

# What am I worth? (8)

## Developing True Worth



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We have been considering True Worth, and today we look to the Lord to consider the eighth message on the subject “What am I worth?”

In the last message, we considered the Lord Jesus, the Perfect Example of True Worth, as we pondered over **Mark 10: 42-45**.

What is the significance of considering the Perfect Example of True Worth in the Lord Jesus? In what way is that helpful to us? Why did the Lord Jesus give Himself as an example?

We saw that in that context He was seeking to teach His disciples to beware of false worth, and instead to develop true worth. We can benefit from the example of the Lord Jesus, but how do we benefit?

When we consider learning from the examples of others, there are various ways that we can benefit. For example, if we want to learn to be a good runner, we can consider the examples of well-known, medal-winning runners of the past. We can learn by reading about their lives, their methods of training, and how they managed to succeed. That is one form of learning: by knowing about them. Another way of learning is to ask them, if they are still alive, to teach us, to supervise our development.

Is this the way that we learn from the Lord Jesus?

Yes, we can learn by reading about the Lord Jesus, His life, His attitudes, how He conducted Himself... but if we were just to read about His life and seek to follow Him and His ways, we will find that we fail again and again.

In many situations, we do not know how to respond, so we may then ask the Lord to teach us. If the Lord were to show us the way, to teach us how we can be like Him, would we then be able to be like Him?

**Matthew 11: 28-30**

- 28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.
- 29 "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.
- 30 "For My yoke is easy, and My load is light."

## Coming to the Lord Jesus

The Lord Jesus not only gave Himself as an example but He invites us to come to Him. He says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest..."

Many of us are weary and heavy-laden with many things. There are many things that can trouble us, distress us, and make life very difficult for us. We find it difficult to go on.

One of the most serious and significant areas that trouble us is the area of self-esteem: What am I worth? – What others think of me... how they treat me... how capable am I in the eyes of others?

We are afflicted in many ways in this area: In daily life situations, at home, in our place of work, in society, it is an issue that constantly creates much difficulty in our hearts, and we can become very weary and heavy-laden. No matter what we do, we still are not what we should be, and we do not find the rest.

The Lord Jesus says: "Come to Me..."

When He spoke those words He was with the people on earth, but let us recognize that the Lord Jesus is not someone who is dead and we are reading about Him... about His life and example to follow.

He is alive today, and He can speak to us and teach us now.

What is it that is particularly important that can help us when we come to Him?

He says, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls..."

"Learn from Me..." the Lord Jesus says. Learn from Him: Why should we learn from Him? Why is it so meaningful to learn from Him?

He says: "...for I am gentle and humble in heart..." The Lord Jesus, being gentle and humble in heart, is a good teacher: He understands us...He will help us... He is understanding... He is kind... He will help us in the best way... We can learn from Him effectively.

### **Receiving His life**

But more than that: The Lord Jesus is not just our teacher, He is not just our example, but He is in fact our life. He says we do not have life in ourselves, but: "...the words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life."

Not only does the Lord Jesus speak to us and teach us but He is prepared to dwell in our hearts to help us understand, and He is prepared to impart His life to us so that His life can become part of our being. We can be transformed so that Christ will be formed in us, that the fruit of the Spirit will be abundantly developed in us.

God has not called us to follow the example of the Lord Jesus just by looking at His life and striving with all our might to be like Him. We are not just listening to instructions - how to develop true worth. But God is prepared to give us His life through the Lord Jesus, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to be transformed to become like Him. We are not left to do it on our own.

The Lord Jesus tells us He is humble in heart. If we learn to be truly humble like He is, we will find that we will no longer be weary and heavy-laden. We will no longer be troubled by what others may think of us.

We will be at peace in our hearts because we know that we are walking the right way, that God is close to us, He is pleased with us, we can have deep fellowship with Him... we can be one with Him.

So then, as we seek to consider how to develop true worth, it is very important that we begin by coming to the Lord Jesus. We do not seek to do so by our own reasoning, by our own knowledge... by our own power. We approach Him; we come to Him.

So as we consider the rest of this message, let us remember this approach, and in our hearts adopt this spirit: looking at Him, listening to Him, receiving Him, following Him, obeying Him, and trusting Him. Let us approach life this way: come to Him, looking at Him, listening to Him, receiving Him, following Him, obeying Him, and trusting Him.

If we do that we will be able to appreciate the primary issues we need to concentrate upon.

