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Daily Devotional, Thursday, September 14, 2017 - the Blessings of a Spirit-Filled Life

SEPTEMBER 14TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Thursday, September 14, 2017 - the Blessings of a Spirit-Filled Life

1 John 2:3-6

There was a time when I was so disheartened that I wondered whether I should remain in the ministry. How could I tell people that Jesus would give them peace and joy while I felt discouraged by my own failure to be godly? I understood what “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22-23) meant but was never sure which of those qualities, if any, would be apparent in me from day to day.

God let me stew in my anxiety until I was fully committed to finding out if His Word was true or not. I encountered my answer in a biography of Hudson Taylor, the founder of China Inland Missions. For a long time he, too, felt that his efforts fell short of the Lord’s expectations. But Taylor came to realize that God wanted believers to trust Him fully and rest on His promises. So when Jesus Christ said to abide in Him, He meant that His followers were to stop striving and struggling. Instead they were to trust Him to subdue their flesh.

As a child, I’d been taught that a person got saved and then went to work for God. You did the best you could to act in a godly manner, think right, and speak wisely. When your best wasn’t good enough, well, you tried harder. Such an impossible expectation was wearing me out, and now the idea of letting Jesus Christ work through me sounded both biblical and liberating.

A branch doesn't bear grapes because of its determined efforts to get sunshine; rather, it simply abides in the vine, and fruit appears. The vine does all the work. In the same way, believers are to abide in the Savior so that spiritual fruit can grow in their life.

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Daily Devotional, Wednesday, September 13, 2017 - Satan's Strategy

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Luke 22:31-34, Luke 22:54-62

Every one of us makes tracks through the valley of failure. The question is, How are you going to respond? Plenty of people give up and exchange a vibrant kingdom-serving life for a defeated existence. But failure need not be the end of the story. It's a chance for a new beginning, living in Christ's strength.

Peter had a life-altering failure. Jesus warned that Satan had asked permission to "sift" the disciple like wheat (Luke 22:31), referring to the vigorous shaking required to separate wheat kernels from debris. The enemy wanted to shake Peter's faith hard in hopes that he'd fall away from Jesus like chaff.

Peter believed the promise he'd made to Jesus: "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not" (Mark 14:29). But Satan knows a few things about the power of failure. He realized that the disciple would be wounded by his own disloyalty. A man with tattered pride can't help but question his usefulness.

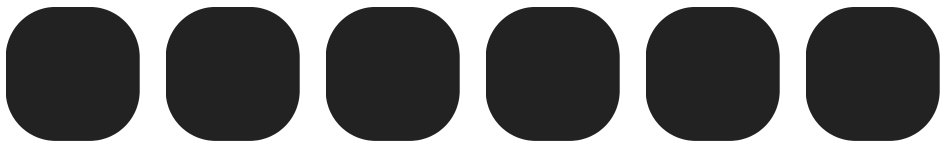
When Satan sifts believers, his goal is to damage our faith so much that we're useless to the Lord. He wants us shelved far from the action of God's kingdom. Therefore, he goes for our strengths—the areas where we believe ourselves to be invincible, or at least very well protected. And when the devil succeeds, we are disappointed and demoralized. But we don't have to stay that way.

If we are willing, God can use our failure to do spiritual housecleaning. Peter laid down his pride and instead put on the Holy Spirit's courage. Thereafter, he risked humiliation, persecution, and death to proclaim the gospel. Failure was the catalyst that led to greater faith and true servanthood.

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Daily Devotional, Tuesday, September 12, 2017 - Confidence in Prayer

SEPTEMBER 12TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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1 John 5:14-15

Throughout the Scriptures, we are encouraged to pray. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells His disciples to keep asking, seeking, and knocking while trusting the heavenly Father to give what is good to His children (Matt. 7:7-11). And in Philippians 4:6, Paul urges us to respond to anxiety by praying about everything. Therefore, it's obvious that God wants us to come to Him with all our needs and concerns.

