

Two Paths To Choose From

Threshing Part Six

Oh what joy to become Born again! The wonder of new Life floods our souls as we rejoice that Christ is in us. Yet it does not take very long to figure out that there is still a huge need for more of Jesus. Even after new birth we find ourselves still thinking, reacting and treating others in ways that are hurtful and selfish. As the joy of our salvation fades into the desperate realization that we are still a mess, we begin to wonder what to do. Should we fake it and pretend we are okay? Is it our lot in life to learn acting skills that mask over the ugliness of a hidden inner life that is not Christ? Did Jesus come to live inside of us to train us how to act better? Is the answer to ignore our condition and pretend everything is alright while we know it is not? These are real questions that require real answers. The answers we choose to these questions will determine the course of the rest of our lives. The answer we choose will define the essence of what we become... a vessel of Christ or religious flesh. We must decide how we are going to approach dealing with our need for more of Jesus.

SELF IMPROVEMENT

There are two basic paths that we can choose. They are radically different and lead to completely different locations. We will title our first option as “SELF IMPROVEMENT”. The basic belief of this method is that we can make ourselves better. This is a form of humanism. It encourages us to act more loving and “Christ-like” apart from the Life of Christ as our source. The flesh that Christ died to crucify is now used as the material upon which we build our holiness. This will be a holiness void of God, and utterly defiled. Rather than separating the dross from the Gold, we are trying to make dross gold. Rather than separating the Seed from the chaff, we are trying to make the chaff fruitful like the Seed. This method is cross-less. The flesh that was crucified in Christ on Calvary is now sanctified as acceptable to God. Yet God does not consecrate our flesh, He condemned it and crucified it in His Son. The Old Man is dead, not a co-worker with God (Romans 6:6). “I” am crucified with Christ... not refined or purified.

It is possible to thoroughly condemn the concept of humanism in our belief system while embracing it in our daily approach to dealing with our flesh. From a sincere heart of love for God we may daily work on improving ourselves for His pleasure and service. But we must progress from a sincere desire to truly knowing God’s heart. God is well pleased in HIS SON (Matthew 3:17). Christ in us is our only hope of bring God glory (Colossians 1:27). No matter what our belief and even desire is, the real issue remains... what are we offering up to God, our flesh or His Son?

The path of humanism requires no threshing, because there is no need to separate the chaff from the Seed. The goal is no longer the Seed becoming fruitful, but us looking good / godly at any cost. At this point religion begins to replace Life.

CHRIST FORMED IN US

The next path we will look at is entitled “CHRIST BEING FORMED IN US”. Paul cried out in earnest desire as he travailed for the beloved Galatians to choose this way. In Galatians 4:19 he says, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you”. Paul’s emphasis was on the Seed of

Christ in the Galatians, and their need for that Seed (which is Christ) to grow and form and eventually be fruitful. Paul saw the powerful temptation these people were experiencing as they struggled with influences that exhorted them to make themselves better. Paul knew the path they chose would determine so much in the future expression of the living Christ in and through this church. He knew that simply manipulating their flesh to look better was beguiling them and tempting them away from Christ being their Life expression. These same temptations are with us today. We can feel the same pressures those Galatians felt so many years ago. But the real question is, "Do we love Jesus and want Him to live more than we love looking good?" If our answer to that question is to let Christ live at any cost... then we will open up to the process of Christ being formed in us.

At this point we acknowledge that Christ Himself is the Gold, and we are the dross. Christ is the Treasure, and we are the earthen vessel that contains Him. Christ is the Life, and we are His body. Christ is the Seed, and we are the chaff. Here we see that a dividing begins happening in the heart of the believer. Instead of sanctifying and justifying flesh, we separate it from the Son and begin putting all our hope in Christ being formed in us. At this time we have opened ourselves to the inward application of the Cross. The reality of our death with Christ now begins to penetrate beyond the Book and into our being. We begin to embrace Jesus not only as Savior, but as the very substance of our innermost motives. All our springs want to find their source in Him. We will determine to cleave, believe and remain abiding in Him all through the threshing and conforming process, trusting that in God's time the fruit of Christ's Life will begin to manifest in us (John 15:4). We can abide in Him with perfect peace knowing that, even before fruit comes, we are complete IN Him. We may be tempted to identify with the dross and the chaff, but we must continue to abide in the finished work of His Cross. Instead of thinking, "I am one with my dross", we should rather think, "I am crucified with Christ". We are choosing the path of removal rather than refinement. We are embracing the Cross as the answer, and rejecting any hope in making ourselves better or acceptable, knowing that it is Christ in us that God desires.

THE POWER OF CALVARY APPLIED NOW

Even though Jesus died on Calvary around two thousand years ago, the power of that Cross is still active, reaching into our innermost being with the power of God to transform us. We are all familiar with the scripture in Galatians 2:20 that declares, "I am crucified with Christ". The word "am" in this scripture is a Greek verb that defines a past work with continuing effects NOW. The power of Calvary flows into each moment exacting and executing the practical effects of a work released thousands of years ago. The Cross of Christ was like a nuclear bomb that went off thousands of years ago and is still reverberating right into this present moment. The radium of Calvary is still just as powerful as it ever was to eradicate flesh and bring forth Christ in whosoever chooses to believe and receive its deepest reach. The work of the Cross is not stagnant, impotent, or stuck in a piece of time. With our faith we must embrace the ever active, "I AM crucified." Paul said that the preaching of the Cross is the power of God. The word for "power" used here is a Greek word called "dunamos"... the word that "dynamite" is derived from. In other words, the Cross is like dynamite! If you really want to be touched by God, allow the power of the Cross to be applied to you now. Let the preaching of the Cross reach deep, threshing and refining until everything that is not Christ is exposed and removed, and all that is Him blossoms into eternal fruit and glory!