

LESSON 3: Man's Gift to the Father — Doing of the will of God

The upreach of man to God

The topic of doing the will of God is such an extensive subject that we simply cannot do it justice in this short lesson. Entire books can easily be dedicated to merely a single aspect of this vast study. And so, in the spirit of keeping this lesson down to a reasonable length, we have chosen to highlight some major points through the use of simple lists. We leave it as an exercise for the reader to dig deeper into his/her specific areas of interest.

Personal religion

Every different culture of humanity has its own unique religious perspective on human existence, and these religions can never come to intellectual unification. Human unity can only be achieved through the religion of the Spirit. Human minds may differ, but all humanity is indwelt by the same Spirit. The hope of human unity can only be realized when the divergent religions become transformed by the unifying and ennobling religion of the Spirit — the religion of personal spiritual experience.

- The religions of authority can only divide people and set them against each other;
- the religion of the Spirit will progressively draw people together and cause them to become understandingly sympathetic with one another.
- The religions of authority require uniformity in belief, but this is impossible to realize in the present state of the world.
- The religion of the Spirit requires only unity of experience — uniformity of destiny — making full allowance for diversity of belief.
- The religion of the Spirit requires only uniformity of insight, not uniformity of viewpoint and outlook.
- The religions of authority crystallize their beliefs into lifeless creeds;
- the religion of the Spirit grows into the increasing joy of loving service.

The philosophic elimination of religious fear and the steady progress of science add greatly to the end of false gods and to the eventual destruction of that ignorance and superstition which so long obscured the living Creator of eternal love. The relation between the creature and the Creator is a living experience, a dynamic religious faith, which is not subject to precise definition. To isolate part of life and call it religion is to disintegrate life and to distort religion. Religious convictions may

be arrived at through wise reasoning, but the individual becomes certain only through personal experience.

Marks of religious living

- The religionist is conscious of universe citizenship and aware of contact with the supernatural.
- The most amazing earmarks of religion are dynamic peace and cosmic poise.
- Genuine religious experience is evidenced by twelve characteristics.
 1. Causes ethics and morals to progress despite inherent animalistic tendencies.
 2. Produces sublime trust in the goodness of God in the face of bitter disappointment and crushing defeat.
 3. Generates profound courage and confidence despite natural adversity and physical calamity.
 4. Exhibits inexplicable poise and sustaining tranquility notwithstanding baffling diseases and acute physical suffering.
 5. Maintains a mysterious composure of personality in the face of maltreatment and the rankest injustice.
 6. Maintains a divine trust in ultimate victory in spite of the cruelties of seemingly blind fate and the apparent utter indifference of natural forces to human welfare.
 7. Persists in the unswerving belief in God despite all contrary demonstrations of logic and successfully withstands all other intellectual sophistries.
 8. Exhibits undaunted faith in the soul's survival regardless of the deceptive teachings of false science and the persuasive delusions of unsound philosophy.
 9. Lives and triumphs irrespective of the crushing overload of the complex and partial civilizations of modern times.
 10. Contributes to the survival of altruism in spite of human selfishness, social antagonisms, industrial greeds, and political maladjustments.
 11. Steadfastly adheres to a sublime belief in universe unity and divine guidance regardless of the perplexing presence of evil and sin.
 12. Goes right on worshipping God in spite of anything and everything. Declares: "Even though he slay me, yet will I serve him."

~ All references are from the Urantia Book.

Religion in relation to social institutions

- Religion is not directly concerned with creating new social orders or with preserving old ones.
- The primary mission of religion is the stabilization of ideals.
- Religion is the cosmic salt which prevents the destruction of the cultural savor of civilization.
- Religionists function in human affairs as individuals — not as religious groups.
- Sectarianism is a disease of institutional religion.
- Religion is always dynamic.
- Religion leads to service and revelation to the eternal adventure.