### **Becoming like Him**

The Lord Jesus in **Mark 10: 38** said to His disciples: "You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? "

If we want to be like the Lord Jesus, if we want to develop true worth, we need to identify with this spirit and direction.

It is not a self-seeking life, seeking for glory and honour and power and status... position and regard by others. It is a spirit of love and humility, the preparedness to suffer for what is good because we love what is right and good, and we are seeking to accomplish that.

If we want to be like Him, we must recognize that this is the path that is meaningful, that will lead to true worth.

It is not seeking to be greater than other people. It is not seeking to be approved by man, but to develop in a way where God will take delight in us.

We may say: “This path is very, very difficult. It seems impossible for me to be like the Lord Jesus. He was perfect... I cannot be like that.”

The Scriptures show to us that it is possible for us to develop to be like the Lord Jesus. When God calls us to be pure in heart, He makes provision for us to develop to be pure in heart. When the Lord tells us to follow Him, He makes provision for us so that we can effectively and meaningfully follow Him.

### Example of the apostle Paul

So we see that it is possible to develop in this way, and we can see this very clearly in the life of the apostle Paul.

#### **Philippians 3: 7-11**

- 7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.
- 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ,
- 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,
- 10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;
- 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

The apostle Paul was sharing from his heart what was real within him. He was once seeking for honour in this world. He took pride in what he had - whatever things were gain to me. He describes them in **Philippians chapter 3**. These were associated with what would be regarded as important and great in this world. In this situation, he was referring to the religious aspect - his association, connections with the nation of Israel, the Law given by Moses, his zeal for the Law. He had sought to be faithful in what he thought was the right way.

He realized that in the midst of all that, he did not find true meaning in life. He was not really following God. In fact, he was persecuting the Lord Jesus; he was going against God's purposes.

That which seemed to be gain to him was in fact negative for him. It was  
glorying in the flesh.

So he said: whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for  
the sake of Christ – he rejected all that. But he said: more than that, I count all  
things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

All things – whatever would be contrary to a meaningful response to Christ  
– he would reject them. Whatever would hinder him from a deep  
relationship with God, he would reject them, and count them as rubbish: I  
have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain  
Christ.

The apostle Paul gave up everything in order to gain Christ.

If we want to be like Christ, then we need to learn to respond similarly.

As a result of that, we see the apostle Paul moving in this direction: that I  
may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings,  
being conformed to His death.

The apostle Paul was fully prepared to drink the cup of suffering, to be  
conformed to the baptism of death, to be identified with the Lord Jesus in this  
whole spirit of living. He gave up his life in order to be one with the Lord  
Jesus.

The apostle Paul appreciated the example of the Lord Jesus. He listened to  
His teaching, he received His life, he trusted Him, he obeyed Him, and he  
became transformed to be like the Lord Jesus.

In order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead: that he may move  
increasingly in the direction of a life of full freedom and glory, in walking  
in the path of God's will and God's ways.

As a result of this way of living, we see the apostle Paul could testify in  
**Philippians 4: 4**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

The apostle Paul learned to rejoice in every situation. He learned to rejoice in the Lord always, and he wanted to emphasize it and make it very clear that it is meant for all of us for all time. So he said, again I will say, rejoice!

The apostle Paul had come to the Lord Jesus, and he had found rest for his soul. There was joy and restfulness of heart under all circumstances. Paul went through very difficult situations, but he could still say, rejoice! Life was always meaningful to him because he had learnt to be like the Lord Jesus.

We see this expressed in **2 Corinthians 4: 5-12**

- 5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.
- 6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.
- 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves;
- 8 *we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;
- 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;
- 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.
- 11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
- 12 So death works in us, but life in you.

This is a description of a life very similar to that of the Lord Jesus: a life of self-giving... a life of meaningful service. The apostle Paul said: we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord.

The apostle Paul was not concerned about his own image, about how others would esteem him. He was concerned about how others would appreciate the Lord Jesus. He wanted to communicate the message of the Lord Jesus.

He says: ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

Bond-servants: humility and love manifested in Paul the disciple of the Lord Jesus.



Because of love for others, the apostle Paul was prepared to humble himself to go through many humiliating circumstances in order to minister to the people that he loved. He said: we are your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

In the midst of seeking to love and to care, he went through many, many difficult situations. However, in the midst of all that, we see victory and freedom in his heart. In the midst of pain, perplexity, and persecution, the apostle Paul was triumphant.

He continued to minister life in the midst of experiencing death.

He said: *we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.

