

Why Christians have no victory or The path of true Christian living

“I am come that they might have *life*, and that they might have it more abundantly”-- John 10:10

In their walk with God, many Christians desiring more than a superficial walk with God come to feel frustrated at reaching what they feel is an impasse in their Christian life. A zeal they may have felt in their first weeks as Christians is gone; they feel apathetic; they don't perceive God working in their lives; they can't seem to get the victory over some sins, some start to doubt their salvation, and so on and so forth. This article is meant to aid those who have encountered this and to show them what in many cases has caused the problem, and what the solution to that problem is.

The ultimate basis of the frustration some Christians feel traces itself to failing to experience life on a level God blesses and empowers. To explain what I mean, I must first point out that four Greek words are used in the New Testament for the word *life* or *lifestyle* (“*conversation*” in the KJV). Below follows an outline of each word and some Scriptures using those words.

Bios

Bios is the word we get *biology* from. It refers to either physical life (existence) or the material substance of a person's goods.

Some Scriptures using *bios*

Mark 12:44 **For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her *living*.**

Luke 8:14 **And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this *life*, and bring no fruit to perfection.**

1 Tim. 2:2 **For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable *life* in all godliness and honesty.**

2nd Tim. 2:4 **No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this *life*; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.**

1st Pet. 4:3 **For the time past of our *life* may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:**

1st John 2:16 **For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of *life*, is not of the Father, but is of the world.**

1st John 3:17 **But whoso hath this world's *good* and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?**

Psuche

Psuche is a word often used to describe the human soul--i.e. the mind, will and emotions--along with the spirit and breath of life of an animal or human being.

Some Scriptures using *psuche*

Mat.6:25 **Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your *life*, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?**

Mat.10:39 **He that findeth his *life* shall lose it: and he that loseth his *life* for my sake shall find it.**

Mat. 16:26 **For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own *soul*? or what shall a man give in exchange for his *soul*?**

Luke 12:23 **The *life* is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.**

Luke 21:19 **In your patience possess ye your *souls*.**

1st Thess. 5:23 **And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and *soul* and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Hebrews 4:12 **For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of *soul* and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

Hebrews 10:39 **But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the *soul*.**

James1:21 **Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your *souls*.**

1st Pet. 1:22 **Seeing ye have purified your *souls* in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:**

Note that a word related to *psuche*, *psuchikos*, is used by Paul when he talks about the sensuous, carnal nature of man, for instance in 1 Cor. 2:14: **But the *natural* man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

Anastrophe

Anastrophe is a word translated as *conversation* in the King James Bible. It refers to a person's lifestyle and behavior.

Some Scriptures using *anastrophe*

Gal. 1:13. **For ye have heard of my *conversation* in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:**

Eph. 4:22 **That ye put off concerning the former *conversation* the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;**

1 Tim. 4:12 **Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in *conversation*, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.**

Hebrews 13:7 **Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their *conversation*.**

James 3:13 **Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good *conversation* his works with meekness of wisdom.**

1st Pet. 1:15 **But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of *conversation*;**

1st Pet. 1:18 **Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain *conversation* received by tradition from your fathers;**

1st Pet. 2:12 **Having your *conversation* honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.**

1st Pet. 3:1 **Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the *conversation* of the wives;**

1st Pet. 3:2 **While they behold your chaste *conversation* coupled with fear.**

1st Pet. 3:16 **Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good *conversation* in Christ.**

2nd Pet. 2:7 **And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy *conversation* of the wicked:**

2nd Pet. 3:11 **Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy *conversation* and godliness.**

Zoe

Zoe is the most important word for *life* in the New Testament, and embodied within its usage is the absolute fullness of resurrection life and empowerment through the Spirit, along with its lesser usage as a word denoting one's "life" in the general sense.

