
HOW
TO
LIVE
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'TILL
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HOME
FAMILY
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WORK
By Jerry D. Ousley

HOW TO LIVE ‘TILL WE GO HOME

By Jerry D. Ousley

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How to Live ‘Till We Go Home

Part 1

Living with Ourselves

Have you ever found yourself in a situation in which you said, “I just can’t live with myself because of this,” or something similar? I’d say most likely you have. You see, that’s one thing we cannot escape from – living with ourselves that is. Some have taken the drastic step of committing suicide in order to escape themselves. However, even in death ourself still exists. We have no alternative, then, but to learn to live with ourselves.

Paul wrote about this very thing in Romans 7:23-25 – “I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh

the law of sin." The Apostle had struggled with wanting to be perfect for Christ, yet even this great man of God had problems overcoming himself and his sin-bred desires.

He was referring to the Law God gave to Moses. It was a very strict law that set boundaries defining how to live for God. But the only person who ever lived up to this law perfectly was God in the Flesh – Jesus Christ. Look down through history. He is the only one. The Bible records two people who were taken out of this life and translated to God without experiencing death. That was Enoch and Elijah. I used to think that perhaps the reason God did this was because they had somehow reached perfection. While we don't have a lot of history on Enoch, we do have a fairly extensive account of Elijah, and even though he was close to God, there were times that he too failed miserably. So, he wasn't perfect. Only God really knows why He took them without them experiencing death.

The point is, no one in the Old or New Testament could fulfill the law and that should let us know that we can't either. We can try, but just know that if we fail in the smallest of details, we have failed in all.

We can't do it because of another law, that of sin. It is bred into man. As proof, we don't like being told what we can and cannot do. Just give it a try. Tell someone in no uncertain terms that they have no choice in the matter but that they have to do something. You are going to be met with an angry individual. They may do it but inside they are saying "I'm doing it but, in

my heart, I'm not doing it!" In some cases they may even spew forth a mouthful that is worthy of anger management.

The fact is, whether spoken or not, lived or not, we all have a desire to do what is right. There just comes a time when we get tired of trying and some simply give up trying. That's because of the war that rages inside us. We want to do good but we fail, often over and over again.

In the quoted text, in response to human failure, Paul said, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Can you hear the frustration? Can you feel the anger at self for not being able to live for God even when we want to?

By the way, he gave himself the answer in the very next verse, "I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." It can only come through Jesus Christ. We can't do it on our own. Even after we accept Him in salvation, still we fail when we depend on ourselves. Only by asking forgiveness and accepting that His sacrifice on Calvary covers our sin, then recognizing that our old self died with Christ and our new self was raised to life with Him can we be free from that curse of wrong-doing.

We can try to make excuses for not succeeding with living with ourselves by saying things like, "I just can't serve God; it just isn't in my nature," or "I'm a lost case," or "I want to, but I guess I'm too young (or too

old – I've heard it both ways)." However, these are merely excuses to attempt to escape trying to live with ourselves for Christ.

In the next chapter, Romans 8:1-5 Paul wrote, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." There's the answer, because of Christ we no longer are slaves to either of these laws, the Law of Moses or the law of sin and death. We want to serve Jesus Christ and we want to do what is right, but even then, we still fail. But after salvation we have the right to ask forgiveness and guess what? He does! He does forgive us when we ask in honesty and sincerity.

In speculation we have to ask the silent question, is this then a get out of jail free card to live any way we want and to do whatever we want? If Christ will forgive us does this make it okay? Absolutely not! We dwell with Christ and so when our minds are on Him then we can do as Paul wrote and walk in the Spirit. Walking indicates living. Our daily

walk is our daily lives. In order to live with ourselves we must live day to day, striving to please God, but then, when we fail (and we will fail), confessing our sin and moving on.

When we really get saved, and by that, I mean that when we aren't just "making sure" and we aren't just saying words that we think are somehow magic and take care of everything, when we really get saved, our desire is to walk with Christ – live our daily lives in and for Him. Once again, there will be times of failure. But we have an advocate with God the Father, Jesus Christ who is ever pleading our case (1 John 2:1).

Read these words of victory and know that you can, after all, live with yourself: "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:27-39).

How to Live ‘Till We Go Home

Part 2

Living with Others

When was the last time you heard the words, “You’ve got to love everyone to be a Christian.” While this is true, it isn’t entirely true in the sense that most people say it. Usually they are accusing you of something. Perhaps you’ve had a run-in with someone that left you aggravated and angry. That’s when it happened. That’s when you got told by whatever critic you may be facing, “You’ve got to love everyone.”

As I said, yes, we are required to love everyone, but Jesus did give us different degrees of love. That isn’t to say that we love one more than another but we love people in different ways.

