

Cleaning Up The House

Help!! My House Is A Mess!

How many of us can feel depressed and overwhelmed at times by looking at ourselves and seeing what a mess we are? I know I can relate to that experience! Surely we all know what it is like to greatly desire to bring God glory and bless Him while at the same time staring at insurmountable obstacles in ourselves? At such times we may agree with the old hymn that says God can save a wretch like me, but wonder if He can be glorified through a wreck like me. There are seasons where our lives in the earth can look and feel like a train wreck. Situations, relationships, and inner turmoil that seem unsolvable can drive us to despair. Yet even then, our heart for the Lord will not let go of Jesus or stop hoping that somehow He will be glorified despite our sad condition in the earth. Sometimes we can feel like collapsing in the middle of our messy situations out of sheer frustration and exhaustion. At these times the only solution we may see is simply to pull ourselves up and start cleaning the mess. Yet there is another way and that is what this article is all about.

Determined To Clean My House

In the effort to get rid of our problems and please the Lord, we may begin the process of cleaning ourselves up. Thoughts may come such as, "If I really love the Lord than I will get rid of this problem." With all our heart and strength we may begin to scrub at every dirty mess trying to wash away the spots and blemishes with our own efforts (Ephesians 5:26-27). We may attempt to put things in proper godly order and organize all the unsorted situations. We get busy shining up the walls trying to make ourselves better and better with every stroke. Without realizing it our entire focus can become consumed with ourselves even though it is with the desire to please God. These efforts do not come from a heart that doesn't care about God but from someone who deeply cares and desires to bless Him. Even though that is the case, our attention is more aware of ourselves when we do this than the Lord we love.

My Personal Experience

At this point I would like to interject a personal note. I had recently re-dedicated myself to clean and organize my home. I scrubbed the floors and tried to clean in the hidden corners and crevices. Then I set about to put everything in its proper place and truly organize things. By the end of this time I felt really good about my house. In an odd way, I even began feeling proud about how clean my house was. Now I could boast in my clean and organized office. While I was sitting there feeling really good about my progress, I watched as a huge roach crawled out from under my couch! How could this

be? My house was too clean and organized to have a roach!!! I had done my best and yet there was still this horrible creature crawling around inside my clean home. Although I had done my best, there must have been hidden places and areas where the roach was able to get in and survive! Very simply, no matter how clean my house became, I could still have a roach problem. It could never be perfect.

While my personal experience is just an example in the physical realm, I began to question and consider my way of dealing with “a messy house” in the Lord. Do I believe cleanliness is next to godliness? Can I clean and organize my way to glory? What is true organization to God? Is righteousness the result of human effort? How can I remove every roach when my home has places they hide in, and how can I remove bad attitudes when they inhabit that which is fleshly (carnal)? I began to realize that cleaning myself up was a ceaseless job with no end. God is not satisfied with my organized Christian lifestyle if it is full of roaches!!! God is not impressed with my “proper actions” when they are performed in attitudes that are contrary to the nature of the Lamb. Very specifically, God is not satisfied with anything short of His Son. My house may look clean in my eyes, but is it clean in God’s eyes, and does it bring Him pleasure? My walls may be white but my heart is deceitfully wicked beyond what I can even know! This can feel like a hopeless cause. How does the Lord deal with filthy messes and disorder in His house?

Jesus Cleans House

Let us look in the scriptures where Jesus is found “cleaning” His Father’s house (John 2:14-21). Notice that Jesus was not setting the earthly form of that temple in order, but rather He was running through it with a whip. Jesus was not trying to clean or re-order the temple. He was responding to the fact that this temple was not glorifying His Father. Jesus was asked what sign of authority He could show them that gave Him the right to do this (John 2:18). The proof and sign that Jesus gave to them was, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up”. Jesus here was speaking of the temple of His Body” (John 2:21). The hope He set before us in these scriptures is in His death, burial and resurrection. We can look away from messy houses unto the Body of His resurrection and find true glory.

Not Home Improvement

Jesus did not come down and try to straighten everything up in the earth. Remember, the world has one way of dealing with problems and the Cross of Christ has another. Jesus knew that the old nature was crooked and could never truly bring the Father pleasure. The hope He gave us was that He would raise up a new temple that would be His very own Body, and therefore glorify the Father. It is to this hope that we must look! God didn’t pick up the old creation from its shambles, dust it off and command it to clean itself up. God isn’t in the business of reconstruction but resurrection. Let’s put it plainly... GOD LOVES HIS SON!!! The cleanest most organized temple on planet earth still isn’t Jesus.

Our goal and passion should be to become filled with the life of Christ for we are His Body and Temple. Jesus said He would raise up a temple in Himself that would be His very own Body. Rather than helping us up from the ashes of our earth lives, God raised us up in His Son as a new creation that is bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. When we see the Father's heart for His Son we will no longer be motivated to make ourselves acceptable but seek to find our acceptance in the Beloved (Ephesians 2:6). We must look away from ourselves unto Jesus! He is not our helper but the Head of His risen Body! Our place is to be found in Christ and His place is to be found in us as new Life!