Many who are afflicted feel themselves totally crushed. Those who are perplexed may often despair; others who are persecuted may regard themselves as forsaken. Those who are struck down may consider themselves incapable of carrying on.

But the apostle Paul was not like that. He could carry on whatever happened to him, because he was always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in his body.

He had learnt to drink the cup, to go through the baptism, to identify with the heart of the Lord Jesus – a heart of self-giving, of love and humility – and he was therefore constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in his mortal flesh.

As a result, he could say: so death works in us, but life in you. The power of God was manifested in the life of Paul. While he experienced the principle of death, he was imparting life to others: a ministry of life through death.

We may ask: "How did the apostle Paul develop such a life? What helped him to develop in that way?"

## Renewal of the inner man

### 2 Corinthians 4: 16-18

- 16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.  
17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,  
18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The apostle Paul was able to go through all this because he looked beyond what was visible. He did not concentrate on the visible, the external, the outward, and the temporary.

He looked at what was unseen... eternal. He was concentrating on the meaning in the inner man rather than the experiences in the outer man.

He knew that on this earth, he would go through much affliction, perplexity, persecution, and pain as he lived in this mortal body. There would be much for him to experience that would be difficult and painful, but he understood that if he were to learn the spirit of the dying of Jesus, then he would also know the life of Jesus being manifested in his body... the life of Jesus manifested in his mortal flesh.

He would be able to transmit the life of the Lord Jesus even while living in this mortal body.

As he lived his life on earth, as he went through his suffering, as he spoke and taught, life from God was being transmitted through him.

The apostle Paul could do that because he saw that although the outer man may be afflicted, although the outer man may be decaying, although others may not understand him and what he was going through, yet if in his heart he were faithful to God, his inner man would continue to be renewed day by day.

The outer man will experience seeing and feeling of a very intense kind as we live in this world, as we are earthen vessels.

But in the midst of that, God wants us to learn how to live according to that which is not seen – the meaning within the heart, God at work in our spirit, what He has in store for us in eternity – and this needs a spirit of faith and trust in God, a recognition of the spiritual realities, and the response to that.

He says: ...though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison...

If we concentrate on the outer man, we will feel the afflictions very deeply. We can easily be discouraged. Yes, what we go through will involve not just the suffering in the outer man, but the suffering of the outer man can very easily affect us, if we do not appreciate what God is seeking to work out within our hearts.

When we understand what God is seeking to do, then we will appreciate that all these things will work together for good under God's sovereign direction. They will produce for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison – the weight of true worth, an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. Whatever we can see on this earth cannot be compared with what God is producing in us and for us – an eternal weight of glory.

This refers primarily to the transformation in the inner man as well as, as a result, the meaningfulness of our relationship with God and what God will entrust to us in eternity, but we must concentrate on the things which are not seen – the things that are eternal.

### **How to develop true worth**

How can we effectively bring about this change in our hearts? How can we learn to develop true worth like Paul, to be like the Lord Jesus?

I see that it is important for us first to recognize that it is possible for us to attain, to develop, that kind of quality. It is God's intention for us, and it can be developed, it can be attained.

But, at the same time, we also must recognize that, although it is possible to develop, it is very difficult.

It is very difficult to develop true worth of real substance and quality. It is not so difficult to have a taste of it, to develop a minimal degree of it, but if we want to be truly what God wants us to be, then it is a very difficult path.

### **Must change old habits and ways**

Old habits and ways can be very deep-seated and difficult to change. The old habits have arisen from the self-life – they have arisen in the context of our being pre-occupied with the things of this world; they may take deep roots within our hearts, and it is very difficult to change.

The concepts, the perspective, the understanding that we have developed over many years of our wrong approach may affect us for many years to come. Our desire for greatness may remain with us for many years after we have become Christians and seek to be like the Lord Jesus.

We can see this clearly in the lives of the disciples of the Lord Jesus, and these are recorded to help us understand that the path is very difficult, and yet to show us that it is possible to be transformed.

In **Mark 9: 30-35**, we read of the response of the disciples in the midst of the Lord Jesus sharing with them the deepest burden of His heart.

In this passage, the Lord Jesus told the disciples that He would be killed, that He would go through the event of the cross. **Verse 32** tells us: But they did not understand *this* statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.

#### **Verse 33 to 35:**

- 33 And they came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He *began* to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?"
- 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of *them* was the greatest.
- 35 And sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all."

