

The Pain That Profits: Does Anyone Want To Be Holy Anymore?

If the title got your attention, then you've made it to the first line. But I can hear some people's thoughts turning. "I'm already holy. He's made me holy by His blood. You can't be holy by your own efforts. It's all by grace." Blah, blah, blah ...

This mentality is the chief reason the charismatic movement has been weak in character.

Please stay with me. This is a necessary practical word in season for many of us. As the coming of the Lord draws nearer, we will need this word all the more.

Many of the references in the New Testament to the coming of the Lord include admonitions to holiness and sanctification, using words for the believer such as "without spot" and "blameless." Here's one:

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

Here are a few others: 1 Thessalonians 3:13; Ephesians 5:27; 1 Peter 3:14.

Sanctification, which is the setting apart of our lives to the Lord, is not all built in at conversion. It is a process that begins at the new birth but should continue throughout our lives. The process of sanctification is when the Holy Spirit will take our lives and begin conforming them to Christ. At the new birth we are new creations in our spirits, but as newborn babes in Christ, we must then mature. Babies are

perfect humans, but they certainly are not mature.

It's not a question of increased righteousness, for all the righteousness a true believer has is in Christ. We can never add to our righteousness either now, in this present life or throughout eternity. Our faith in Christ alone supplies all the righteousness of God we will ever need. A believer can never add one iota to the righteousness of Christ. We are already accepted in the beloved (Eph. 1:6) and complete in Christ (Col 2:10), just as a newborn baby is fully accepted and a celebrated part of the family he is born into. However, when we are first born again, we are not mature. There is a need for the new believer to begin renewing his mind with the Word of God and to present his body as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2).

As the new believer begins to grow like a tree grows, there is also a pruning and a purging which he must yield to in order to produce more fruit (John 15:2). Although we cannot add to our righteousness, we can increase in the fruits of righteousness (Phil. 1:11).

The cultivation of the soil of our hearts must go deep for much fruit to abound. The sword of the Spirit must probe our true heart's motives to the bottom and align them with the will of God (Heb. 4:12). The deeper the tilling, the richer will be the filling. God will not purge you without your consent.

That's why Christians can live and die with so little true fruit to show for their labor. They were not willing for a deeper tilling. A heavenly plowing is always brutal. It deals with the inner self and the thoughts and intents of our hearts. It prepares the heart for a heavenly planting which will produce a heavenly harvest. Everything moves correctly and efficiently in a heart that is right with God. Seek first the kingdom of God and all will be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

For example, Joseph was given a dream of being a ruler (Gen. 37:5-11), but from the time of the dream to its fulfillment, there was a pit and a prison prepared for Joseph to endure. These fiery trials were necessary to purge Joseph from false motives and selfish ambition. The Word of the Lord tested him through these trials (Ps. 105:19).

As a New Testament example, Peter initially was not willing to face the persecution of being identified with Christ (Luke 22). Therefore, he was sifted by Satan as the Word of the Lord searched him out (Luke 22:34). As it turned out, even in his denial of Christ, because he was sorrowful and repentant, he would be pruned and purged, and the motives of his heart more refined.

The lack of preparation through prayer in the garden caused Peter to faint in the trial. It was Jesus' praying that caused Peter's faith not to totally fail (Luke 22:32).

Under the dispensation of the Old Covenant, God's people didn't have the help of the Spirit that we enjoy in the New Covenant. He helps us put to death the deeds of the flesh as we stay edified and built up in Him (Rom. 8:13, 1 Cor. 14:4, Jude 20). Nevertheless, the Father will still chasten us and correct us simply because we are His children. And it will hurt.

Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Heb. 12:9-11)

Partaking of pain is necessary to produce partakers of

holiness. Pain doesn't feel good, but it "hurts good." The Father corrects us and chastises us for our own profit. Don't run from it, but subject yourself to it that you may live and yield forth the fruit of righteousness.

Believers who use the aforementioned reasoning such as, "I'm already holy. He's made me holy by His blood. You can't be holy by your own efforts. It's all by grace." Although they understand the legal side of our redemption, they fall short in their understanding of the vital (experiential) side. And so what they are doing is unknowingly running from God's chastisement, hiding from their own flesh instead of employing the help of the Spirit to crucify their flesh and areas of their lives that are hindering their own growth and maturity. Selah.