The one most quoted by people is found in John 15:12 which says, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” Many quote this verse in defense of loving everyone. However, Jesus was specifically talking about fellow believers. It is imperative that we love our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is the sign to the world that we are

Christians and that Christianity is real, according to Jesus. He also said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

For believers in Christ, to love each other is imperative. If we don’t how else will other people know that His Kingdom and His love is real? Some say that signs and wonders are the proof of Christ. People want to see the dramatic in order to believe. But in Jesus’ day, He did many mighty miracles and the people still asked Him for a sign as to who He was. It may sound ridiculous, but you can read it for yourself in the Bible. If fact, after He had done one of His most powerful miracles, feeding five thousand men, plus their families, with only a few cakes of bread and a couple of fish, when He claimed that He was the Messiah, they still said, “Show us a sign …” (John 6:30). Signs are dramatic and spectacular, but it is the daily love believers have for each other that positively proves Christ is real and that the love of God is genuine.

But we are also required to love those Jesus called “our neighbors.” He said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you …” (Matthew 5:43). And then in Matthew 19:19 and 22:39 we read, “… You shall love your neighbor as yourself …” Finally in Mark 12:31

Jesus told one who had come to Him that the second commandment was to love one's neighbor as much as he loves himself. At one point Jesus was asked, "who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). That was when Jesus told the story of the "Good Samaritan." The answer was that, not just those who live next door to us, but anyone we may come into contact with, qualifies as "our neighbor." This is the love we have for everyone.

Then we are told to love our wives. In several instances, Paul told Christian men that they were to love their wives just like Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. You can read that in 2 Corinthians 11:11, Ephesians 5:25, and Colossians 3:19. We are told to love our wives. Of course, when we first get married it is easy to love our wives. But over time, they may do or say things we don't like or agree with and that job becomes harder and harder. But it shouldn't.

It is a difficult thing to love your wife as much as Christ loved the Church. That's because Jesus gave everything, including His life, proving and showing that love. Yes, He was the Son of God and yes, He was God in the Flesh. Yet, He still was as human as any one of us. The fact is, when we love our wives as much as Christ loved the Church, giving Himself for it, then our wives will love us back. It works 99.99% of the time. We do our part then it becomes easy for them to do their part.

Finally, we are told to love our enemies. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you,

love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:43-48, see also Luke 6:27-28).

So, we are to even love our enemies. In the light of these different forms of love, the answer then becomes, "yes, we are to love everyone." But in somewhat different ways. Note one key: Jesus said to be perfect as God is perfect. How can we do that? We can't, not in ourselves. That's why the human race is in the big mess we are in. Only by having Christ in our lives can we be perfect. Not perfect in that we do everything correctly, in the right way and never make a mistake, but perfect in that Jesus Christ in us is perfect and we allow Him to be our perfection.

There are times we feel like we'd just like to find a remote cabin in the woods, apart from all of civilization, where we have no other human contact. While that may seem inviting, reality will tell you that there will come a time when we need contact with other people. We become lonely. Loneliness leads to depression, and depression leads to all other kinds of sickness and even disease.

That being the case, life demands that we learn to live with others. Living with others requires us to sometimes bite our tongues. It requires that we be patient with people, even when they make us want to "blow our tops.' It isn't easy living with others. But it is necessary.

We come into contact with people who we just can't seem to get along with. They rub us the wrong way. They may seem obnoxious in their speech, their actions and their mannerisms. We feel a dread whenever we get around them. We just want to turn and run, not walk, the other way. But we can't. Especially if we want to demonstrate the love of Christ. That requires us to love them in one of the four ways we have outlined. If it is our spouse, we love them as Christ has required. If they are a fellow believer, we love them as a witness to the world of Christ's love. If they are our neighbor, we love them by helping them in whatever situation God places us in. And if they are an enemy, we still love them and pray for them.

Again, this is not an easy job to fulfill. We will fail. There will be times when we "lose it," and we have to repent and maybe even apologize to the other person. But we do it, not because we have to, but because we love Jesus Christ and want to show His love reflecting upon our lives as much as we can.

When we do, we have a unique and special opportunity – To let others see Christ in us. When people don't believe our words, don't listen to our

preaching, won't see things our way no matter how much sense it might make, no matter what we do or say, they won't believe that Jesus loves them. But when they see the love of Christ emanating from us towards others, and especially in their direction, maybe, just maybe, we can become a witness of that great love of Christ. It's just like James wrote, "Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:19-20). NUFF SAID.

How to Live ‘Till We Go Home

Part 3

Living in the World

There's an old spiritual song that says, "This world is not my home, I'm just passing through…" As believers in Christ Jesus, it is true. We are now only what the Bible calls, sojourners here. We are here for now, but no longer citizens of it. Oh, we may be citizens of the country in which we live, but when it comes right down to it, our true citizenship is where God is.

