



STRUGGLING

WITH ALL

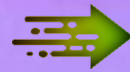
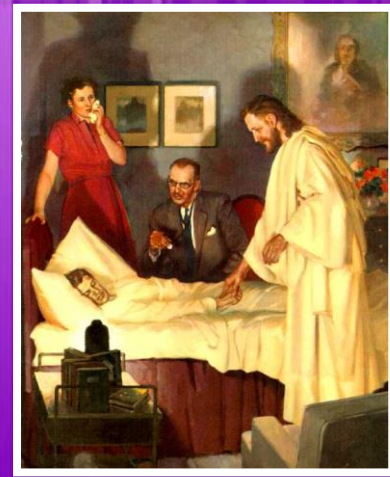
ENERGY

Lesson 6 for August 6, 2022

Everyone faces difficulties in this life.

How can we deal with the crucible of difficulties, no matter their source or purpose?

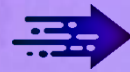
What does God do when we're in the crucible? Should we expect Him to just take the difficulties away with no action from our side? Should we get out of the crucibles by our own means and without God's intervention?



The role of the truth:



The work of the Holy Spirit



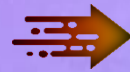
The role of free will:



Struggling with the strength of Christ



Feelings and will



The role of commitment:



Making radical decisions



Persevering

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;” (John 16:13)

Can God transform someone immediately? Yes. Does He? Usually He doesn't. Why?

Transforming our character is the work of the Holy Spirit (2Co. 3:18). Let's see how He works:

- He convinces us that we have sinned, but He doesn't force us to repent
- He convinces us of God's nature, but He doesn't force us to believe in Him
- He convinces us of true doctrine, but He doesn't force us to accept it



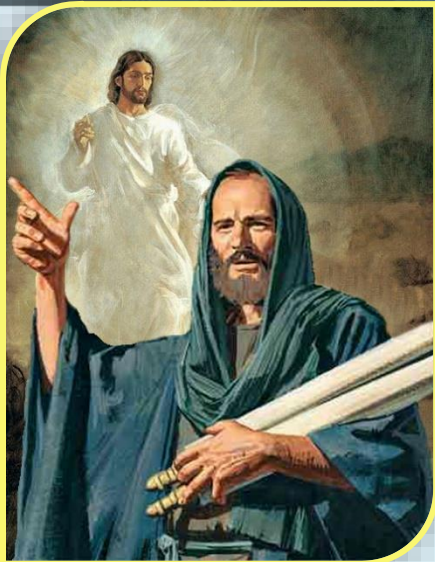
Satan and his angels were not forced to believe in God's kindness and love. Adam and Eve were not forced to not sin. We must choose to repent and to obey God for His power to transform us.



“Having brought conviction of sin, and presented before the mind the standard of righteousness, the Holy Spirit withdraws the affections from the things of this earth and fills the soul with a desire for holiness. ‘He will guide you into all truth’ (John 16:13), the Saviour declared. If men are willing to be molded, there will be brought about a sanctification of the whole being. The Spirit will take the things of God and stamp them on the soul.”

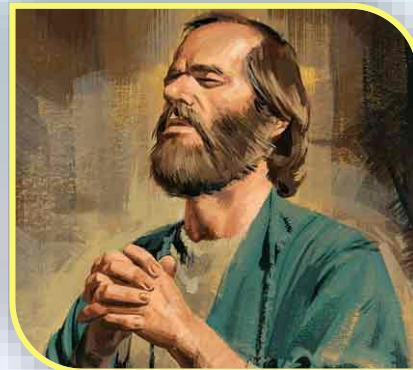
STRUGGLING WITH THE STRENGTH OF CHRIST

“To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.” (Colossians 1:29 NIV)



Paul had a work to do: to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” (Col. 1:28) He had to put a lot of effort (1Co. 9:19-23). He struggled every day to be ready for that work (1Co. 9:26-27).

