

## PART 36 – THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

### ❖ DECEIVED OR SELF-DECEIVED

*Have you ever had someone deceive you? I remember when a company approached me about putting down some asphalt spray on our church's paved driveway. He gave me what seemed on the surface like a really good price, so I told him to go ahead. I found out later that the individual was a gypsy from North Augusta that basically dilutes the spray so that you are not getting a good application that will last. I was deceived and the covering faded quickly. Obviously, I do not appreciate being intentionally deceived any more than you do. However, I think it is just as bad when we are not willing to face reality in our own lives and when we are unwilling to face the proverbial "elephant in the room". I do not believe that anything good can come from allowing ourselves to be self-deceived.*

In his book entitled Disciplines of a Godly Man, Kent Hughes made a remarkable statement. He said that the great scandal of today's church is that of **Christians without Christian minds**.<sup>1</sup> In essence, he is talking about Christians who are very self-deceived. For them the Christian life is almost delusional – to think that someone could really live the way the Bible asks them to live. He is referring to people who profess Christ outwardly, but who never actually think like a Christian should think inwardly. This kind of Christian is much more worldly in their thinking than they are spiritual in their thinking.

**Self-deception begins the moment that you ignore what God says, and in its place accept what the devil and the world offer to you as what seems like a "reasonable alternative".**

Now, I have no idea why some professing Christians think the way that they do. It is almost as if they have become numb and deadened to what it really even means to be a Christian. It is like they have no intention of ever allowing God's Word to control their life. If you ask them if they are a follower of Christ, they will give you a hardy "Yes, I am", but when you examine their life, nothing fits. Nothing about their life and their confession coincide or connect. If they have problems in their life, it is as if they have no inclination to do what God wants them to do, so they keep fixing their problems without any of God's wisdom being applied to their problem. Stated in a stronger way, they keep resisting God, resisting God's ways, and resisting the very life transforming truths that change both their circumstances and their life.

**KEY PRINCIPLE 127: THE END RESULT OF RESISTING GOD IS THAT YOUR PROBLEMS ONLY BECOME WORSE, NEVER BETTER.**

Here is exactly what happens in a very practical way when you continue to resist God. You begin to blame everyone else and see them else as the problem. You assume no personal responsibility and just wash your hands clean of anything wrong in your own life. Over time you will begin to develop very toxic and debilitating thoughts towards those people that will quickly become very ugly and demeaning words. Please remember that "**out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks**". Bitterness sinks in. This is real life. This is what the enemy loves. This is what he is always pushing for in your life – resisting God, blaming others, saying what you want to say, becoming bitter. Not good, not healthy, not

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes, 71.

spiritual. Now, if you want to know if this actually fits your life so that you do not have to be self-deceived, then all that you have to do is to examine if your thought life has become toxic and debilitating towards someone. Do you have constant negative thoughts toward someone? It is really a very simple test. This is Basic Christianity 101.

If I were to ask you what it even means to be a Christian, I wonder what kind of answer that you would provide. I have heard comments like the following:

1. *"I am a member of such and such a church."*
2. *"I have been baptized."*
3. *"I grew up in a Christian home."*
4. *"I try and read my Bible every day."*
5. *"I am a deacon at my church."*
6. *"I accepted Christ when I was 12."*

Now, none of those answers are necessarily wrong or even bad, but they may indicate a very crucial misunderstanding of what salvation is and what it even means to be a Christian. For instance, [Luke 9:23](#) gives us a glimpse into how Jesus may want you to answer the question of what it means to be a Christian.

**Luke 9:23 (NKJV) Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.**

There are Christians who may have read that verse a hundred times, and yet it never even made a difference in their lives. It is like living like this seems so difficult and almost irrelevant to the culture in which they live. Listen carefully. This is God's call to discipleship, His call to Christianity at the most basic level. This is not raise your hand and say the sinner's prayer – whatever that is. People think to themselves that *"This is for those that God has called into some special ministry."* I do not think so. This is for everyone that God calls into His kingdom, for anyone who believes that they are a follower of Jesus Christ. Stated another way, Jesus is saying **"If anyone desires, wants, yearns to come after Me"** or **"If anyone truly desires to be saved and follow Me"**, then this is what must happen in their life. Here is what Jesus said should be happening and be visible in the person's life that claims to be saved.

1. First of all, he will not live for himself, but will be willing to place God's will above his own personal ideas.
2. Secondly, he is willing to die to what he wants to do. I.e., he will set aside what he wants to do and determine what God wants him to do, and then do it.
3. Thirdly, he will actually in real life begin following Christ and obeying His Word.

These are not casual requests or nonchalant appeals that Jesus is making. This is the Christian life, and if the enemy can get you to think of the Christian life in any other way, then you are losing the spiritual war in your mind.

