

THE CROSS AND DROSS

Introduction

There are those who desire the Lord in a deeper way, and find themselves crying out for more of Jesus. Prayers begin to move from God meeting our needs to becoming a vessel that meets His needs. God answers these prayers many times in ways that can be surprising and confusing if we do not understand the wonderful work He is doing in us. Let us look at the process of purification and refinement that is necessary if we want to be a vessel that the Lord can use.

God is Answering Our Heart's Cry!

*"He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness" (Malachi 3:3),
"And the Levites were purified..." (Numbers 8:21a).*

As we seek the Lord in this heart condition we begin to find the inner-longings of His heart, and set ourselves to fulfill His needs. We choose to exist for Him, and we dedicate our lives to this end. In a true way, we begin functioning as a priest consecrating ourselves to the Lord. And yet, within the priesthood there is not just a consecration but a purification that must happen in order to truly fulfill those vows. (Numbers 8:21). Many of us are familiar with the consecration aspect of dedicating ourselves to God, but few embrace the purification process that must happen afterwards to make those vows effectual and practical. For example, our heart may respond to the Lord in a way that brings us to our knees where we express our love for the Lord. In our prayer we may vow to God that we will be His for the rest of our life, and that no matter what the cost we want Jesus to live through us. That prayer is like a vow of consecration. How many of us pray these prayers, only to find ourselves back in an old rut of living selfishly later on? The purification process is God answering those prayers. He is responding to our vows by working to bring forth more of Jesus in us.

Two Views of Purification

*"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until CHRIST BE FORMED IN YOU" (Galatians 4:19).
"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (II Corinthians 4:7).*

There are two TOTALLY different ways of viewing the process of purification and refining. The first way is to begin to set a course for God to make us more loving and pure and Christ-like. This is basically the path of self-improvement and is a form of humanism. We say, "I want to be more like Jesus", but is this communicating that we should try to make our flesh act Christ-like rather than letting Christ Himself be formed in us (Gal. 4:19)? This may seem like a slight difference in wording, but what people might

comprehend when they hear it worded in that way can lead them down a path of self improvement rather than seeking Christ as their Life. The second way, which is the focus of this article, is to realize that CHRIST HIMSELF in us is the pure and our old selfish nature is the DROSS. We are the earthen vessel that can contain the precious treasure of Christ (*II Cor. 4:7*) or the dross of our old sinful nature. I believe that the scriptures bear testimony that God does not consecrate sinful flesh, but crucified it in His Son (*Gal. 2:20*). Whichever way we believe sets the course we take after consecration. Once we make our vows we either seek for the gold of Christ to be formed in us, or spend our time and energy trying to be “good-enough” (gold-enough) for God to use us.

Purification Comes After Consecration

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial” which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12-13).

“As the refining pot for silver and the furnace for gold [bring forth all the impurities of the metal], so let a man be in his trial of praise” (Proverbs 27:21).

Once we consecrate ourselves to the Lord we hope for a glorious season of closeness and communion with Christ. Yet usually what occurs is a season of fiery trials that manifest all of our bad attitudes! Because we forget that purification is the next step after consecration... we think it strange that our tender vows are answered with the refiners fires (*I Pet. 4:12-13*)! Yet this is exactly what should happen. We should expect the dross to be brought to the surface so that the pure gold of Christ can be formed within. These fiery trials will no longer be thought of as “strange –fire”, but places where Christ’s glory shall be revealed.

A refiner's fire is a fire that is so hot that it causes any metal being heated upon it to be separated from the dross that is within it. The liquid metal gets heated up, and the impurities rise to the surface, whereupon the silversmith then removes the dross. As more dross is consumed or removed, the refined metal is purer, more precious to the Refiner. So it is with the consecrated heart. The fiery trial serves the purposes of purification by separating what is us (the dross) from what is Christ in us (the gold). If we want to be the treasure and seek to glory in our own flesh, then this process is excruciating and depressing. The more we are confronted with our own failure and ugliness under trial, the more our pride is wounded. If our hope is in ourselves, then we are left hopeless and defeated. But if our heart’s desire truly is for more of Jesus, then we are able to be with our Father, the Refiner, in the purification process. We delight that our flesh is being exposed and removed to make place for more of Christ to form and fill His vessel, temple, and Body!