Characteristics of true religion

- The chief inhibitors of spiritual growth are prejudice and ignorance.
- Growth is indicated not by products but by progress.
- Religion takes nothing away from life — but it does add new meanings to all of it.
- Evolutionary religion drives men, revelation allures them.
- It requires faith and revelation to transform the First Cause of science into a God of salvation.

What of faith and belief

- Our senses tell us of things, mind discovers meanings, but spiritual experience reveals true values.
- You must have faith as well as feeling.
- Belief has become faith when it motivates life. Belief fixates, faith liberates.
- Faith is the bridge between moral consciousness and spiritual reality.
- There is a great difference between the will-to-believe and the will that believes.
- Faith transforms a God of probability into a God of certainty.
- The individual becomes God-knowing only by faith.
- Man is educated by fact, ennobled by wisdom, and saved by faith.

Religious insight

- Religion persists in the absence of learning.
- Religion may be the feeling of experience, but it is not the experience of feeling.
- The liberated religious soul begins to feel at home in the universe.
- There is a sharp contrast between spiritual liberation and the despair of materialism.

Religious experience

- Religious experience can never be fully understood by the material mind.
- Religious experience ranges from the primitive to the superb consciousness of sonship with God.
- Avoid allowing your religious experience to become egocentric.
- Spiritual birth may be either complacent or “stormy.”
- The experiencing of God may be valid, even when its theology is fallacious.
- The reality of religious experience transcends reason, science, philosophy, and wisdom.
- Personal religious experience is an efficient solvent for most mortal difficulties.
- Religious experience knows God as a Father, and man as a brother.
- Dynamic religion transforms the mediocre individual into a person of idealistic power.
- Religion is the experience of experiencing the reality of believing in God.
- Reason and logic can never validate the values of religious experience.
- Religionists live as if already in the presence of the Eternal.

Science and religion

- Neither science nor philosophy can validate the personality of God, only the personal experience of faith sons.

- However men view God, the religionist believes in a God who fosters survival.
- Nature offers no option for believing in human survival.
- To science and philosophy God may be possible and probable, but to religion he is a certainty.

Philosophy and religion

- Religion becomes the unification of all that is good, true, and beautiful in human experience.
- Religion becomes real as it emerges from the slavery of fear and the bondage of superstition.
- Philosophy transforms primitive religion into ascending values of reality.
- Mortals can experience spiritual unity, but not philosophical uniformity.
- When theology masters religion, religion dies. Reason, wisdom, and faith introduce man to facts, truth, and religion.
- It is the mission of religion to prepare man for bravely and heroically facing the vicissitudes of life.

21 Steps to a spiritual awakening

1. Recognizing our need
2. Believing in God
3. Accepting God's grace
4. Admitting our shortcomings
5. Forgiving others
6. Asking others' forgiveness
7. Accepting God's forgiveness
8. Living new lives
9. Committing ourselves
10. Praying
11. Balancing physical with spiritual
12. Persisting in our search
13. Gaining perspective
14. Gaining faith
15. Experiencing assurance
16. Deepening fellowship
17. Serving others
18. Sharing our spiritual experience
19. Loving each other
20. Loving Jesus
21. Loving God

Conditions of effective prayer — The laws of prevailing petitions

- You must qualify as a potent prayer by sincerely and courageously facing the problems of universe reality. You must possess cosmic stamina.

- You must have honestly exhausted the human capacity for human adjustment. You must have been industrious.
 - You must surrender every wish of mind and every craving of soul to the transforming embrace of spiritual growth. You must have experienced an enhancement of meanings and an elevation of values.
 - You must make a wholehearted choice of the divine will. You must obliterate the dead center of indecision.
 - You not only recognize the Father's will and choose to do it, but you have effected an unqualified consecration, and a dynamic dedication, to the actual doing of the Father's will.
 - Your prayer will be directed exclusively for divine wisdom to solve the specific human problems encountered in the Paradise ascension — the attainment of divine perfection.
 - And you must have faith — living faith.
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Revision #2

Created 12 November 2024 19:44:13 by Bee

Updated 19 November 2024 01:42:12 by Bee