I was in the military. I still salute our flag. I still face the flag, place my hand over my heart and stand at attention at the singing of our national anthem. But even though I am faithful to the United States of America, there is a flag I serve above our national flag. It is the Christian flag. I am first and foremost a citizen of Heaven, even before the USA.

Jesus said, "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the

world, just as I am not of the world." (John 17:14-16). The third part of "How to Live 'Till We Go Home" is "Living in the World."

Many Christians want to shun the world. They correct others when they use words they shouldn't use. They frown on those who commit sin, and they nearly look down on people who are not Christians. But that is not what Christ called us to do. Being holy is not being proud and arrogant. Being holy is letting Christ and His finished work in our lives be our holiness. You see, Isaiah wrote, "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Isaiah 64:6). I know it sounds repulsive. It is raw at its best, but those words "filthy rags" in their full meaning and context are referring to old used menstruous rags. Rags that are fit for nothing but to be thrown away. They look awful and smell even worse. But that is what God, through the prophet Isaiah, said about our self-righteousness. At best we are smelly filth in the sight of God, and that's the best we can do.

So, when we lift our self-righteous heads above those who are still bound in sin, we are sinning ourselves. When we try to make someone who hasn't yet come to Christ, live by Christian standards, we are actually pushing them away.

As Jesus said, the world may hate us as it hates Him. The world, referring to this world system which is made up of those who are actively against God, hates

Christ, but not because He is self-righteous and being a snob to sinners, but because He stands for the righteousness of God and the world hates God. It does so because it is ruled by the devil. When Adam disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, and discovered the knowledge of good and evil on the side of evil (because he sinned to gain this knowledge), he turned the world over to the devil in exchange for his temptation. Don't get me wrong; God is still very much in control. But He honors His word. He told Adam that if he ate of the forbidden fruit of that tree, that he would die. The moment he began chewing, he began dying. But instantly he died spiritually. The devil doesn't want to relinquish the control he has and so he inspires those who don't know God through Jesus Christ, to hate Him. They may deny it. But as the old adage goes, actions really do speak louder than words. Just take a look around. The world is kicking hard against Christian values. It is demanding that we are haters just because we stand for the truth of the Word of God. It insists that Christians must accept as normal what the Bible says makes God sick and is called out and out sin. The world really does hate Christ – and since Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, it also hates God. Jesus told us that He and His Father were one (see John 10:30).

How, then, are we supposed to live in such a world? First, we know where our true citizenship lies. We are on our journey to Heaven. For now that is with God where ever Heaven is right now. One day, it is going to descend on a remade Earth as the New Jerusalem (see Revelation 21:2) and we will be with

our Father here. For now, it is somewhere else. We are citizens of where ever God is.

Once we realize our true citizenship, then we must follow the instructions of Jesus. He told us to go into all the world and preach the gospel – the Good News that Christ has paid the penalty for our sin and one day all of creation will be redeemed back and restored to what it was before man sinned. You think the Earth has beautiful scenery now – wait until you see it then!

We live peaceably with people. We are at war with the devil, but not with the people of this world. In fact, our job is to live a life that is a living-gospel to them. Our life speaks first. We can preach until we are blue in the face, but if our life doesn't reflect our message, no one is going to listen. First, we live it.

Then we tell it. After we prove the love of Christ to the world by loving our brothers and sisters, loving our neighbor as ourselves, loving our spouse and family, and even loving our enemies, then we can tell them how they can do the same. We all want love. We all want peace. But there is no true love and no lasting peace without God.

The message we preach is simple. There is no hidden agenda or meaning to it. Some like to try to interject hidden messages in codes and numbers. But the Bible is plain, plainly spoken and to be plainly interpreted. It means what it says unless it specifically says otherwise. There are places where it says without

doubt that a passage is a representation. In those cases we look for what it represents. Otherwise, it says what it says.

Jesus further prayed that God not take us from the world. Wouldn't that be nice? To get saved and then just be translated to Heaven? But Jesus wanted us here to be witnesses of the gospel. He did pray that we be kept from the evil of the world. That doesn't mean that we are exempt. It means that we have a way out, through Jesus. He's that advocate with the Father John wrote about (1 John 2:1). But we are here for a purpose and a reason. There's a song that has the line "if we're not dead then God's not done." I agree with that. He has a reason for each of us in this world.

We are not of the world just as He is not of this world. We have become the chosen of God, grafted in with the Jews as God's chosen people. Jesus added in John 17:18, that just as God sent Him into the world, Jesus has sent us into the world. Our missions are slightly different in that Jesus was sent here to pay the penalty for sin by dying on the cross, then conquering sin, death and the grave by rising never to die again on the third day. Our mission is that we tell the world what He has done so that all who will come to Him for salvation, can. This is how we live in the world today – as witnesses to the truth of the Good News of salvation.

