

Is Your Self-Will Passing Itself Off for the Holy Spirit?

When Jesus took a seat on the mountainside to deliver His timeless Sermon on the Mount, the twelve apostles of the Lamb were among the crowd of disciples who hung on His every word. They were amazed at His teaching. There was something different about this Jesus. He taught as one who had authority and not as the scribes. He lived His message.

The newly ordained apostles probably marveled when Jesus called those who are persecuted for righteousness blessed. I can imagine their brains went “tilt” when Jesus told them to love their enemies, bless people that curse them, do good to people that hate them, and pray for people that spitefully use them, and persecute them (see Matt. 5).

Indeed, Jesus’ teaching was a far cry from the world’s ways—or even the Law’s ways that commanded an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The Sons of Thunder were among those in the crowd who were “astonished and overwhelmed with bewildered wonder at His teaching” (see Matt. 7:28, AMP). They heard the words, but they didn’t catch the revelation. They counted it as the best teaching they had ever heard, but the principle Jesus was imparting—the principle of moving in the opposite spirit—wouldn’t soon play out in their everyday lives.

How do I know? Luke 6 records the same sermon. Jesus actually delivered the Sermon on the Mount right after He chose the 12 apostles—and right after giving those 12 apostles the authority to preach the gospel of the kingdom and the power to heal the sick and cast out devils.

But before He sent them out to preach and work miracles with the authority of heaven, Jesus first equipped His chosen

nation-shakers with the principles of moving in the opposite spirit. Jesus knew they would need to guard their hearts in the face of mean-spirited opposition and show religion a better way. Jesus taught them not to resist evil, to gladly give up their personal rights, to avoid judgmental attitudes. (You are familiar with the message.)

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, the apostles had authority to cast out devils, but they didn't have the revelation about moving in the opposite spirit of those same devils (or the sinful flesh). In other words, they had the information, but they didn't have the revelation. Fast forward to Luke 9, just three chapters after the Christianity 101 workshop. What do we find?

First we see that the disciples weren't able to cast the demon out of the child. Right after that, the disciples got into an argument about who would be the greatest. Then, John rebuked a man who was successfully casting out demons in the name of Jesus because he wasn't part of the inner circle. (Hardly living the Beatitudes, were they?) And, finally, James and John, the Sons of Thunder, took offense when the Samaritans wouldn't offer Jesus the hospitality He deserved. These apostles actually asked the One who came to save the world, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" (Luke 9:54, KJV).

Um... were these disciples napping when Jesus taught the principles of moving in the opposite spirit on the mountainside? Surely they had front row seats and heard the message loud and clear. When the Samaritans snubbed the King, the apostles should have asked Jesus if they could hold a feast for the Samaritans and end the party with a healing service. But they didn't catch the spirit of the message that offered them the secret to true power. So instead they started flowing in the wrong spirit. Jesus rebuked James and John and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (KJV).

James and John weren't moving in the opposite spirit of the Samaritans. The words of their mouths revealed that their hearts were not fully aligned with the spirit of Christ. They weren't in agreement with the Holy Spirit. The disciples wanted to use their authority to exercise the Law's eye-for-an-eye principle—compounded about 1,000 times. They were offended and they wanted to retaliate. But Jesus not only teaches us not to retaliate. He teaches us not even to resist. The natural mind can't comprehend Matthew 5:38-48. Let's look at this passage in The Message translation:

"Here's another old saying that deserves a second look: 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.' Is that going to get us anywhere?

"Here's what I propose: 'Don't hit back at all.' If someone strikes you, stand there and take it. If someone drags you into court and sues for the shirt off your back, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously.

"You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst.

"When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty.

"If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.

"In a word, what I'm saying is, Grow up. You're kingdom

subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you."

All of this is foolishness to the natural mind. The carnal mind wants to strike back twice as hard, file a countersuit, tell everyone who will listen what they did to you, make them pay. To stand there and take it, to give away even more than what someone is trying to force from your hands, to pray a blessing on the ones who are cursing you ... that, my friends, is called moving in the opposite spirit—and there's a reward in it. When you move in the opposite spirit, you avoid the bondage that the one who strikes you, sues you, takes advantage of you, gives you a hard time, or mistreats you in any way, is living in. You walk free—you walk in power. And your response might even set them free, too. We overcome evil with good.

Now, you can't try to move in the opposite spirit, not really. You have to get the revelation of it and move by His grace alone. That's why we have to give the apostles a bit of a break. They didn't have the benefit of a leather-bound book that displays the Sermon on the Mount in red letters so they could meditate on it day and night until it renewed their minds. We do. They also didn't have the Holy Spirit living on the inside of them. We do. When we move in the opposite spirit of the ones who come against us, we are moving in the Holy Spirit. After all, in Him, we live and move and have our being. And we, too, can live His message for the glory of God.

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