Their hearts were pre-occupied with which *of them* was the greatest. The Lord Jesus had shared with them something very serious, very significant from His heart. They did not understand *this* statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.

When the Lord Jesus shared with them, certainly His intention was for them to understand, to receive and to identify with Him, but they did not understand. It is very likely that this is because in their hearts they were pre-occupied with their own desires.

This is often true in our lives.

When we are pre-occupied with our own desires, it is very difficult for us to listen to what the Lord has to say to us. It is also very difficult for us to understand what He wants to teach us – we are not really listening. We may also not want to know... we may be afraid of what He may be telling us.

So if we want to be like the Lord Jesus, we must be prepared to listen well to what He has to say, to be prepared to ask Him to teach us, help us understand, and then to follow Him.

Instead, along the way to Capernaum, they had discussed with one another which *of them* was the greatest. And then we find **Mark chapter 9** goes on to **Mark chapter 10**, and again, the Lord Jesus, on the road going up to Jerusalem, shared with them what was going to happen to Him. He told them: the people will mock Him and spit upon Him, and scourge Him, and kill *Him*, and three days later He will rise again.

So the Lord Jesus again shared with them what would happen to Him at the cross.

And we see in **Mark 10: 35-37**, immediately following a description of what the Lord Jesus had shared, James and John asked the Lord Jesus, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You. ” They wanted to sit, one on His right and one on His left.

They were still pre-occupied with their own desires: “we want You to do for us...”

They were not identified with what was in the heart of the Lord Jesus: What was going to happen to Him? What was He seeking to do? How could they support Him? But they were thinking of what they wanted.

**Luke 22: 20-24**

- 20 And in the same way *He took* the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.  
21 "But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table.  
22 "For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"  
23 And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing.  
24 And there arose also a dispute among them *as to* which one of them was regarded to be greatest.

We see that right until this moment of time, just prior to the Lord's crucifixion, in His final hours with them on earth, they were still pre-occupied with the issue of personal greatness: It was in the context of the Lord Jesus sharing with them the Lord's Supper, telling them about the new covenant in His blood, and that He would be betrayed.

They began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing. And **verse 24** tells us: And there arose also a dispute among them *as to* which one of them was regarded to be greatest. In the midst of such a serious moment, they were still thinking about which of them was the greatest.

So we see that it is very difficult to change. Many of us carry with us many of these wrong inclinations in our hearts for many, many, years in spite of seeking to change. Some of us may then think: "It is not possible because I have failed so many times. It is not possible for me to change."

But God records for us the transformation in the lives of the disciples to help us see that it is possible to be changed. We know it is possible to change, and the disciples did learn deeply from the Lord in the days that followed.

However, we know the process is very difficult. It therefore must mean that we need to be very determined if we want to succeed in developing true worth to a significant extent.

If we value it deep enough, we will be determined. If we do not, we will give up, because the path is difficult. We must be determined to trust God. We must be determined to depend on Him, and we must be determined to obey Him, whatever the situation may be.

In practical terms, how can this come about? How can we bring about this change?

### **Living by meaning**

When the Lord helped me to appreciate His grace, to find forgiveness and to become a Christian, it was a meaningful path ahead. I experienced peace in my heart, but in the midst of that, I realized that there was much that was missing in my life. I did not find a deep reality in the experience of God... the knowledge of Him... a deep meaning in life.

It was in that context that I prayed to the Lord regularly that He would grant to me a meaningful life. At that time I did not understand what that meaningful life would be, but I am thankful that over the years, the Lord has helped me to learn a very simple lesson, and yet a lesson that has very far-reaching implications.

The lesson is this: If I want a meaningful life, then I must live my life based on meaning – what is morally and spiritually good, that which has eternal value and worth.

It is a very simple principle: If we want a meaningful life, then we must base our life on meaning.

But the problem is that it is very much easier for us to base our life on feeling rather than meaning. We tend to make our decisions depending on how we feel – what we like, what we prefer, what we are naturally inclined towards.

The Lord helped me to realize that if I want to find a meaningful life, then I must be prepared to live by meaning: what I believe in and what it implies. It must have practical implications in my life.

For example, if I believe that God is morally and spiritually perfect, then I must give my life fully to Him: to live for Him, trust Him, and depend on Him, no matter how I feel, no matter what the circumstances are, no matter what others think of me or do to me.

If I truly believe that God is morally and spiritually perfect, then this must be the path that I take. I must commit myself to that. I must align myself with Him, not the other way.