**The problem with modern Christianity is that it is enamored with helping everyone find a way to choose the path of least resistance.**

To many people, doing what God says is the right thing to do seems unbearably difficult, when in reality it should be the joy of their life. Thinking the way that God wants you to think or living in such a way

that God would be pleased with your life seems like a monumental task for so many. Here are the two questions that you must ask yourself. There is no shortcut around these two questions. There is no wiggle room here, no rationalizations that will suffice, and no excuse that will even make sense spiritually.

1. **Is what I am doing and how I am living, is it bringing glory to God?** I.e., if God were here right now while I am doing this, would He be greatly pleased or greatly disappointed? If you know that what you are doing would not be pleasing to the Lord and that He would be disappointed with your life choices, then you have believed the enemy's lie and discarded God's truth. You have become self-deceived as to what the Christian life is really all about. Trust me, but it is not about you getting what you want or doing what you want to do every day. From where in the world did that kind of idea come? It did not come from God. I repeat – it did not come from God.
2. **At any time and in every area of my life, can I write above what I am doing “Hallowed be Your name, O Lord!”** This is how Jesus told His disciples to pray, which means that this is how He wants His followers to think. *“Lord, is this a holy thing, a Christ thing, a God thing that I am doing or saying?”* Listen carefully. The answer is always either “yes” or “no”. There is nothing in the middle. You must decide who is going to be Lord of your life – either Christ or yourself.

If you cannot answer these two questions with a “Yes”, then you are probably living in a way that is dishonoring to God. You are living for yourself. You are choosing what you want rather than what God wants. You are ignoring God's Word as if it has no value or merit for your life. You think that you have a better idea or solution than God does. You are choosing the path of least resistance. I know when I say something like that that there will be many people who deep inside will be resisting and fighting and struggling to agree with me. They may not even like me anymore. In some ways they will almost resent the spiritual pressure that it seems to make on their life. Please remember what was studied in Key Principle 116 which said that the person who sincerely pushes you toward godliness and faith is the person who cares the most about you.

Let me give you a hypothetical example of what we are addressing here just to make this practical. Let us assume that you are doing something in your life that you know first of all is not honoring to God. You know that. You know what His Word says. Secondly, you know that what you are doing is hurting someone else. They have told you. They have begged you to stop something that you know is wrong. However, you just keep going, grinding away. You keep doing what you want to do, you keep saying what you want to say, and all the time knowing that neither one is pleasing to God. I mean how does that fit with your understanding of what a Christian is or how a Christian is supposed to live? In my mind, this kind of person is greatly, greatly deceived. They think that they have something that they do not have at all. They are severely self-deceived. They claim to be a Christian, but they do not have a Christian mind – not at all. I know I will get in trouble for saying this, but I personally doubt that people who fit this kind of scenario are even saved. They just have some Christian words that they throw around at everyone, but they do not have a Christian mind. They absolutely do not think like God thinks. How do they weasel out of all of this. Simple. They do exactly what Adam and Eve did in the garden – they pass the buck. It was the serpent that made me do this. God, it was the woman you gave me. They

develop some bogus reason as to why they live in a way that displeases God and hurts other people. You do not have to be a brain surgeon to figure all of this out.

### ❖ A BAD EMPLOYEE

*Let us say that you owned a business and one of your employees was always cursing, always speaking down to you, always putting you down to the other employees, and stealing your tools. What would you do? You would fire him with no questions asked. The problem is that people do this with God every day and then pull out their “I was saved when I was 12” card as if that makes everything okay. It does not make anything okay. All it does is reveal how deluded they are in their thinking and in their mind. They have bought into some ridiculous lie and in that process they have dishonored God and hurt other people. Not good. Not good at all.*

Listen. If you choose the path of least resistance and just do what you want to do all of the time without any regard to how it impacts other people in your life, it is because you have believed the incredulous lies that the enemy has placed into your mind. You have taken the bait and been deceived. You have bought into his lies and decided to live how you want to live with virtually no regard for what God desires for your life – **EVEN WHEN YOU KNOW THAT WHAT YOU ARE DOING IS DISHONORING TO CHRIST**. You are simply refusing to be obedient to Christ. You are refusing to be a genuine follower of Christ. You are refusing to “**deny yourself and take up your cross daily and follow Christ**”. In essence, you are refusing to be a Christian as God designed the Christian life to be lived. The devil has won the war in your mind and you have been greatly deceived. Listen carefully.

1. You can find a way to weasel out of obedience. You can do that, but it is still disobedience, maybe even rebellion to God if it continues in your life.
2. You can find some reason why you can continue to be unbiblical in your behavior.
3. You can find some meaningless justification as to why you can ignore people’s pleas and hurt them in that process and ignore how God wants you to live, but you will not like the outcome. You become the devil’s perfect candidate for loneliness, anger, despair, and even depression.
4. You can find a way to excuse yourself from honoring Christ with your entire life. The problem is that you cannot fool God or excuse yourself before Him with your apologies.

