

# Lambs Among Wolves

By

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Chapter 6

## What Would Jesus Do in My Place?

ONE OF the questions which often perplex those who desire to be real Christians is, How may I know that I am where the Lord wants me to be, and that I am doing what He wants me to do? Several ways are open before me, but how am I to know which one is His will for me? That this is a problem in which many are interested was demonstrated some decades ago when the book *In His Steps* was written on the subject, and millions of copies were sold.

I read the book at the youthful age when I was not satisfied with beautiful theories. I wanted factual proof, and I questioned any man's ability to tell just what Jesus would do in a world vastly different from that in which He lived 2000 years ago.

When I heard men and women testify that they had resolved to do only what Jesus would do were He in their place, I was rather skeptical. Of course it was a fine motto and a commendable ideal, if it were only possible to know what He would do. I reasoned it all out for myself. I said, "Suppose here is a boy whose parents were millionaires, but they were killed in an accident. The boy is left with a palatial home and millions of dollars. His circumstances are entirely different from those of Jesus when He was that age. How could he possibly know what Jesus would do in his place?" I thought of many such illustrations. I decided that all this discussion of what Jesus would do was mere speculation and was based entirely on the imagination of the author.

But as I studied God's Word more carefully, I learned that when any soul for whom He had laid down His life has a deep longing to know God's plan for him, and will study God's Word, and pray, the Lord will demonstrate His love by making the way perfectly plain. I believe we shall be able to show definitely from the Bible that every child of His may know day by day—in every plan, activity, and decision—just what Jesus would do in his place. This may seem surprising, but is it not reasonable to think that One who has infinite wisdom, and loves us with infinite love, is able and willing to guide us day by day in this dark world?

### **Natural and Spiritual Laws**

In the physical world we recognize that everything is governed by what we term the laws of nature. There are natural laws which must be observed in relation to all animal life and all plant life. Also all the inanimate forces of nature are subject to laws, and the better we understand these laws, the more benefit we derive from these forces. We have learned something of the laws that prevail in the realm of electricity, and by working in harmony with those laws, we can obtain light, heat, and power. But to ignore or defy the laws of electricity will rob us of its benefits and may bring instant death.

The vast advance in industry during the past century, and also in mechanics and scientific inventions for the benefit of mankind, is the result of study and research and new discoveries in this realm of natural law.

This suggests a logical question. Is it possible that the Creator of this vast universe has placed all things, animate and inanimate, subject to natural law, while in the higher sphere of spiritual life He has left everything in uncertainty, subject to mere chance? We know this could not be. Therefore we must conclude that when we come into full harmony with the spiritual laws ordained by our Creator, we may achieve any end and reach any ideal or goal He has placed before us.

### **The First Step in God's Plan**

There are many beautiful lessons and illustrations in the Bible which seem plain and simple, yet we do not get their deep significance unless we study them and meditate upon them. Looking out into the yard, I see a large grapevine. It has scores of branches and hundreds of leaves, yet we look upon it as just one vine. Jesus used it to illustrate a fundamental truth: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." John 15:5. The branches are not separate from the vine—they are all one. So Jesus uses the vine to show the relation of Christians to Christ and to one another. When we are born again, we are brought into such a union with Him that we are said to be members of His body: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." 1 Corinthians 12:27.

It is of the greatest importance for us to cultivate constantly the consciousness of this union with Him if we are to know His will for us.

"And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him." 1 John 3:24. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." 1 John 4:16. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. . . . He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." John 15:4, 5. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20.

It is this union with Christ by faith which brings us into harmony with His laws. So we read, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world." 1 John 4:17.

We have looked forward to our home in heaven, believing that when we are translated to that glorious land, we shall be like Him. But this verse says, "As he is, so are we *in this world*." If we are living in union with Him as the branch is united to the vine, His life flows continuously into our lives. Therefore "as he is so are we."

"Every child lives by the life of his father. If you are God's children,—begotten by His Spirit,—you live by the life of God. In Christ dwells 'all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;' and the life of Jesus is made manifest 'in our mortal flesh.' That life in you will produce the same character and manifest the same works as it did in Him."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 118.

### **The Next Step**

We have found that God's ideal may be reached only as we live in harmony with spiritual law; we believe Jesus set the example by living in perfect harmony with that law. When we study His life and the law by which He overcame all the snares and temptations of Satan, we have found the key which will make that life available to us. Here is that wonderful key: "I can of mine own self do nothing." John 5:30.

This is the first step. If you would know what Christ would do if He were in your place, it is absolutely necessary to start here, where He started. Many have mistaken ideas of Christ's life in humanity. They say that Christ was divine, He was God, and He could do anything, and so they brush His statement aside. But Jesus makes His position plain when He says, "I can of mine own self do nothing: . . . because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." John 5:30.

### **Two Wills**

This statement brings before us the fact that there are two wills: "mine own will" and "the will of the Father which sent me." Sin and righteousness are matters of the will. There is a right way to exercise the will, and there is a wrong way. Sin entered the universe as a result of the wrong use of the will. When a created being exercises his will contrary to the will of his Creator, he is in rebellion against the government of the universe. That is what cast Lucifer out of heaven.

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." Isaiah 14:12-14.

Lucifer refused to recognize any authority above himself. That principle transformed him from a glorious angel into a devil. Following that principle will produce the same result in any created being. Thus we understand that "everything depends upon the right action of the will."

