

Call to Obedience #460
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Things That Hinder Your Walk With God

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Beloved pilgrims of the Lord: There are many things that can bring leanness to your soul and hinder your prayers. Here are some of them:

1. **Trying to please others will hinder your walk with God.** Many dear Christians are under constant stress because they think that they must live up to the expectations of others. That makes them the prisoners of others. We are not to be prisoners to anyone except of the Lord Jesus Christ. But Jesus is not just our Lord, but He is also our Father, our best Friend, our Helper and our constant fellowship. And, in time, we shall be heirs with Him forever. Therefore, why should we care what people think about us? It is what He thinks about us that matters. We living in Him and He living in us is all that matters. Stop trying to please people. Jesus said: *...Ye cannot serve God and mammon* (Matt. 6:24). Do not seek the praise of men. Do not be like the Pharisees who: *...loved the praise of men more than the praise of God* (John 12:43). So, whom are you going to serve? My friend, once you stop trying to please men and live up to their expectations, you will arrive at a wonderful place of rest for your soul. You will gain strength, clarity of mind and power in the Holy Spirit. On Judgment Day the question is not whether you have satisfied the desires of others but those of your Lord and God. You do not need man's praise.

2. **Do not be critical of others**, yet make the best of criticism when it comes your way. Make it work for you rather than against you by considering the following:

a) **Criticism helps you to know the state of your heart.** If critics offend you, then you know that you are still carnal, often meaning that you still think you are a somebody. Only carnal people get offended, and carnality is death. You cannot offend the spiritual man: *Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them* (Ps. 119:165). Because carnality is a killer, thank God when carnality is revealed to you by someone's criticism.

b) **Most criticism has at least one crumb of truth in it** and you need to thank God for it. Look for this crumb and devour it with thanksgiving—it just might save your soul. Unfortunately, many of your best friends will not

criticize or correct you. Out of misguided “love” for you, they may let you die in your sins, neglects or inconsistencies. Your friends may not be willing to pull the blindfold off of your eyes; but thank God for your enemies because they will. We all need enemies because we do not have enough honest Christians to strip us of our ungodly behavior. Jesus corrected His disciples immediately, without hesitation. We need correction, chastisement and discipline—all of us. God is in favor of it, so do not be against it because God will sometimes use our enemies to chastise us. He even used His enemies to lay the stripes that “heal us” upon His own Son. Remember these words from Hebrews: *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as to children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: For whom the Lord loveth he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receiveth* (Heb. 12:5-6). We need to be broken. Only as our roots go down into brokenness will our spiritual branches spring upwards. There is no bypass for this. Again, be aware that God will many times use enemies to chastise us. So, my friend, cherish truth—it sets you free! Do not live in a lie or in a dream world. Indeed, Jesus said, *...the truth shall make you free* (John 8:32).

c) **If you are being ridiculed, persecuted and falsely accused, take it as a badge of honor.** Jesus said: *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you* (Matt. 5:11-12).

3. **Busy yourself with the things of God;** “unbusy” yourself with the things of the earth. Learn to get more done by doing less. Jesus said: *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly* (Matt. 6:6). There is a divine mystery about this. It is like in tithing: you give more to God and end up having more for yourself. Or it is like keeping the Sabbath day holy: you give up one working day, but you get more done on the other days. You spend more time praying and God gets more work done for you. I read of a pastor in South Korea with a congregation of 1 million people. How could he find time to pray? Well, he prays four hours a day and God rewards him openly. It was the same with Martin Luther. There have also been doctors, lawyers, mechanics and housewives who have been rewarded openly by their heavenly Father when they have spent much prayer time in secret. Yes, I know it is not easy, but it is worth it. It is easier to do this than to work like a slave without getting much accomplished in the end. Do you want a

headwind or a tailwind from God? Make up your mind and make the devil mad at you for choosing God's tailwind!

A friend of mine who is an anesthesiologist said that the golden hours of the day are from 5 o'clock to 8 o'clock in the morning. God wanted Israel to give Him the best sacrifice. Give God the best of your golden hours every day. Do not give Him leftovers when you are all worn out at the end of the day. He deserves better than that. You say: "I am not a morning person." Well, Jesus was and Paul was, and you can learn to give God your first fruits, and you will be rewarded openly.

4. Exercise Christianity in your home or you will come to leanness in your soul. If your Christianity does not begin in your home and if it is not first practiced there, you have nothing. There is a wonderful mystery about the union between a man and a woman. Eve came from Adam's rib—but since then, every man comes out of woman. Husband and wife are as one flesh. It takes constant self-denial along with a constant preferring of your spouse above yourself to make a holy union that will shine brightly and testify of Christ in you. Many pastors' wives do not want to hear their husbands preach because they do not live it at home. This is a terrible indictment on a man's walk with God.

Children must be disciplined and loved consistently. Many young people leave the religion of their parents when they leave home because it was laden with hypocrisy and they were neither loved nor disciplined. Every man should arrange for family prayer each morning. I know that this is difficult, but it is worth it to bond the family together in Christ and to build Christian character.

5. You can also make yourself a prisoner through the fear of hurting someone's feelings. If you are always trying to protect yourself from saying the wrong thing or constantly worrying about stepping on someone's toes, you are like a beautiful songbird that is in a cage and cannot sing. Jesus has given you liberty! He has given you a song; now go and sing it. Jesus hurt many people's feelings, not intentionally of course. He sang His song. Indeed, His first year was a year of popularity; His second was a year of questioning, but in the third year, He offended many because people really began to hear what He had been saying all along. For this reason, both Peter and Paul called Jesus a "rock of offense." He became so much of an offense to people that they killed Him. It will be the same with you. For a while people may enjoy your company and your words, but eventually, many will be offended at you as the truth of God shines more brightly out of you. There will be a clash: ...*The servant is not greater than*

his lord... (John 15:20). Because of potentially losing favor with man, many Christians refuse to witness. They refuse to become watchmen on the wall. They refuse to lay down their lives for others.

6. **Do not ever think that you deserve better.** The first person who ever thought he deserved better was the devil. Now you know where this spirit comes from. What do you really deserve? What will you be satisfied with? Remember what Abraham experienced after he had turned down all the loot that was offered him after the battle of the Kings; God said: *...Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceedingly great reward* (Gen. 15:1). All Abraham wanted was God—if he had God, he was satisfied and considered he had everything he needed. Are you a son of Abraham? Not only do you have Jesus to forgive you of all of your sins and keep you in fellowship with Him, but you have a heaven to go to and remain in forever and ever! What more do you deserve? You did not even deserve all this blessing—how much more do you really need to be happy? Having this then, can you be happy with your marriage no matter how challenging it may be? Can you be happy with your salary, with your home and its furnishings, and with your circumstances? Oh, my friend, stop chasing after happiness in the things of the world. You will always keep coming up empty and unsatisfied. If you say “no” in your heart to all the things of the world, you will truly become the dwelling place of the Almighty.

Here are some other points I want to mention that can bring leanness to your soul, but I do not have space to develop them now:

Do not be unwilling to look like a loser. Although at times you may look like a loser to man, remember that as God’s servant, you will never be a loser.

Do not underestimate faith. Give faith time to grow. As the earth is the soil in which plants grow, so time is the soil in which faith grows.

Look at everything in the light of eternity and live every moment to the full.

If you would like to listen to Pastor Schultze’s radio messages, you can visit his website at: www.schultze.org and click on the icon that looks like a microphone.

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