Trust me, but the enemy will give you all of the answers that you are looking for at no charge. You can come up with all of the reasons and rationalizations as to why you are not going to do what God wants you to do, but the truth is that your profession of Christ does not come close to matching His definition of salvation – not even close. Something strategic is missing. Something critical is absent. You can convince yourself that it is okay for you to do whatever you may be doing that is NOT pleasing to Christ, yet knowing full well that God is not being honored in any way in your life, but continue to disregard Him anyway – and hurt people in the process. Trust me, but God’s plan is always better than yours.

If this describes your life, you are very self-deceived because you simply are not willing to choose Christ over your own preferences of what you want to do and how you want to live. Good luck with that. Listen. If Jesus has chosen to flippantly live this way, to just casually live anyway that He had wanted to live with a casual disregard for His Father’s will, none of us would ever have been saved. If Jesus had chosen the path of least resistance, you would never have been saved. It was the simple fact that He willingly and intentionally chose to do His Father’s will in **EVERY SINGLE AREA OF HIS LIFE**

that has made your salvation even possible. It was that choice that brought His Father the greatest glory. The problem is very, very simple.

**KEY PRINCIPLE 128: THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE WILL ALWAYS HINDER YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE THE MOST.**

The path of least resistance guarantees failure in your life. You may be wondering to yourself “*What in the world does this have to do with connecting my mind with my life?*” It has everything to do with it. It has everything to do with how and what you are thinking.

**One of the most important and critical truths of this entire study is that if you choose to think like you want to think, then you are essentially leaving God out of your life.**

You are actually resisting God and fighting against the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, and may not even be saved if you can habitually live in subtle, every day sins without any remorse or any willingness to even change. Please do not tell someone that you read your Bible, go to church every once in a while, were saved in a revival, served as a deacon or Sunday School teacher at the church, or anything else that you believe excuses you from honoring Christ with every area of your life. Those men and women who have always made the greatest impact and who have always walked with God the most are those individuals who were willing to obey God no matter the cost to them personally.

Is there a cost to being a disciple of Christ? You bet there is. Do most Christians want to pay that cost? Not at all. So many Christians will always be satisfied with the path of least resistance, with the path of the least cost to them personally. They will say that they believe the Bible, but deny their unbelief and lack of faith in God. They will try to convince both you and themselves that becoming a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ is reserved for just a special few like the apostles. If being a follower of Christ interrupts their lifestyle, their convenience, their preferences, or anything else that they may want to do that does not honor Christ, they will choose what they want to do. I see it every day. That is the easiest choice to make, that of taking the path of least resistance, but it produces the most tragic results.

Since the beginning of this study, the goal has been to help you see that to be a fully committed follower of Christ you **MUST** change the way that you are currently thinking. This applies to you and it applies to me. I have beseeched you, almost begged you at times, to be intentionally and purposefully focused on changing how you think so that you can change your life to honor Christ. You must understand the following:

**When you change your wrong thinking and how you have casually and nonchalantly embraced the Christian life, it will have a profound impact on your life, as well as the lives of other people.**

1. Rather than never making a difference, your life will always be making a difference.
2. Rather than just being a nice person at church once a week, your life will radiate everything about Christ that is important every day of your life.
3. Rather than being self-absorbed in your own little world of doing what you want no matter how much it hurts other people, your life will begin to bring spiritual, mental, and emotional well-being and health into the lives of most everyone with whom you are involved.

I always wonder why it seems so difficult for people who claim to know God to choose God's best? Why is it so difficult to trust God with their life? No matter what you may think, no matter what kind of ideas you have, you cannot improve on God's will for your life. It is impossible. The more you resist His will, the more you will lose in your life. I can assure you that the average Christian who does not have a Christian mind does not accept this. [Luke 9:24](#) says it this way, so listen very carefully because this is a divine truth that creates divine impacts when embraced into your life.

**Luke 9:24 (NKJV) For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.**

As if once was not enough, Jesus says the same thing again in [Luke 17:33](#),

**Luke 17:33 (NKJV) Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.**

If you want to waste your life, squander away all that God has for you, lose the value and importance of why you are made in God's image, and completely miss God's best for your life, then just do your own thing. The world will tell you to do that, the devil will tell you to do that, television will tell you to do that, but not God. Just take God's Word and set it aside somewhere on a shelf, attend a church somewhere every once in a while, and ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit to fully yield your life to the will of God. If you do that, whatever you thought was what you wanted from life will be short lived. I have said it several times, but please, please stop fighting against God. Stop ignoring what God says and resolve that no matter what is taking place in your life that you are always going to do everything in your power to think like God thinks. If you do this one simple thing, your life will never be the same.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Hughes, R. Kent. *Disciplines of a Godly Man*. Revised. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 1991.