

‘Destroying’ Your Outer Man Takes Holy Spirit Discipline

Do you ever sometimes wonder why your walk with God falls short of your own expectations and why your spiritual life is so unfulfilling?

Chinese evangelist and author Watchman Nee once wrote: “Many of God’s servants are not able to do even the most elementary works. Ordinarily they should be enabled by the exercise of their spirit to know God’s Word, to discern the spiritual condition of another, to send forth God’s messages under anointing and to receive God’s revelations. Yet, due to the distractions of the outward man, their spirit does not seem to function properly. It is basically because their outward man has never been dealt with. For this reason revival, zeal, pleading and activity are but a waste of time. As we shall see, there is just one basic dealing which can enable man to be useful before God : brokenness.”

Brokenness. It’s not a word with which many, including followers of Jesus Christ, have made themselves familiar. Why? Could it perhaps be that brokenness is closely associated with discipline, submission and humility—a trio of concepts that are foreign to our selfish human nature?

For the true believer, such an ideal should not seem so far-fetched. After all, as John Piper so eloquently put it in his book *Desiring God*, “... there is no calling greater than praising God. This is true not only for us, but surprisingly also for God himself, he being the greatest, to glory in anything else would be idolatry. Therefore, if the greatest thing God can do is give himself glory, and nothing any created thing does can be greater than God, the greatest thing we can do (our purpose, you might say) is to glorify him.”

Colossians 1:16 backs that up by saying, "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers. All things were created by Him and for Him."

The problem with that is, due to our flawed human nature, our outward man and our inward man "are not one," as Nee so adamantly points out in his book, *The Releasing of the Spirit*. Nee says that "the breaking of the outward man is the basic experience of all who serve God," and that "this must be accomplished before He can use us in an effectual way."

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Our American way of life has lulled us into such a state of comfort and complacency that many of us are simply not familiar with the concept of brokenness. Our compassion for God and for his work has been overwhelmed by our big-screen televisions, our fascination with cars, our compulsion to know what's going on with Caitlyn (Bruce) Jenner, our desire to dine at nice restaurants and our obsession with college and professional sports. We're more concerned about which four teams are going to make the college football playoff than spreading the gospel and drawing the lost into God's kingdom.

Can we at least be honest about that?

If the outer man, which is much more fascinated with the things above than the matters of God, remains unbroken, then one's inner man may be, as Nee says, "inert and unable to function." Thus, as Nee explains, "the breaking of the outward man is the first lesson for everyone who would learn to serve God. He who is truly used by God is one whose outward thought and outward emotion do NOT act independently. If we have not learned this lesson, we shall find our effectiveness greatly

impaired.”

In other words, we need for God to bring us to a place where the outward man is completely broken. And how does that happen?

It happens simply by submitting to God, as James 4:7 instructs us, and by drawing near to Him, according to James 4:8. While it is contrary to human nature to relinquish control of our everyday lives, we must do this to become the powerful spiritual warrior for Christ that many of us aspire to be. We need to yield to His authority and will, commit our lives to Him and his control and be willing to, “... deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24).

We need to “resist the devil.” Don’t allow Satan to entice and tempt you. We need to “cleanse our hands and purify our hearts.” That is, be cleansed from sin, replacing our desire to sin with a desire to experience God’s purity.

We need to repent. Don’t be afraid to express deep, heartfelt sorrow for your sins. And, we need to “humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift You up:” (James 4:10).

I certainly include myself in the “we need to do these things” category. I have wasted a lot of precious time—both mine and God’s—in my nearly 49 years of life. In the last few months, however, I have committed myself to “destroying” my outer man and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide my inner man.

I have read many books concerning the Holy Spirit, including the above-mentioned Nee offering as well as Lee Grady’s *The Holy Spirit is Not For Sale*. As a matter of fact, Lee loaned Nee’s book to me, and I’m grateful. The wisdom in these books have prompted me to seek a more intimate relationship with my Creator through His Word and prayer. I am seeking all of the gifts of the Spirit the Bible promises can be given to me.

I realize all of that will come with great sacrifice, but it’s

time. And, it's time for all of us believers to show the world who we belong to. "So, seeing that you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that you may excel to the edifying of the church" (1 Cor. 14:12).

And, as I always like to say, "there is that." God bless.

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