It is very easy for us to have our own desires and ask God to give us this and that according to our way of thinking.

But if we believe that God is truly morally and spiritually perfect, then the correct response would be to align ourselves with Him: What does He find meaningful?

What is meaningful to Him is therefore meaningful to me.

Also, if I believe that what is revealed in the Scriptures is inspired by God and is therefore morally good and right, then I must seek help from God, and make great effort, to understand the primary and foundational teachings of the Scriptures, and base my life on what I sincerely and honestly believe the Scriptures show me regarding what is meaningful to God.

If I truly believe that the Scriptures are inspired by God and that what God seeks to teach me in the Scriptures are morally good and right, then surely I would want to make great effort, with the help of God, to understand what are the primary and important teachings, and therefore, to base my life on what I honestly and sincerely believe God has shown in the Scriptures.

Many of us believe in the Scriptures, that God has inspired the Scriptures and that they show us the correct way, but to what extent do we really believe in the sense of basing our life on that?

We have to learn to make our choices based on meaning. If this is the meaning that we believe in, then that should be the way we live. That is the only way I understand whereby we can find true meaning in life.



So, a meaningful life is a life based on meaning – that which is morally and spiritually good, with eternal value and worth.

What then should we concentrate on?

### **Concentrate on the heart**

The Scriptures show to us that if we want to follow God, we need to ensure the right concentration.

The Lord Jesus teaches us in **Matthew 12: 33-37** the relationship between the outward and the inward.

#### **Matthew 12: 33-37**

- 33 "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.  
34 "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.  
35 "The good man out of *his* good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of *his* evil treasure brings forth what is evil.  
36 "And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment.  
37 "For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned."

The Lord Jesus said: "For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned."

It may seem that the important thing is our words: our outward conduct, what we say – that is the important thing. However, when we look at the whole passage, we realize that the Lord Jesus tells us our words will condemn us, will justify us because of the meaning they carry from our heart.

It is the heart that determines the quality of the words that we say. We know that the Pharisees were capable of saying many right words outwardly. They could praise God. They could offer prayers. They could express sympathy, compassion... They could teach the right things, but something was seriously wrong in their heart.

The tree is known by its fruit.

And here, the Lord Jesus, when He speaks about the fruit, He is not talking about just the outward form. He is not talking about the words by themselves. He is talking about the meaning conveyed by the words – the meaning that comes from the spirit... that comes from the heart.

So He says, “...how can you, being evil, speak what is good?”

The Pharisees could say many things that were good in words, but they were not saying things that were good in spirit: “For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.” It is from the abundance of the heart that the mouth will speak.

So, what we say will convey what is in our heart. Of course, we may often hide them in words that sound right if our heart is wrong. But God sees the heart, and the words that we utter will condemn us when our heart is wrong.

So, “The good man out of *his* good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of *his* evil treasure brings forth what is evil...”

So, in spite of the words that you may seek to change to make them pleasant and right, it will not alter the meaning because “by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned” is a reference to the meaning of the words that come from the heart.

Yes, we need to pay attention to our outward conduct – what we say and what we do. But we need to understand that the value of what we say and what we do is measured by the meaning that is within our heart.

Therefore we must first concentrate on the heart, and then on the outward actions. We must concentrate on the unseen and eternal before the seen and the temporal.

We live in this world – we are involved with the seen and the temporal. We should speak, we should do, we should act, but we must do so, first and foremost, with the right spirit. We must ensure the right heart, and then the right outward actions.

We can also evaluate our outward actions by seeking to understand why we chose such a path or said those words – what was the motive and meaning within our heart?

As we evaluate our lives, we consider what we have done, what we have said, it can help us to know what is within our heart.

Why did we say those words? Why did we do those things? Is it genuinely out of love for God and others, or is it for other reasons that are not right?

That is how we can learn to correct ourselves, and that is how we can bring about a change in us.

So, when we learn to base our life on meaning rather than feeling, it must involve the whole direction of our life as well as every situation that we go through and every choice that we make.

Whatever we choose, however we live, will constantly affect us in terms of the development within us: The eternal weight of glory that we seek to develop in our hearts will be dependent upon the way we live our lives each moment.

It is true that we can often be affected by feelings; we can fail and falter in the midst of intense feelings. But let us take heed to settle down, to calm down, and ponder over the meaning of what has happened, and re-align ourselves according to the right meaning. It is then that we can continue to develop.