Some Scriptures using *zoe*

Mat.7:14 **Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto *life*, and few there be that find it.**

Luke 16:25 **But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy *life* time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.**

John 3:16 **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting *life*.**

John 5:24 **Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting *life*, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto *life*.**

John 6:48 **I am that bread of *life*.**

John 10:10 **I am come that they might have *life*, and that they might have it more abundantly.**

Acts 5:20 **Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this *life*.**

Romans 6:23 **For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal *life* through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Eph. 4:18 **Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the *life* of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:**

Rev. 2:7 **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of *life*, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.**

Rev. 3:5. **He that overcometh, he same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of *life*, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.**

Rev. 20:15 **And whosoever was not found written in the book of *life* was cast into the lake of fire.**

The root cause of Christian frustration

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, many Christians desiring a full relationship with Christ often encounter a wall of frustration as the effectiveness of their Christian lives seems to flatten out and cease growing in the way they may have experienced in their early days as Believers. The prime cause for this lies in a wrong emphasis on the sort of lives they should be living, for usually these Christians, consciously or unconsciously, base their Christian walk and sanctification on *anastrophe* rather than *zoe*. (Recall that *anastrophe* relates to one's lifestyle and behavior, most often typified by adhering to a set of commandments the person sees as his duty to follow). A host of religions and denominations--some good, some bad, some true, some false--focus on reproducing followers of God through a process of *anastrophe*. Some of these include Judaism, Islam, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Fundamentalist Baptists, Pentecostal Holiness, Methodists, 7th Day Adventists, and so on. Some of these are fine Christian denominations. But these groups often follow the same flaw as the cults, emphasizing *anastrophe* as a correct means of sanctifying one's life. Ironically, it's the Catholic church that comes closest to formally teaching the *zoe* life of God with its notion of meritorious works. The Catholic church is in error if it believes those Works keep us out of Purgatory or make us "more reconciled" to God than we are at the point of initial justification through faith. But Works and actions done under the unction of the Holy Spirit do have eternal value over Works we may do through carnal *anastrophe*--i.e. out of a sense of duty.

Now in the case of a new Christian who has just accepted Christ, an *ansatrophe*-based exhortation to turn from sin and activities inconsistent with Christian living may be appropriate to lead him into initial repentance. Beyond this, the error is to keep him in a state whereby the Christian, through self-denial and self-discipline, seeks to "work out his own salvation" or perfect his walk in Christ by "doing the right things"--going to church, avoiding questionable activities, doing Good deeds, studying the Bible, praying, and so on. These are fine things to do, but too often the Christian fails to accomplish these things through the power of *zoe*, and thus they end up as sincere, but carnal Works often unanointed by God. This was part of Paul's frustration with

the Corinthians: they simply would not mature in the faith and constantly had to be rebuked and appealed to on a basis of *anastrophe* to get them to repent and remain in that state so they could go on to full maturity..

“Well, Brother, I believe God has called His people to holiness, and if we love Him we just have to make a choice to follow Him over sin.”

You will hear this sort of statement made at almost every decent Bible-believing church. And as good as this statement is on its face, it perfectly illustrates one of the Devil’s most effective tools of deception--taking one point of spiritual truth and emphasizing it to the exclusion of even greater spiritual truths. A person who says something like this usually goes on to do his best to turn from sin and do the right things. Sometimes he’s disciplined and does well at it, sometimes he’s not great at self-control and drifts in and out of sin, feeling frustrated and unsure of his salvation much of the time.

Where we miss it as teachers is in failing to instruct the new Believer that his success at living a Christian life is not through a lifestyle of repentance and self-denial but through consciously seeking the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to keep him on track. As Paul says, **For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live--Romans 8:13. And...For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do His good pleasure--Phil. 2:13.**

To put this in perspective, I’ll use my own Christian walk as an example. When I fully turned to Christ as an adult, I didn’t need to make a lot of conscious choices to give up sin. Now before that, I was as bad a sinner as you could find. But after making a decision for Christ, that stuff fell off of me by itself. I didn’t have to give it up or buckle down and choose to do Right--my desires had changed through the power of the Spirit abiding in me. I was walking in the effectiveness of *zoe*! It was only in the months to come as I started to feel secure in reaching the point of sanctification I was at, and backed off a bit at consciously seeking God, that what I would call the *anointing* lifted and I had to then substitute my own efforts at “working” at doing the Right things, and making more of a conscious effort on my part to resist doing Wrong or to do Good.