The Refiner Is Our Father

“O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard: Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved. For Thou, O God, hast proved us: Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; Thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place” (Psalm 66:8-12).

*“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee”
(Isaiah 43:2).*

Through our heart covenant and vows with the Lord, we choose to put ourselves into the hands of God, our Refiner. We must remember that our Refiner is also our Father. He is working to bring forth His Son in us (*Roms 8: 28-29*). All through the refining process our Father, the Refiner, views us as those who are joined to Jesus and His very own Body. It is important to know this because in the purification process we experience A LOT of DROSS coming to the surface. We are strongly tempted to identify with our DROSS rather than the Cross that has made us one with Jesus and partakers of His Life! We must accept God’s view that we are in His Son, by His grace alone (*Eph. 1:6*)! Peter address those going through the fiery trials of refinement as “Beloved”, for Peter knew God’s heart of love towards us, and how we must remember our Father’s heart towards us as we are passing through the flames (*1 Pet. 4:12*).

We must also remember that we are not in these fiery trials alone, for the Lord Himself encompasses us with His care and covering during the process (*Is. 43:2 + Ps. 66:8-12*). Christ is IN us and begins to come forth through us even in the midst of the flames. A great example of this happening is the three Hebrew children in the book of Daniel chapter 3 verses 19-25. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were bound up and cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace that was heated up seven times hotter than usual. Yet they were not alone in those exceedingly hot flames; for as King Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace he declared, *“I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”* IN THE FLAMES the Son of God came forth and was seen by many! God was in control and brought forth His Son through the trial. They were not alone... and neither are we.

The Dross is For Removal, Not Identification!

*“Take away the dross from the silver,
and there shall come forth a vessel for the refiner” (Proverbs 25:4).*
“And I will turn My hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin” (Isaiah 1:25).
“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:6).

Dross is defined as, “A worthless or dangerous material that should be removed”. The dross is brought to the surface through this process for REMOVAL not REPAIR! The refiner simply skims it off the surface and discards it. It is material that has no purpose any longer. Isn’t that a good description of our old nature after it has already been crucified

with Christ (*Roms. 6:6*)? What is the purpose of allowing the motives and attitudes of an old dead creation to linger in a vessel set apart for Christ? We are no longer of the old creation with its deeds and attitudes (*"Lie not one to another, having put off the old man with his practices" Col3:9*). When these reactions surface in us we must "skim them off" by faith in the finished work of the Cross (*"And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and appetites and desires" Gal. 5:24*).

The Cross Dealt With The Dross

*"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin..."
(II Corinthians 5:21a).*

In our prayers of consecration we choose to set ourselves apart as a vessel for the gold, and not for the dross. In order to fully embrace that commitment we must FIX our eyes on the Cross. We must believe that the CROSS DEALT WITH THE DROSS! The bible says that Jesus became sin for us (*II Cor. 5:21*). Jesus bore in His body on Calvary's tree all that was rejected of God. The Father's ultimate remedy for the dross of our old nature was to remove it forever through the death of His Son. When our dross begins to appear through the trials, we have a choice to make. Do we fix our gaze upon the Cross of Christ and honor His death by believing He put away our dross on Calvary? Or do we believe the report of our reactions and bad attitudes and say the Cross failed in relation to our dross? If we turn our hearts and eyes upon Jesus, and lift up His precious death above all we see, feel and experience in that moment, then our soul will cleave to God's work at Calvary rather than identifying in the dross of a nature that *was* crucified in Christ. Our faith in the Cross gives the Refiner the freedom to go deep into our inward parts and remove all that is not truly the gold of Christ in us. David cried out for God to do this work in him (*Psalms 51:6 + Psalm 139:23*). Love for the Lord and trust in Him enables us to be open to the glorious work of the Cross as it is applied to our deep inward parts where Christ is meant to dwell. The process becomes excruciatingly painful if we are identified with the dross that God is trying to remove. If we accept that we are not the dross, but that Christ is our Life now, then we allow God to expose and remove the things that hinder Christ from forming in us.

TAKE YOUR DROSS TO THE CROSS!

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him" (James 1:12).

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21).