### **Walking by the Spirit**

Many people think that a life filled with the Spirit of God, a life of consistent walking by the Spirit is a very meaningful and enjoyable life, a life of freedom... a life of peace.

Yes, it is true: It is a life of freedom, a life of peace... a life of meaning. But how does it come about? How do we effectively walk by the Spirit? How do we effectively live a life filled with the Spirit of God?

It is important for us to recognize that it is not a life based on feeling, but it is a life based on moral and spiritual meaning that is good and eternal in value and worth.

Many people experience the Holy Spirit. They concentrate on that feeling, that experience – how good it feels, and they equate that with spiritual meaning.

The Scriptures show us very clearly that walking by the Spirit is living by moral and spiritual meaning.

**Romans 8: 1-8** is a description of a life of freedom.

It tells us how we can, by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, find freedom from the law of sin and of death. And the apostle Paul then tells us that if we really walk according to the Spirit, we will experience this reality: the requirement of the Law will be fulfilled in us.

The requirement of the Law is not set aside, is not disregarded... is not rejected. The requirement of the Law will be fulfilled in those who walk according to the Spirit.

How is this possible?

It is only possible because our hearts are set in line with the requirement of the Law – the moral law of God – what is truly good and meaningful. The Law is good, is holy... is righteous. If we walk by the Spirit, we will fulfil the requirement of the Law. We will not reject the moral law of God.

In contrast, the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile toward God. It does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*.

Why is that so?

It is because the flesh lives by self-centred desires primarily to feel good rather than to be good.

This is what brings about the difficulty and the problem – we want to feel good. And this is present not just in the world at large but also in Christian experience and pursuits.

Some years ago, I saw a notice, which said: “Feel good. Be a volunteer.” It did not say, “Be good – be a volunteer” but “Feel good. Be a volunteer” because that is more attractive. “Be a volunteer and feel good” – that is the world’s approach.

And sadly, Christians also adopt this principle: “Be filled with the Holy Spirit!” Why? “Because you will feel good!” “Obey God!” Why? “Because you will feel good!”

God says: “Be good. Be pure in heart.” The Holy Spirit is given to us to help us to be good, to be like God, to be transformed to be like the Lord Jesus.

Yesterday, I saw someone wearing a T-shirt, and this T-shirt was an advertisement for a popular drink. And together with the name of the drink were the words: “Ministry of Enjoyment”.

“Ministry of Enjoyment” – that is what people are looking for. The world seeks for that... so too do Christians. What we want is enjoyment, in whatever form that it can come to us, even in spiritual pursuits.

But the apostle Paul tells us if we want to walk by the Spirit we must put to death the practices of the body. If we want to walk by the Spirit, we must not let sin reign in OUR mortal body that WE should obey its lusts. We should instead present ourselves to God and the members of our body AS instruments of righteousness.

Ultimately, it is up to us to decide: whether we will live by our feelings, inclinations, and desires, or we will live by the holy and righteous will of God – the path of true meaning and life.

We decide whether our bodies become instruments of unrighteousness OR instruments of righteousness.

## A worthwhile goal

In this path, as we seek to develop true worth, let us take heart that the outcome is truly worthwhile.

If we respond well, we can be healthily confident of genuine meaning and true worth in our being and in our relationship with God, now and for eternity.

Even Job recognized this, when he said in **Job 23: 10**

"But He knows the way I take; *When* He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold..."

If we respond well, what is developed in us will be spiritual gold that is pure and of true worth.

The apostle Paul put it this way in **2 Timothy 4: 6-8**

- 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.
- 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;
- 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

It is not just for him... it is for all who truly love God.

It is a painful fight. It is a difficult course. But if we are faithful, God will grant us a deeply meaningful life in eternity.

Let us then ask the Lord to help us to learn deeply from the example of the Lord Jesus, the Perfect Example of True Worth: to look at His life, to listen to Him, to receive His life, to be transformed to be like Him... that He will be formed in us... that we live our lives on the basis of meaning and not feeling... that we choose to be good and not to feel good.

If we truly learn to be good, we will feel good because a life of oneness with God will be a very enjoyable life, but it will be enjoyment of the right kind.

Being good comes first; feeling good must follow, not the other way round.  
Meaning must come first; the feelings must follow.

We cannot seek for meaning by following feeling.

Let us then ask Him to help us to understand the right path to take, to treasure what is of true worth, and to be determined to develop this to a very high quality in our hearts.

Let us ask Him to help us, for His grace is always sufficient for us... His power is perfected in the midst of our weakness.