Some of you have experienced the same thing. Your initial honeymoon with God after first getting Saved was great, but after a point it started to dry up. Without correcting the problem, months or years later that period is just a memory and today you coast along on the strength of past victories, with your heart feeling cold and fighting apathy on a weekly basis. The problem is, you’ve substituted *anastrophe*--a Godly lifestyle of repentance, behavior and philosophy--for the power and anointing of *zoe*. You’re doing the right things outwardly, but inwardly you’re removed from the anointing of the Holy Spirit’s empowerment for your life. This doesn’t mean you’re Unsaved, but you’re using Fleshly discipline to combat the Fleshly nature, when it’s the “...**Spirit that giveth life**” (2 Cor. 3:6). This is why you come to church cold and leave lukewarm. This is why you can’t stay away from Porn sites on the Internet. This is why you can’t stop smoking or overeating. This is why your heart feels cold and you have no fruit of the Spirit. This is why you constantly doubt your salvation. This is also why so many pastors are falling into sin: they’ve made the mistake of “coasting” in their Christian walk and getting away from that constant daily, hourly conscious seeking of the empowerment and revelation of God in their lives. They’ve gotten lax and their Enemy, who never sleeps, creeps in, little by little, until he can offer temptation to an *anastrophe*-led Christian who may or may not have the self-discipline to resist the temptation. Had the man stayed in a state of seeking God he might well have stayed out of temptation altogether, or else have had the Spirit aiding him to make the right choices.

Take the Lord Jesus Himself. How do you think He was able to perfectly obey the Law of God and walk in the constant joy and power of God’s Spirit? Because He was a master of *anastrophe*? Because He had good discipline and self-control? No! Because He was the living personification of *zoe*! Every thought Jesus had was Spirit-inspired; every action Jesus undertook was Spirit-empowered! The fallacy many have is that Jesus was free because He had no sin. In fact the reverse was true--He was without sin because He was *free*.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you--John 16:7.

This verse used to drive me crazy and I always felt it was the most ridiculous thing Jesus ever said. I just could not see how the Apostles, nor we today, were even remotely better off with Christ physically gone to be replaced by the more passive Holy Spirit, great as that may be. The usual teaching on the subject held that with Jesus now in Heaven the Holy Spirit would work through the church on earth and do greater numbers of miracles in a greater number of places than Jesus could Himself do bodily on earth. That never made any sense to me because the Apostles, even during the earthly ministry of Jesus, were told to go out and raise the dead and heal the sick (Mat. 10:8), and by the end of the Apostolic Age the great Apostle Paul apparently couldn’t automatically heal Timothy’s stomach nor Trophimus’ ailment. I thus reasoned I’d much rather have personal access to Jesus--who at times healed “**all**”--than someone otherwise filled with the Holy Spirit, no matter how anointed they were.

Only as I received revelation knowledge in the area of *zoe* did I begin to comprehend that one major benefit to the Apostles (and us) of Christ departing to send the Holy Spirit was as a means of anointing to be freed from the bondage of trying to serve God by our own sincere efforts through the empowerment of the Spirit implanting in us God’s thoughts, motivations, and anointing to make our service one that flows out naturally rather than as a result of our conscious choice to do Good.

Now I need to make the point that I’m not claiming to have reached a point where every thought and motivation in my heart is to do Good, for no one is ever delivered from the Flesh. But the difference between my life now and my life then is that today I have *zoe* empowering me to make right choices. Those choices are thus far easier to make and my inner motivations and my accompanying actions “feel” much more in harmony than in the past where my Flesh and spirit were always in disagreement. In those areas where I need to progress, instead of perceiving myself as stuck at a certain point, unable to move forward, I see myself making progress and daily overcoming some of the negative aspects of my will and behavior.