We must embrace the work of the cross to such a degree that we say in our hearts, *"That dross is not who I am any more. I am now one with Jesus, and I am going through this*

process for the Life of Christ that is in me to grow and form and fill my vessel. The Cross put away this dross through the death of Christ, and I put off this dross by my active faith in His finished work". Remember, the finished work of the Cross must be applied in practical daily ways. When Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ", the tense of the Greek verb he used meant that he was crucified in the past with continuing effects now in the present. The work of Calvary flows forth with living streams that reach into our lives each moment, exacting and executing the practical effects of a work accomplished through Christ's death thousands of years ago. The work of the cross is not stagnant, impotent, or stuck in a piece of time never to reach into our present dilemma. Paul said the word of the Cross is like a powerful blast of dynamite to someone who actively believes in it (*I Cor. 1:18*). In other words, we must actively apply the work of the Cross to the dross that is appearing. If we believe that Christ crucified the old man and his deeds, then we also choose to "put off" the old man with his deeds. Remember, the dross rises to the surface for removal not repair.

When we see those old dead attitudes come forth in our reactions, we are not supposed to believe that the Cross did not work for us, and try to improve our behavior. We are to reckon those things as old dead fruit coming from a tree that was cut down at Calvary. Paul said we are to "reckon those things dead" (*Roms. 6:11*). The dross may continue to rise and rise and we may begin to feel exhausted and defeated... but we must continue to lift high the banner of Christ and Him crucified. We only strengthen the dross when we identify and abide in union with it. We must separate ourselves from the scum that is surfacing and cleave to Christ our new identity. Jesus said, "Abide in me, and I will abide in you" (*Jn. 15:4*). In time, if we continue to abide in Christ even before fruit manifests, the dross falls off and gold emerges instead. We must stay the course, believing in God's view and method every step of the way, even before our change has come.

Conclusion

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: "
(1 Peter 1:6-8).

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

"The foundation [stones] of the wall of the city were ornamented with all of the precious stones. The first foundation [stone] was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony (or white agate), the fourth emerald"
(Revelation 21:19).

I pray this booklet brings encouragement and strength to those who are despairing in the process of refinement. If we realize that what we are going through is not just temporal pain and failure without purpose, but a part of our eternal destiny to bring forth Christ,.. then there is blessed consolation and a glorious cause behind it all. Our divine and true purpose is to bring forth Christ. We will feel faith rise as we begin to look at the eternal end of what we are going through (*II Cor. 4:16-18 + Roms. 8:18*). These fiery trials are an incredibly important part of the refining process, and what they work of Christ in us will be glorious for worlds without end. At the end of the Bible, in the book of Revelation you find a glorious city, the New Jerusalem, built with precious gemstones that contain the Lamb Himself (*Rev. 21:19*). These gemstones represent those who endured the process of refinement and allowed all the fire and pressure to bring forth Christ in them. We must see that God is building us into a habitation for Himself that will exist far beyond this lifetime. We are not just randomly suffering under great pressures and hot fires, rather we are being crafted into a glorious habitation for the Son that will stand throughout all eternity. Embrace God's purpose and heart in all that you are going through and allow Christ to be formed in you! There is great glory at the end of the refining process and this is our hope. Colossians 1:27 declares that it is, "Christ IN us, the hope of glory!" May God be expressed, magnified, and honored as we choose to allow His Life to form in us. May we see God's heart of LOVE as He brings forth His Son in us. Amen!

A Prayer For Those In The Midst Of Trial And Dross

Lord, hear our prayer from Solomon's mines,
from David's cave,
from the hidden places where sons are made.

That all this suffering and loss,
this existence of dross,
would render gold... for ages untold.

To the heart of the Lamb from the chambers of man
who have yielded to
correction, detection,... rejection.

Who have withstood depression, dejection, oppression
to stay with You till the forming is done,
till the Son has come
and we abide as one.

To the temporal view we say, "NO!" you must go.

To the view of God's heart we cleave,... will not leave.

We will hide and abide and stay inside.... the One who was slain
to give us His name.

And from our hiding place, our shelter from the outward disgrace of
our wrong actions and attitudes,

we huddle as one, awaiting the Son,
being tempered in love

even before the change has come.