Today's passage assures us that the Lord hears and answers our prayers. However, this promise is accompanied by one very important stipulation: We must ask according to His will. But how can we know whether our request is what He desires? Much of God's will is clearly revealed in Scripture, but what are we to do when an issue is not directly addressed in the Bible?

Though we'd like to feel confident that the Lord will hear and answer, at times our prayers seem like shots in the dark because we have no idea whether they align with His will. If we dare to admit it, there are also times when we just want God to do what we ask, without regard to what He desires.

If we want to pray effectively, our goal should not be to offer up quick, thoughtless, or self-willed prayers in hopes of receiving speedy answers. Instead, we must learn to pray wisely and wait patiently. Along with voicing our concerns and requests to God, we should also offer ourselves up in submission to our Father, as Jesus did in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39). When we are yielded and obedient to the Lord, His Spirit guides us and provides the wisdom we need in order to pray according to His will.

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Daily Devotional, Monday, September 11, 2017 - Freedom from Enslavement

SEPTEMBER 11TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Colossians 3:5-10

Sin cannot dominate believers who throw themselves upon the Lord's mercy—the Father is faithful to restore fellowship with His beloved children. He does this by breaking down walls that were built up through disobedience.

However, it is our job to confess the specific bondage that holds us, since denial blocks the healing and freedom God offers. Whatever the nature of our sin, the root of the problem is ultimately spiritual, not simply a weakness or social ill. Treatment meant to ease our emotional, mental, or physical discomfort will not be fully effective until we acknowledge the spiritual aspect of our difficulty.

Though sin is uniquely spiritual in nature, the reasons behind wrong behavior are often emotional. Emotions trapped deep within the believer—like insecurity, inadequacy, or lack of self-worth—drive the individual to search out ways to satisfy or escape the feelings. What results is often some form of unhealthy behavior. For instance, at one time in my own ministry experience, I allowed myself to be overextended. Out of a sense of inadequacy, I was driving myself to succeed in “God’s work,” which turned out to be the responsibilities He gave me plus anything else I thought needed doing for Him. I discovered that freedom from bondage is a choice.

As Paul explains, Jesus’ followers must lay aside their sin. For me, that meant putting away my misguided drive to succeed and taking a long rest. Through the Holy Spirit, we voluntarily surrender our chains in order to gain freedom in Christ.

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Daily Devotional, Friday, September 8, 2017 - God Honors Our Commitment

SEPTEMBER 08TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Daniel 1:1-21

Daniel and his friends faced the same dilemma that we do today—how to live a holy life. At times, our society seems to accept Christian values and standards, but that’s not always the case. Our challenge is to live under God’s authority while remaining in submission to the law of the land. But what if we are forced to choose between the two? Our first inclination should be to seek the Lord’s guidance before marching forward.

Had Daniel bluntly declared, “I won’t eat this food!” he wouldn’t have lasted long, and we wouldn’t have the book of Daniel in the Bible. But the Lord gave him the wisdom to humbly seek permission from the person who was in a position of authority over him. God honored the young man’s commitment and provided a way for him to live righteously in a pagan world.

We tend to hold up Daniel and his three friends as extraordinary people who lived amazing lives. But they were regular people, just like us. Have you ever wondered what the Lord could do in the life of an ordinary person like you or me? The determining factor is not the individual’s greatness, but rather his or her commitment to a heavenly Father who can do remarkable things in a life fully devoted to Him. That’s the kind of person God is looking for.

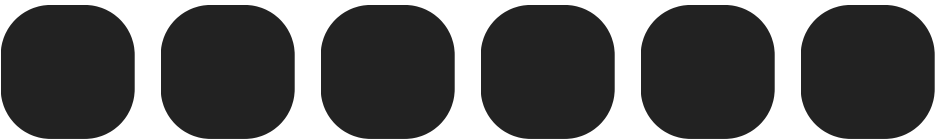
Although we don’t know all that God could do in and through us if we radically committed ourselves to Him, the thought of missing out on His plans should be enough to motivate us to

obey. On arriving in heaven, we don't want to discover blessings were forfeited because we weren't fully devoted to Him.

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