Home improvement shows are popular in the United States, but the Church does not need a home improvement show. We need our eyes opened to see who we are in Christ. God told Ezekiel to "show the house to the house" (Ezekiel 43:10). We must lift up our eyes away from ourselves in the earth to truly see who we are. If our eyes remain fixed upon our old identity, then we will never know the joy of what God has done in Christ and who He has made us in His Son.

That which is flesh is flesh, and that which is spirit is spirit (John 3:6). God did not take fallen man and try to clean him up. God crucified the old man with Christ. God did not organize the old creation to look like the new, he destroyed it. Our hope is not in self improvement but in a whole new identity as members of the risen Son. The old Adamic nature is set apart for destruction, not correction. No matter how ordered I try to make my flesh after the pattern of the heavenly Son, that first man is not the house the Father is looking for (I Corinthians 15:47). That is why I am crucified with Christ rather than improved with Him. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption.

Look Now Toward Heaven

Although the earth may lie in ruins, the New Jerusalem which is from above can never suffer loss. When we fix our eyes upon who we are together in Christ, we can have hope, faith and even love where once there was only fear and division. What we cannot do, God has already done in His Son. What we are striving to become we have already been raised up as through union into Christ. Our goal is no longer to become something, but to enter into what God has already made us in Christ. What we are, we are by the grace of God who has accepted us in the Beloved. We can find rest in His work and know that we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand. Instead of weeping over our lack the barren can rejoice in hope! We are not in bondage to our lack, but united to Christ in His fullness. We access that fullness through faith and not works. Rather than becoming agents of our own righteousness we are as branches that partake of all the root and fatness of the True Vine Himself.

Instead of looking into our cleaning closet for the answer, we must look into heavenly places in Christ Jesus and see that a glorious union has already taken place. All of the richness and vastness of His resources are ours through union (Ephesians 1:3). We are the

children of promise for we are born out from that realm of plenty. We are born from above (John 3:3). We must lift up our eyes like Abraham did, and see all the fullness of the heavens and know that so shall our Seed be, which Seed is Christ (Genesis 15:5). Our true identity is found above in Christ, and the Seed of all that fullness dwells within by Christ and will bring forth by promise. Having begun in the spirit let us not now try to make ourselves perfect by the flesh (Gal. 3:4). If we truly walk in the Spirit and sow to the Spirit, than the fruit will follow.

True Zeal For The Father's House

As a bride we need to be zealous to embrace our identity in Christ above our messy earth life. In John 15:4 Jesus tells us that if we abide in Him than He will abide in us. We can be clothed upon with true holiness as we put off the old man and his deeds, and put on Christ. Consider that even if our lives in the earth outwardly seem fine and decent, true zeal will consume someone to cast off the best of the flesh to be found in Christ alone. A mindset of accepting that which is not the Son needs to be driven out. All flesh needs to be set apart for destruction and not reconstruction, for the cross has put away the old. Why rebuild what God has already thrown down? The only House that will stand is the one that is raised up in His Son. Until we have found the House that God alone has built in His Son and abide there, we build in vain. All true manifestation of spiritual life and fruit can only come through union into the Son and not the labors of our flesh. As that which is from above finds appearance in the earth, than we are not building something for God but being the vehicles for His expression through union.

The Order of the Law

When Paul shared along these lines he was accused of just letting sin abound. Yet remember, Paul emphasized the need for tutors and governors while the heir was yet a child. But these things were only temporary until the Seed which is Christ came forth. They must never replace our true hope of glory, which is Christ in us. The law becomes a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. There is a time for us all when we are kept under the law, shut up unto the faith that afterwards will be revealed. Yet the law can not give life, and only the Life of Christ will fulfill its righteous demands. That is why our hearts eventually must turn away from our own resources and face towards the Lord. In that heart condition we are not rebelling against the law, but allowing it to turn our hearts towards Jesus that we might be changed. It is important that we do not despise the order that the law gives during the time period of waiting for the Seed. It keeps us while we wait for the spirit of adoption. Then, in the time appointed of the Father; the house that was once ordered by tutors and governors will be filled with the Spirit of the Son. At that time we will no longer be serving an external law but fulfilling it by Christ within as our hearts cry out Abba Father (Galatians 4 1-7). All creation groans waiting for this manifestation of the sons of God! We will no longer be servants but sons by Christ. Moses (who brought the law) was a faithful servant in all his house,

but Christ is the fulfillment as a Son over His own house, whose house we are! (Heb. 3:4-6)

The Order of the House

There is a House that brings the Father pleasure. There is a Temple that produces pure and continual worship by its very essence and nature. There is “sameness of kind” in this Temple rather than flesh striving to act properly. “Sameness of kind” refers to the nature of the Son filling the Temple of His Body rather than the foreign element of man’s flesh trying to produce something. This Temple glorifies the Father, for it is the Body of His Son. Christ is all and in all here for He fills this Temple. Only by Him can we please God. Our best efforts will still bring failure for only the Son pleases the Father.