Let us notice the contrast between Lucifer and Christ, in the way each one exercised his will. When Jesus finished His public ministry and entered upon the experience of taking the sinner's condemnation and penalty, He experienced agony of soul beyond anything which we can comprehend. The Bible tells us: "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Matthew 26:39.

Here, in the supreme test of His life, He demonstrated that He came not to do His own will but the will of His Father. The only obstruction to the complete working out of God's plan in the life of any individual is the will. God could carry out His purpose in every human being if the will were fully yielded to Him.

God made man a free moral agent, with ability to obey the law of the government of heaven and to develop a character that would entitle him to live forever. But he listened to the alluring lies of the fallen Lucifer and decided to obey him instead of God. Thus the human will was weakened, perverted, and made incapable of maintaining God's pure and holy standard. God might have destroyed Adam and Eve because of their disobedience, but He is LOVE, and in His infinite mercy He revealed His plan to give man another chance.

### **The Way Back**

Jesus came to this fallen world and became a member of the human family; that is why He usually spoke of Himself as the Son of man.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; . . . for verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Hebrews 2:14-16. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Galatians 4:4.

Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. He was, therefore, enabled to keep His will surrendered to the Father, thus removing every hindrance to the perfect working out of God's will in Him. The life of Jesus on earth is God's ideal for every human being. It reveals just how God would work out His plan in each individual if the will were fully yielded to Him.

We cannot be saved. unless we are born again. (John 3:3.) And when we are born again, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who comes to dwell in us and make our bodies His temple. (Acts 2:38; 1

Corinthians 6:19.) We may have the same power dwelling in us to enable us to keep the will surrendered to the Father, as Jesus did. And thus the Father will produce in us the same character as He did in Jesus.

When we read the story of the storm upon the lake (Mark 4), which threatened to sink the disciples' boat, we are not surprised that Jesus "rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. . . . And there was a great calm." It seems easy to say He could do that, for He was "the Master of earth, and sea, and sky"; He was the Son of God. It also seems easy to forget His own words, "I can of mine own self do nothing." Jesus was not exercising divine power in His own behalf, but He had come as the Son of man to demonstrate how we can live by bringing our lives into harmony with the spiritual law which governed His life.

"When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. But He rested not in possession of almighty power. It was not as the 'Master of earth and sea and sky' that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, 'I can of Mine own self do nothing.' He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

Jesus makes it plain that if the disciples had possessed the faith offered them, they could have stilled the storm as readily as He did. "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" Mark 4:39, 40.

These lessons reveal the fact that if we relate ourselves to the laws of spiritual life as Jesus did, there will be no failure in our Christian experience. Should we not cultivate in our minds and hearts the thought, "Heavenly Father, I am not here to do my own will, but Thy will"? This will enable Him to live out His life in us.

### **God Was in Christ**

When Jesus was here on earth He was tried and tempted, but He was ever conscious that the Father was dwelling within Him and working through Him.

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren. . . . For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Hebrews 2:17, 18.

"Then Jesus said unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." John 8:28.

Jesus maintained that consciousness of the presence of God with Him continuously, yielding His will so fully that all He said and all He did came from the Father. This is what Jesus would do today if He were in your place. It is what He desires you to do. If we look at those about us, pointing out their faults, criticizing their conduct, and perhaps quarreling with them, we are following the law of death rather than of life. By "beholding others" and losing sight of Him, we get into darkness and failure and sin. But by beholding Him we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

Here is the statement of the Apostle Paul, summing up the whole gospel: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." As God was in Christ, so Christ is to be in each one of His followers. "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Corinthians 13:5.

### **Two Wills in One**

We have considered Christ's words, "I Came. . . not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." We might conclude from this statement that there were two conflicting wills, and that it was a

constant struggle for Christ to keep His will subject to that of His Father. But we need to place with this another striking statement of the Saviour: "I and my Father are one." John 10:30. Here is a further revelation of the wonderful law of the spiritual life. When Jesus accepted the Father's will as His own, their wills merged, so there was never any conflict.

Who could conceive of a more wonderful experience than to have Jesus abiding in us and our wills so fully surrendered to Him that they are merged with His will, and we can say, "Jesus and I are one"? This is His plan.

"When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness.

"And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity with His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us."— *The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

"God was in Christ," and their wills were so merged that Jesus did only what the Father desired Him to do and spoke what the Father would have Him speak. His life was in every respect a revelation of the Father.

"Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" John 14:8, 9.

There was a note of disappointment in the words of Jesus, as though He would say, "What you have seen as you have been with Me all these months has been the Father. I and My Father are one. As He is, so am I in the world. As you have seen the sick healed, the blind eyes opened, the lame walk, and the lepers cleansed, you have seen the Father working. As you have heard the words of love and mercy, the calls to repentance and salvation, you have heard the Father speaking."

### **His Glorious Plan for Us**

We have had plainly set forth from the Bible the relation of Christ to the Father when He was here on earth. Now if it can be shown from the same Word that our relation to Christ is to be identical with His relation to the Father, we would clearly understand the meaning of His statement, "As he is, so are we in this world." In His prayer to the Father, Jesus revealed this: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." John 17:18, 22, 23.

We co-operate and work in harmony with the natural laws of the physical world in order to obtain the benefits provided for us by our Creator. Is it not perfectly evident that in God's plan of love for us He expects us to conform to the law of spiritual life, to bring our wills into harmony with His will? Thus we may know each day and each hour that we are abiding in God's will. We may have the peace and joy of the consciousness that we are where our Father wants us and are carrying out His purpose for us. We may have the experience of the Apostle Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Galatians 2:20.