This is the difference between the true Christian experience and the lifestyle of counterfeit Christianity. There are a variety of pseudo Christian denominations which can “teach” one how to live an outwardly Christian lifestyle of obedience and Good Works.

But they lack the empowerment of the Spirit that the true Christian has access to but all too often ignores simply because he isn't taught how to make use of it.

“OK, so how do I make this work for me?”

It's not as hard as you might think, but it does require a commitment on your part.

First, you need to decide whether you want to stop at salvation or really be led by God. If you do, you must absolutely repent from and remove from your life those things or influences that are outright sin. I'm not talking about smoking or some Denomination's legalistic list of what constitutes sin; I mean those things absolutely forbidden by the Scripture, and those things you are fully persuaded of that God wants you to separate from. With that done, the key for the Christian is to live in that state of *zoe* by developing a prayer life. We Christians need to **“pray without ceasing”** (1st Thess. 5:17), specifically seeking the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to change our hearts and thoughts, and to give us the spiritual strength to walk in the light of God on the path God leads us along. Start your day with a good prayer along these lines:

Heavenly Father, I thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit in my life. I ask that you open my heart and mind to the truth you have for me today as I start my activities. I pray your Spirit releases the power of zoe and directs my actions and emotions, keeps me out of temptation and gives me the wisdom and strength to make right choices. Grant me revelation knowledge of your love for me and give me favor and patience in dealing with others. Help me see the areas of my life you stand ready to help me change as I yield my will to You. Use me to bless people and help me seek the welfare of others over my own good. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Beyond this, the way we get the victory on an hour-to-hour basis is be in a constant attitude of thanking God for what he is doing in our lives, no matter how bad those lives may appear to be. And when a thought, an attitude or an emotion comes to us that we know isn't of God, as soon as we become aware of it, we *immediately* stop and pray along the lines of : *“God, that thought/word/emotion/attitude, etc., is not of you, and I thank You that Your Spirit has given me a transformed nature that I don't have to yield myself to that! I just receive Your empowerment to overcome and move forward, and I praise You for giving me the victory so that I can manifest the fruit of the Spirit in response to what goes on around me.”* Thus, we need to pray for empowerment when we get up in the morning...when we hit the highway to drive for work...at our job...before we go home to our spouse, and so on. It may sound hard, but it's not, because it's the door that opens one to the empowerment of the Spirit in his life to do it. And when we begin to live in this manner, not only does God begin to change us from the inside, but we open ourselves to the blessing of God on the outside. To give you one minor example of what I mean, I own two cars, one of which is a '68 Cougar that recently needed some mechanical work on the suspension. Before going out to fix it, I prayed for the anointing of God to work effectively through me, and that I would repair the car efficiently and not lose my temper if things didn't go well.

To get to the Cougar I had to push my '79 Ford back away from the garage. That particular car had a problem over the last year with the door not fully closing. I had unsuccessfully tried dealing with it in the past, but had no luck getting the door aligned to close properly and concluded it was a permanent problem due to a hit the car had taken on that side. Although I had manually pushed the car away from the garage in precisely the same manner a hundred times before, *this* time, after praying for the anointing of *zoe*, I felt a loose piece of metal in the door frame. After crimping it down the door then shut normally for the first time in a year. You can call that coincidence if you like, but if you take a constant path of rationalization you'll never give God glory for any good thing that happens in your life. But this is an example of how *zoe* in that instance provided a material blessing over and above that for which I was consciously seeking (the Cougar was fixed in only 20 minutes, by the way).

Keep in mind this never means that we won't have problems--but it means we have God aiding us *in* those problems.

Do what I've suggested, while meditating on the goodness of God, and I guarantee you will soon see the changes in you that you've been looking for!