A body, as a temple, reflects whoever it belongs to. Therefore, the order of the House which is the risen Son emanates from His own being. What we once labored in the flesh to produce will now come forth by nature, for we are His Body. Because Christ is filling the Temple of His own Body, no man stands to minister in his own strength, but all are overshadowed by the glory of the One Who is the Life. When we see Him in His Temple, we will see that we are not the One and fall down in our own wretchedness (Isaiah 6). Only One fills this place, and His presence orders all things. No man will clean this Temple, only the Son will fill it full of true holiness, which is God alone. We will stop trying to clean the wrong house and be swallowed up of the one true habitation of God, which is the risen Son. As our eyes see the glory of God in His Temple, we will not be strengthened for service, but weakened unto death. Then our emphasis will be Christ as our Life, the Son Who fills His own House. He will walk in us, and we will know it was the Son and not our own strength and effort. No flesh shall glory in His presence, for he that glories shall glory in the Lord alone (I Cor. 1:29-31).

Hopeless Situations or Hope In Resurrection?

Remember in John 2:14-21 where Jesus said that He would raise the temple up in three days? Three days! This astonished the people around Him for it had taken 46 years for them to build it. Let’s think about this in practical everyday terms that relate to our lives right now. A temple is built up of many bricks that have come together as a habitation (Ephesians 2:21-22). The Body of Christ is made up of many members that share one Life. In the functioning of the temple on earth there can be many problems. There can be division, irreconcilable differences, problems and issues. Jesus found people using the house of God for merchandizing. There are countless situations that in our eyes can seem either hopeless or that will take years and years to work out in the earth. Like the tower of Babel, we want to build up something that will reach the heavens, but that is not how God works. Jesus knew that what He was looking for and dying for was not a cleaned up earthly temple built by the efforts of man. Jesus was going to raise up in Himself the Bride and habitation that He had longed for. It wasn’t going to take Him 46 six years to come down here and work with us through every issue and problem. It was going to take

Him three days,... one to crucify the old earthly form, one to bury it away forever, and one to raise up in Himself a whole new creation. After those three days were accomplished He sat down for the work was finished. As we sit down and abide in that reality, then eventually we will be able to also walk and stand in it!

The Togetherness Of it

Ephesians 2:6 says that He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Romans chapter six tells us that we have been planted together in the in the likeness of His death, and together raised up from the dead. What we couldn't and still can't manage to build and make work together, God has already done for us in His Son. In other words, this temple took only three days to build, not a lifetime of human effort. Our eyes must see the temple God loves. Our hearts must identify together there and not in the impossible messes we find in the earth. God did not clean up the messy old earth temple, He has raised up a new one in Himself. Christ is not divided. The Jerusalem that is from above is at peace, full of the Prince of peace. Look up to her for she is the mother of us all (Galatians 3:26). Find your completion and rest as you embrace your identity as one with the Risen Christ and with His members. We are children of the free! We are born after the Spirit and not by the labors of the flesh. The Jerusalem which is above is not in bondage, she shines with His glory and is tempered together in His love. As we look up and see this glorious risen temple the barren will rejoice and receive grace and enter into His rest. Sometimes we can clean and search in the wrong house looking for our lost coin rather than lifting up our eyes to behold the risen Lord. His raised Body is the work of God and we can dwell above in the reality of that work. Our eyes will no longer see seven churches on the earth each with different issues, but one Lamb's wife from above bearing the glory of God.

Conclusion

We have now come to Zion (Hebrews 12:22)! Right this moment by faith we can turn our hearts to identify in her and be free from bondage to self improvement. We can find our unity there. We can find our order in the Son. His Spirit will fill us and all things will flow by Life. It is already finished and now it is ours to simply access by faith! We seek a city whose foundation and maker is God and not the work of our own hands. We can leave the shambles of our best attempts to enter into the Land of Promise, a heavenly city that is ours by faith. Be persuaded of this identity and embrace your heavenly citizenship by faith. Look up and believe and eventually you will see the glory of God manifest. Drink in from that fullness, partake of that provision, and embrace with faith every word from God's heart concerning our identity in the risen Son.

May our hearts be encouraged and our eyes lifted up to behold the beauty of the Lord in His temple. When we have a question, may we enquire for the answers in His risen temple (Psalm 27:4). His way is in His sanctuary, not in our situations (Psalm 77:13). Here we will find rest for our souls in the middle of strife in the earth. Practical solutions

and true holiness come from a walk in the Spirit that sows life and peace into otherwise impossible turmoil. May the Father be glorified through His Son and may the bride from above bless the Lamb her husband!***