

WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD LIVE A CONSISTENT LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Someone who is consistent always behaves in the same way, has the same attitudes towards people or things, or achieves the same level of success in something. In consistency, there is no contradiction; there is continuity, practice, determination, faithfulness, balance, harmony, stability, orderliness, reliability and quality.

The world has a great demand for consistency. Consider the athletes in regard to their games; the employers in demand of attendance and excellent performance, the employees in demand for their salaries on time. As Christians, we need to accept nothing less than true consistency!

Jesus emphasized that consistency (abide, continue) is condition for discipleship - **John 8:31** ³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. In Paul's admonition to Timothy and all Christians, he demanded for consistency (**continuity**). **1 Timothy 4:15-16** - ¹⁵ Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. **Continue in them**, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Paul and Barnabas spoke of the need for a congregation to be consistent - **Acts 13:43** ⁴³ Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to **continue in the grace of God**. Consider **Acts 14:22** ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to **continue in the faith**, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

From God's words, the declaration is clear that we as Christians should be consistent in godly living and continue in the way of God. There is no need for anyone to think that consistency is not needed in our lives!

BARRIER TO CONSISTENCY

It is very hard to be consistent. We have a hard time doing something on a regular basis, unless there is a motive that keeps us going. For example, if we think it is important to read our Bibles then we will consistently read it. The plain fact of the matter is that we are consistent in the things we think important! If we are not

consistent in godly living, it is a reflection (*consciously or unconsciously*) that we do not consider godly living as the most important aspect of our lives.

We all must admit that we have our own failings. When crisis or challenge comes, it becomes difficult to be consistent. When crisis or challenge comes, that's when you see another side of yourself and you find out what people are made of.

There are some challenges which the church faces that hinder consistency:

1. A situation where the unbelievers or those we may term as idolaters, oppressors, liars, prostitutes, thieves, corrupt persons or drug dealers **behave better than** the members of the church. It is the story that the churches are full of hypocrites or professed believers that don't live at all like their Lord Jesus Christ. **Members living a life that makes the Christian faith seem a lie.**
2. A situation where one is overtaken by sin, there is this tendency that the guilt, regret and slackness towards swift repentance could lead to an excuse to avoid going to church service, going to counselling and/or coming face to face with one's own sin.
3. There is hardly a difference between the **pre-baptism life style** of one and the **post-baptism life style**. We are caught up in between a situation of habitual rebellion and sin, and a professing Christian.

Countless number of times, we have fallen short of God's will in our lives. This is a daily problem for all. This problem put on us put on spiritually depressing phases. We are not free *from* sin — that is our burden; when we are in sin— that becomes our lamentation; that there is more final bitterness in reflecting on sin — than there can be present sweetness in the commission of sin.

Sin is the barrier to consistency. Sin is like a river, which begins in a quiet spring — but ends in a tumultuous sea. In sin, there can never be consistency.

WHY WE SHOULD LIVE A CONSISTENT LIFE

We need to understand the principle of following Christ in our lives. Following Christ begins with an inward change of heart, repentance, faith and baptism into the Lord's church, this leads to the new life. From this point, we are to be involved in the fellowship of the church and among brethren. This new life continues to grow into transformation from the inside out. We need to keep constantly in our mind that we are undergoing a process of transformation. This process of transformation is in two phase: the outward, the one we see and feel, and the inward or the secret, the one we allow God to do within us - **Philippians 2:12-13** ¹² *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

This inside-out transformation does not occur automatically or by magic, it doesn't just happen. It does come about by an appetite that has been cultivated over a period of time! We must acquire a standard, a disciplined mindset, and a consecrated desire for consistency! This appetite should not be feasting on a self-promoting motive. No, our motive should be for God's glory and should desire consistency in our life for His glory alone!

The attitude a Christian should have in this transformation process is very important. We need to recognize that the influence of sin in our lives is a continuing one.

Also, the necessity to combat sin in our lives with God's help should be a continuing one. The continuing combating of sin in our lives comes from making efforts to ensure that the outward transformation corresponds to the inward transformation.

Most of us are not consistent spiritually because we are more concerned about being consistent externally. Only external transformation will not transmit the energy of God to us; it may be interesting, but it will have no power. **2 Timothy 3:5** ⁵ *having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!*

Once both external and inward transformation correspond, it helps to balance and consistency. When it comes to the Christian life, one must be internally in balance. There is wisdom in balance. There is a danger in being out of balance. The way to achieve balance and purpose is to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. He teaches us how to walk consistently.

Let's see few listed reasons why we should live a Christian life:

- ***A consistent life means we exercise personal responsibility*** to ensure the all round transformation continues to have its place in our lives. As we are aware that there are times, due to our failings, we get distracted from the allowing the transformation to be a continuing one. When we fail to overcome sin, we sin but it does not make us the worst sinner as long as there is life and we make swift response to repent. When we sin, our souls shall be in the bondage of the *guilt of iniquity* —the *burden of infirmity*. *Sorrow* will ever be our *visitant* and an *inhabitant*.

However, there should no room in our attitude to hang our failure to overcome sin on someone else or a circumstance. We should be willing to take the responsibility to make effort to ensure this transformation continues. **This enhances consistency in our lives.** Knowing this, we should accept that we are not free *to* sin and that is our blessing. Also, when our souls are not in sin, we have a strong consolation and motivation.

