It just may be that He's trying to protect us and draw us closer to Him.

Though the Lord sometimes allows storms in the form of problems and hardships, His goal isn't ever to hurt you. If you're going through a trial right now, God may be trying to draw your attention back to Him. It is possible He's disrupting your plans so He can implement His.

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