However, he knew that all his effort was useless as long as he relied on his own strength only. He could only be useful and effective if he worked “with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.”



This works the same in everything we do. Even overcoming a “crucible” requires cooperation between God and us. We shouldn’t expect God to do everything, or to be victorious by our own means only.

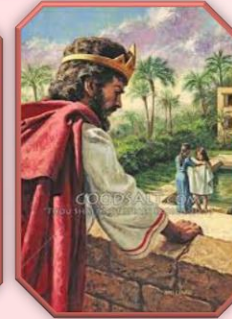


FEELINGS AND WILL

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

Advertising appeals to our emotions: "Don't you feel like...?" "You deserve this!"

This usually moves us to make decisions according to our feelings without analyzing if they are reasonable and right.



Recall Bible stories of people making this type of decisions: Eve (Gn. 3:6), David (2S. 11:2-4), Peter (Gal. 2:11-12). Which were the consequences of those decisions?

Our feelings are not enough to make right decisions. Peter advised us to use "minds that are alert and fully sober" (1P. 1:13 NIV). Our decisions must be governed by our minds and not our feelings.

MAKING RADICAL DECISIONS



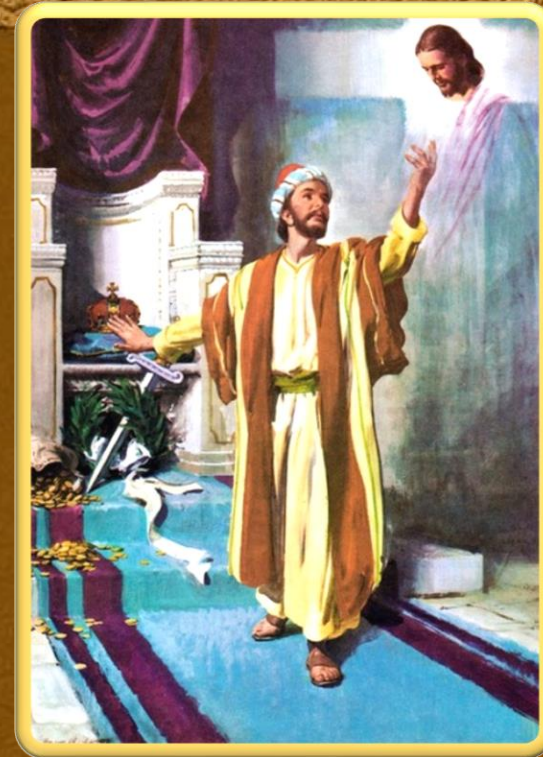
"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell." (Matthew 5:29)

Radical action is necessary not because God has made the Christian life difficult, but because we and our culture have drifted so far away from God's plans for us.

We're called to firmly stand by God's and truth's side (Jos. 1:7). We're called to make a covenant with our eyes, our desires, and our thoughts, to avoid sinning (Job 31:1).

We should deny ourselves (Lk. 9:23). Every right decision will become a step forward to make the next right decision more easily.

If we have wandered, crucibles may be God's call to make a radical decision and come back to Him.



PERSEVERING

"be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day;"

(Proverbs 23:17)

Cooperating with God and making thoughtful decisions are not just occasional acts. We must persevere.

Jacob went through a great crisis. He feared his brother. He needed to be sure of God's protection. He prayed, but someone fought with him (Gn. 32:24). He didn't abandon the fight even after being wounded by the angel (Gn. 32:25). He didn't quit even after his strength faded.

We must cling to God every day as Jacob clung to the angel in his pain and desperation: "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" (Gn. 32:26)



“I saw evil angels contending for souls, and angels of God resisting them [...] But it is not the work of good angels to control minds against the will of the individuals. If they yield to the enemy, and make no effort to resist him, then the angels of God can do but little more [...] Jesus will not commission holy angels to extricate those who make no effort to help themselves.”