

Spiritual Schizophrenia?

Do you ever feel as though you are living two lives? Sometimes it can feel that way, especially at university. You have one close-knit group of friends at university and another completely different set of friends back in your home town. Moving between the two can be difficult and you come to realize you have to act in different ways depending upon which group you are in.

In the film *Face Off*, we see a similar situation in which a police officer undergoes surgery in order to become the criminal that he is tracking down. Although the change is only physical, the emotional stress becomes intense as the officer begins to realize how similar his life can become to that of the convict, separated only by the ambiguity of the term 'law'. He then realizes that by putting himself in the shoes of another man, his actions become more and more similar to that of his opponent and one tension experienced in watching the film is the question of whether or not the officer will ever return to his previous way of life.

We can often experience this tension between different ways of life in our own Christian walk with God. In one sense, we can often be tempted to lead one life in front of our Christian brothers and sisters, whilst living a totally different life in front of our non-believing friends. This idea of living two different lives is often warned in the Scriptures in such verses as found in the first Psalm which states, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the council of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers." The Psalmist goes on to talk of the right way of living, setting up this image of a right way of living and a wrong way of living.

The apostle Paul also makes extensive use of these two ways of living: the way of the world and the way of God. Thus, Paul explains as he opens his epistle to the Ephesians, "As for you, you were dead in transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world." (Eph. 2:1-2) So Paul elucidates his point further; we may have been walking in the way of the world, "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions." (Eph. 2:4-5) Therefore, any one of us who feels as though we are living two lives, should not be discouraged but look back to their salvation and see that, being saved, we no longer need to conform to the ways of this world because, "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ... the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal. 6:14)

However, we should also look at this idea of two ways of living in a positive light too. We are not told to shun the world outright, as the monastics did in their day, but rather we are told that we should live lives that are, "blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe." (Phil. 2:15) In other words, our lives should be lived as examples to those who still walk according to the ways of the world as we seek to boast in nothing except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we are to go out in the confidence that we have a Saviour who understands our predicament. (John 17:11-16)

Let us encourage one another as we seek to be a living witness to Jesus Christ in this dark world. Let us seek to live lives that are true to who we are not who we once were. Let us shine like the stars in the universe as we seek to proclaim Christ crucified.

Jon Mackenzie

Day 1

Psalm 1:1-6

¹ Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. ⁴ Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. ⁶ For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, may we realize that we are now no longer children of the world but children of God, through the death of your son Jesus Christ. Help us as we seek to live lives which testify to this, especially as we live in a world to whom the death of Jesus is a stumbling block. Help us also to stand as a church of people who share this common goal and seek to encourage one another and press on towards the goal; towards heaven and towards your side. Amen.

Day 2

Ephesians 2:1-6

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your Son, Christ Jesus. Forgive us that we ever take our eyes off him, Lord, for it is only by Christ that we are made alive. Thank you for taking mercy upon us, Lord, and thank you for the gift of grace which allows us to worship you for eternity by your side. Help us to live lives which seek to take account of the grace that has been made available to us. Amen.

Day 3

Micah 6:6-8

⁶ With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸ He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Prayer

Dear Father, we thank you that we can come to you, even though nothing we bring is acceptable in your sight. We thank you for the Scripture which testify to your Son and the death that he died on the cross for us. But, Lord, we pray we would never raise Scripture above the place that must be set for your Son, Jesus Christ; a throne at the right hand of God in heaven. Forgive our sinful nature and our constant failings and help us to forgive our contemporaries. Amen.

Day 4

Philippians 2:12-16

¹²Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. ¹⁴Do everything without complaining or arguing, ¹⁵so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe ¹⁶as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour for nothing.

Prayer

Dear Father, help us to be a witness in this world for you. Let us witness not only with words which speak of you, but also with lives that testify to the work you have done in us. Aid us in our witness, Lord, as we continue daily to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Never let us lose sight of the complete otherness of your plan of salvation. Live in our hearts, Spirit of God. Deal with us wisely and give us wisdom to face whatever the day may bring. Thank you for this new day, Father. May we make best use of it for you. Amen.

Day 5

Isaiah 6:1-5

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵ "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, help us to worship you aright. Fill us with holy awe and wonder at your transcendent glory. Never let us lose sight of that glory that first won us over to you. Forgive us that we are men of unclean lips living in a world of people of unclean lips. We thank you that you lowered yourself lower than the angels to live a perfect life on earth so that our eyes may see the King, the LORD Almighty. With this in our minds, help us to go out with confidence this new day in the name of the LORD Almighty, in the knowledge that you are holy. Amen.