

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 74 – Check Your Spirit

By Sharon K. Griffiee

Every day we can choose to hate or choose to love. Because of our God-given agency to choose right or wrong, good or evil, when we get up each morning, we should *check our spirit* to see if we are going in God's direction and obeying His will.

II Corinthians 13:5-6 (NIV) – *Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test.*

While the world continues to flow with the current of bondage, terror, and death, Christians should embrace and boldly proclaim the truth that Jesus ushered in when He came to earth, that of *peace on earth and good will toward men*. With His earth-shattering message, Jesus broke the chains of darkness with supernatural love, liberty, and grace. What does all this mean to a world in desperate need? It means that Jesus did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

II Peter 3:9 (NLT) – *The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.*

John 3:17 (NKJV) – *For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*

What does this message of salvation mean to us individually? I can tell you, it means much more than being saved from hell. The quality of life we live here on earth is vitally important to Jesus. He wants us to appreciate what it means to have the spirit of Christ living in us, empowering and saving us daily from the ravages of sin. Therefore, we must be certain that our daily words and actions are not in opposition to the awesome gospel that Jesus delivered us *into*, for our benefit.

We have much to learn from the hands-on teachings of Jesus, as He trekked around the countryside and through the villages with His disciples. Jesus taught them, *through word and deed*, how to successfully overcome the darkness of this world, through the daily application of *kingdom principles*.

Sometimes, lessons are learned the hard way, as was the case with His disciples, James and John. One day they received a strong word of rebuke from Jesus, when they tried to resort to the ways of the world, rather than applying kingdom principles.

Luke 9:51-56 (NKJV) – *Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him [Jesus] to be received up, that He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for him. But they did not receive Him, because his face was set for the journey to Jerusalem.*

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?"

But He [Jesus] turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." (See: John 10:10)

Take a closer look at what is happening here. Instead of allowing the peace of Christ to rule in their hearts, James and John immediately "flew off the handle". They were ready to seek retribution for not letting Jesus pass through. They wanted to *call down fire from heaven* to consume this village. Their hearts were set on destruction, not salvation! Jesus rightly rebuked them saying, "*You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.*"

The Apostle Paul accurately describes the *manner of spirit* Jesus referred to in His rebuke.

Ephesians 2:2-3 (KJV) – *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

If our way of dealing with frustrating circumstances is to respond the same way the world does, we are not behaving as children of God, but as *children of wrath*. Our actions demonstrate that we are *failing the test*, because our *conversations* are still with the spirit of darkness.

Do not get drawn into the World's MO!

We live in an angry world, with people consumed with wrath. We find them in the society where we live. People get offended over the least little thing. In our American society, litigation is part of daily life. Why has this become common practice? Many people have adopted the ways of the world; they do not want to be accountable for their actions. They would rather blame, rather than to forgive as Jesus taught. Lawsuits have become the way people deal with their problems. Why is this? They want to get even, to *destroy* the lives of others. This spirit directly opposes Jesus, the Spirit of Light, the Spirit of *peace on earth and good will toward men*.

We need to sit up and take notice of what Jesus said to James and John, *“For the Son of man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.”*

Jesus brought the single righteous answer to man's anxieties. Retribution will not bring peace of mind. In the end, seeing someone else suffer will not satisfy the deep longings of our heart.

Jesus showed tolerance.

Though James and John were ready to *call down fire from heaven*, Jesus would have none of it! Out of His love for them, He corrected them.

Revelation 3:19 (NKJV) – *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.*

Jesus exposed their pride, passion, and desire for personal revenge when He said, *“You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.”*

Even though it was wrong for the Samaritans to reject and oppose Jesus and His followers, Jesus called for tolerance. Jesus did not insist on His right of traveling the road through this Samaritan village. He did not make a major issue out of it, even though the road was as free to Him as it was to other travelers. Jesus would not force His way, but peacefully chose to go to another village, on His way to Jerusalem. He called for grace, not fire!

Luke 9:56 (NKJV) – *“For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.” And they went to another village.*

In Summary: God has given us the beautiful gift of agency. That means we have the God-given right to choose how we will live our life. We can choose to hate or we can choose to love. In our personal lives when we see that an onslaught of opposition is coming against us, we need to *check our spirit* to determine how we will respond. Why is this so important? How we deal with opposition will have much to do with who we are having conversations with, the spirit of darkness or the Spirit of Light. My prayer, is that our daily conversations will be with Jesus, the Spirit of Light. Amen.

Questions for Personal or Group Study

Why is it so important to *check our spirit* each morning when we get up? See: II Corinthians 13:5-6

Jesus ushered in the earth-shattering message of *peace on earth good will toward men*. What does His message mean to a world in desperate need? See: II Peter 3:9

How does Jesus empower us to be saved, not just from hell, but saved from the daily ravages of sin?

What manner of spirit are we of, if our hearts are set on destruction, not salvation? See: Ephesians 2:2-3

Jesus delivered us into an awesome gospel, for our benefit! What must we do to ensure those benefits?

When the Samaritans rejected Jesus and His followers, He showed *tolerance*. Have you received Jesus' saving nature, demonstrating grace during times of opposition?