

LIVING ABOVE THE LINE

II Corinthians 4:18

Have you ever set out to do something spiritually and found it hard to complete it? Like maybe you tried to read the Bible through completely. Or maybe you decided you would try to read the Bible every day. Or you decided that you would pray every day. Or pray for a longer period of time each day. Maybe you decided you would give something up for God. Or you decided you would take on something new. Maybe you set out to start going to Sunday School. Or get involved in a new ministry. But something happened. It was hard to follow through. Isn't that the way the Christian life is?

Living the Christian life isn't easy. In fact, it just may be humanly impossible. But maybe that is the way God intended it! Jesus talked about this. He talked about keeping the Law. No one can keep the Law, he said. It is impossible. It is a yoke that no one can bear by themselves. You can't do it.

God has been teaching me something new along this line. Here is how it works for most Christians. At some point we become a Christian. We accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We give our life to Christ. He comes into our lives and forgives our sins, right? At that point we know God's saving grace. We are going to go to heaven when we die. We have Christ living inside us. But then we spend the rest of our Christian lives struggling to live the faith. We struggle to do all these things we know we are somehow supposed to do. And to be honest, most of us are not very good at it. We don't give like we should. We don't love like we should. We don't practice the spiritual disciplines (pray, read the Bible, serve, worship) like we should. We continue to fall back into sin. Don't we? We work hard until the end trying to measure up, trying to live the Christian life, trying to do all the things we hear the Bible telling us we are supposed to do. And it is a struggle. And most of the time we never get to the point that we do it really well and really consistently.

This is what God has been teaching me from a book I am reading called, "*The Rest of the Gospel*" by Dan Stone. You see, there are, in reality, two different worlds. There is the "seen" and temporal world. And there is the "unseen" and eternal world. Let's read how the Bible describes it in II Corinthians 4:18.

Most of us are far more familiar with the world that is seen and temporal. That is the world that we were born in. It is the world that we have spent most of our time in. But God opens us up to another world when we become Christians. Let's look at a description of this other world in Colossians 3:1-3.

If you can, imagine that there is a line that exists and this line separates the two worlds. This is not completely accurate, because there really isn't such a line. The two worlds are really overlapping and not nicely separated. But to understand this, we need to imagine for the time being that they can be divided. The line separates two different dimensions of existence. Below the line is the world

of the “seen” , the temporal world. Above the line is the world of the “unseen”, the eternal world. It is the spiritual world. It is the world from which God sees us, once we have become Christians. It is the world from God’s perspective. It is the real world from God’s perspective. And it is the world that he give us the opportunity to live in, if we choose.

Listen to the description of this world as it can be experienced by us, found in II Corinthians 5:16. This is how we can relate to each other, if we live in the world above the line. Verse 17 also describes this “above the line” existence.

Below the line we experience life as hard and difficult. We experience life as a “work in progress.” We have needs. We have emotions that fluctuate up and down. We experience behavioral changes. We make mistakes. We fall. We grow. Right?

But look at how life is “above the line.” Above the line we have been perfected or sanctified (Hebrews 10:14). In the “above the line” existence, we are complete (Colossians 2:10). Above the line we are righteous (II Corinthians 5:21). Above the line we are holy and blameless and beyond reproach (Colossians 1:22). This is how God sees us. As far as God is concerned, this is who we really are. This is our true identity.

Our fearful, sinful, doubting, mistake-prone self is not our real identity. Our real identity is the one that is above the line. But again, most of us live most of our lives, even though we are Christians, saved by grace, ultimately going to heaven, with our sins forgiven, we live “below the line.”

Here is the good news. You can live “above the line.” God has made it possible to live above the line. Look at how Jesus lived his life. Jesus saw people coming to him that were broken. They had broken, messed up lives. They had diseases. They had broken relationships. They were a mess in many ways. But he didn’t see their brokenness as ultimate. He saw their ultimate destiny as complete and whole. He started with a different perspective. He started with a different point of origin. He lived in the above the line world. He saw what they were or could be from heaven’s perspective.

When there was a crowd of people that had been following him and listening to him all day, what did he see? Yes, he saw that they were hungry. But his didn’t see their hunger as ultimate. He didn’t see shortages as ultimate. He saw the limited loaves and fishes, and then saw what they could be. He saw them as being more than enough. Jesus saw beyond the world of limitation to the world of abundance and sufficiency. He looked beyond what our human eyes could see and looked to what the Father wanted to do. He lived in an above the line world.

So how do we live above the line? How do we live in the world of the “unseen” and the eternal world? How do we live in the spirit world, the world from which God sees us? Everything in the spiritual world is about faith. The Spirit world operates by faith. God gives us the opportunity to go over into the world of the “unseen” and eternal by faith.

Here is how Paul described the way we live in this other world (Galatians 2:19-20). The secret is that it has to be Christ living in us that enables us to live in this other world. We can't do it. All we can do is make ourselves available. We do the complying. We have to give up living in the world of the "seen" and temporal. We have to die to ourselves. We have to become crucified...with Christ. We surrender, let go, yield. And the life we live, we live by the power of Christ living in us. Everything happens "in Christ." *"I can do all things through him, who strengthens me,"* (Phil 4:13). *"My God shall all my needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus,"* (Phil. 4:19). All the promises found in the Bible are fulfilled "in Christ."

So, here is the deal. Do you want to live the Christian life? Then you do it, "in Christ." You let Christ do everything in you that you do. If you keep on trying to do all these things in your own strength, and in the temporal world, using your human strength, you'll never succeed. But in Christ you can do anything and everything. In Christ we are whole and complete and worthy. In Christ we are new creations, the old has gone and the new is now here. We are not only new creations and holy and blameless, but we can do everything in God's power that he wants us to do.

The goal is to live by faith in the spirit world. The goal is to see each other as Christ sees them. As sons and daughters of God, loved by Christ and destined for heaven. The goal is to see ourselves as God sees us. God is working this new image into us, into this "seen" and temporal world. He is conforming us into his image by the transformation of our minds.

My prayer for you is that you would ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to live above the line. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to live in the Spirit world. Ask him to give you the faith to believe what he already knows is true about you.

Let's pray. O God thank you for what you have already done in our lives. Thank you Jesus for saving us and giving us the gift of eternal life. Now we ask you Holy Spirit to come and help us to live in the spirit world, in the eternal world, in the world of that which is unseen. Help us to see ourselves as you see us. Help us to let you live our lives. Show us how to release and surrender every area of our lives to your control and truly let you be the one who is living within us. "The life I now live, I live by the power of Christ." Make this our prayer. Make this true for us. Amen.