How to Live ‘Till We Go Home

Part 4

Living for Jesus

The young man needed some encouragement. He had been left in Ephesus by his mentor to aid the new congregation that had been established there. Timothy, I suppose from what is written in the letter to him from Paul, felt inferior and somewhat unprepared for his assignment. Paul had written to him from Macedonia where he continued his missionary journey. In this first letter the great apostle encouraged his young protégé. He knew that he had these uneasy feelings as he oversaw men older than himself, perhaps better educated, but he was in charge and Paul wanted him to recognize it.

While the entire letter is an encouragement to Timothy, Paul said something in chapter 6, verses 11-16 that is a witness to each of us. It says, “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God who

gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen."

In this passage, Paul is warning Timothy to avoid the temptation for financial gain, stating that the lust or desire for money and wealth is the root of all evil. Note that it doesn't mean that we shouldn't have wealth or that we shouldn't have a way to provide for ourselves and our families but that greed has a way of becoming first place in our lives.

That's why Paul began the quoted passage by telling Timothy to flee – to run away, from those things and concentrate on those things provided us by our salvation in Jesus Christ. Things like righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness. These are things that are included when we talk about living for Jesus. He told him to fight the good fight of faith, hold on to eternal life. He told him that he had been called to eternal life and to lay hold, or "hold tightly" to a good confession in the presence of his witnesses. In other words, he was telling Timothy to live a good life for Christ in front of those to whom his life witnessed.

Of course, that all sounds well and good. Who doesn't want to be righteous, like God, with faith, love,

patience and gentleness? But I challenge you to show me just one person, besides Jesus Christ, who has perfectly lived up to these qualities? I guarantee that there is not a single one. Oh, you could point to some very good people, people who have lived remarkable lives, but without doubt if you delve deeply enough into their lives you will find some dirt. It's there. It's there with all of us. In each of our lives, regardless how good we try to live, there are things that are wrong. We may hide them well. There may not be another single person on Earth who knows about our flaw. But it is there and you know it. I might not know it specifically, but I do know that it is there. How? Because it is in me too. Because of sin in this world, the flaws are found in all of us. Only Jesus Christ was born of a virgin and thus escaped the curse. Only He lived perfectly without sin, without flaws and only He lived all these qualities perfectly. He was crucified and died in our place, paying the penalty that was required of each of us. But because of our flaws, we are unworthy. We can't pay the price. Jesus did for us.

Because of that, living in this world for Jesus means that we rely on Him to be our righteousness, our god-likeness, our faith, our love, our patience and our gentleness. In Him and only in Him can we fight the good fight of faith and hold on to our hope and promise of eternal life. He is our good confession.

We can try. We can do our best to be perfect as God is perfect. Jesus told us to be perfect like God, now, didn't He? (Matthew 5:48). God is absolute perfection. God never makes mistakes, but not one of

us can say that. We will never be able to fulfill what Jesus said in Matthew. But He knew that. The great sermon on the mount as found in Matthew 5-7 is actually a message that lets us know that we in ourselves can't do any of those things He told us to do. At some point we will fail.

So how then can we live for Jesus in this world? The one and only way is that we must let Him live through us. When we accept Christ as our Savior and are filled with His Spirit (which is what happens in our lives when we genuinely accept Him) that is what happens. We begin to live up to the standards of God but letting God live them through us by the provision given us by Christ and the Holy Spirit Who now lives within us.

We can live in this world, live with our families, live with others and live for Jesus, but to do it well, we can only do as He lives through us. All of our efforts are useless. All our perfection is at best marred, scarred and barred from Heaven. We just can't do it. But He can. Only He can. He is the answer to our dilemma. He is the solution to our dooming problem. He is the salvation from the curse of hell.

With this information intact, we now have a decision to make. You see, that is the way we live today, the only way we can continue to live, and that is through Jesus. But we must decide. Of course there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. We can't pay the penalty price for salvation because our lives are not sinless and therefore not worthy as a sacrifice for sin.

But there is one thing we must do in order for His sacrifice to work for us and that is to accept His free gift of salvation. We can't earn it. We can't live good enough to be worthy of it. We can only accept it. Just as with any gift, unless we accept it, it is never really ours. When someone hands us a free gift, it is not ours until we take possession of it. It is just the same with the free gift of salvation provided by Jesus Christ. He is handing it to us. But unless we say "yes" and "thank you" then reach out and take it into our lives, it is never ours. What is your decision? All you must do is see what He has done for us, then accept it. But accepting it means that from that moment forth, we allow Him to live through us. That's how we can live with the world, with others, with our loved ones and for Jesus. He lives it through us.