In taking personal responsibility, we are not to accept what is sinful in our lives - murder, lies, corrupt practices, fraud, forgery, covetousness, materialism, idolatry, idleness, gossips, drunkenness, bitterness, hatred, malice, pride, jealousy, envy, slander, busybodies, adultery, fornication, cultism, violence, incest, procrastination, non-diligence, insensitivity, immodest dressing, late coming and so on. Not only are we not to accept or live in such sinful ways, we must not tolerate such ways or approve of them in the lives of others - we cannot affirm and approve lifestyles that are contrary to God's laws. **1 Cor. 6:9 -11, 18-20, Gal. 5:19-21. Romans 1:32** ³² *who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.*

- ***A consistent life means that we have more work to do.*** We are God's children. We have been given the grace to live in His light. We have the joy and obligation of obeying Him. We are more watched more than others. We are expected to do more than others in terms of godly living for the transformation process to continue. **Matthew 5:47-48** ⁴⁷ *And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?* ⁴⁸ *Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

When we do everything God requires from us, we must not slack nor be distracted because there is nothing to glory about it. We still have a lot more work to do for the transformation process to continue. **Luke 17:10** ¹⁰ *So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'* ”

God has shown the greatest love to mankind by the death of His Son. God has done more for us by allowing us to find an entrance into His church. Because more is done for us, we have an obligation to do more to ensure the transformation process continues. It not only brings consistency but it also shows reflection that we are grateful to God for the work of redemption. “To whom much is given — of them much shall be required.” The blessings we enjoy are not the fruit of our *merit* — but the fruit of God's *mercy*. By how much the more *grace* we have received — by so much the more *glory* we are obliged to return to the Giver. A *grateful* mind is a *great* mind.

- ***A consistent life means that we carefully consider the effect our lifestyle on our society.*** A consistent life is a looking-glass, wherein Christ sees His own likeness. The world does not like such kind of life. There are many who are waiting to triumph in our mistakes or sins. The more the world watches us — the more we should be careful of the kind of lifestyle we exhibit. If we do not allow that all round transformation to be seen in our lives, it is no longer consistent and it gives an occasion for the world to make mockery of our faith.

When we make mistakes or sin, the wicked will not walk backward to cover our shame; but they will walk forward to publish it. Thus they make use of *our weakness* — as a plea for *their wickedness*. Men are merciless in their censures of Christians! They have no *sympathy* for our *infirmity*. The behaviour of some Christians has often given the wicked an opportunity to reproach true religion. The malice of the world is such, that they will reproach the righteousness of God's Word. So if we commit one sin — it will cause us many sorrows — and the world will triumph. *Living a consistent life will help us to be conscious that we are God's jewels and that we should sparkle more — in this world that is overtaken by darkness!* When the godly are left to fall, then the envious sinner will exclaim, “So that is your religion!” Like James admonished, our religion should be undefiled before God — and our lives unspotted from the world. **James 1:26-27** ²⁶ *If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.* ²⁷ *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

- ***A consistent life means that we review our companions from time to time.*** As an ungodly man *poisons the air* in which he breathes; so he *pollutes the age* in which he lives. Evil communications corrupt good manners. It is far better to have the ungodly man's *enmity* — than his *society*. By his *enmity* — he is most *hateful*; but by his *society* — he is most *hurtful*. “Do not be unfairly, unequally yoked together with unbelievers. To see a *saint* and a *sinner* maintaining familiar fellowship with each other — is to behold the *living* and the *dead* keeping house

together! The *godly* are more frequently corrupted by the evil deportment of the worldly — than the *worldly* is refined by the chaste life of the godly.

A godly man was once heard to lament, ***“that as often as he went into the company of the wicked, he returned less a man from them than he was before he joined with them.”*** The Lord's people, by keeping evil company, are like people who are much exposed to the sun — insensibly *tanned* and *darkened*.

Every Christian is a light *in* the world — in the midst of our companions we need to let our *light* shine before men — that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in Heaven!” Godly company brings *fire* to our graces, to kindle them when they are *freezing* — but unequally yoked company with the worldly brings *water* to quench our graces, when they are *flaming*. It is hard to be conformed to the *world* in the *outward* man — and transformed to *God* in the *inward* man; to be an *outward heathen* — and an *inward Christian*. To be too *intimate* with sinners — is to *intimate* that we are sinners!

- ***A consistent life means that we recognize that our dependency is on God.*** We must be consistent in our Christian lives because we know our consistency is not from our strength or skill but from the power of God. *Godly duties performed are regarded before God when we allow* Christ fills them. Any good work we do can never be sustained without the support of Christ or the power of the Holy Spirit. If we ever do any good work, it is still not the reason for our continued physical existence – Christ is the reason why we are alive. When we have kept all the commandments, there is one commandment above all to be kept; that is, “all our righteous acts are like filthy rags!” In *most* of our works — we are *abominable sinners*; and in the *best* of our works — we are *unprofitable servants*. Let us always go in the strength of the Lord God.

CONCLUSION

It takes time and commitment to grow and mature spiritually and to continue to grow and mature spiritually. This does not happen overnight. It takes patience and determination. Though there will be distractions which the Scriptures refer to as weight.

Hebrews 12:1-2 ¹ *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

A weight is something that distracts us and slows us down as we live to obediently serve our LORD. That weight is sin and it can never give us a consistent life.

Let us all be challenged to continue in the race of life and finish to receive the victor's crown. God bless us all in Jesus Christ Name – amen!