

Part Three: Flowing With God in the Seasons of the Harvest

The Necessity of Conformity

Our past articles have been discussing the very real need for every born-again believer to go through a process allowing Christ to be formed in them. The reality and eternal importance of this process is a huge part of our calling during our time on this earth. Can you imagine planting a seed and then immediately plucking it up and setting it out for display, or serving it for dinner? What would be missing if a mother birthed a son and then instantly put that baby into the army to fight for his country? It is obvious that the son would lack the maturity, growth, strength and formation necessary to function in such a manner. Fruitfulness requires a season of growth. Nature itself testifies of this process time and again. Before a caterpillar can fly with wings it must enter into a cocoon allowing a deep and inward metamorphosis to take place. Once this inward transformation is given time and place to occur, this creature will finally be able to give outward expression to its innermost nature. If the conformity stage is skipped over in our examples, you will simply have seeds trying to be fruit, babies trying to be men, and caterpillars trying to fly without wings. These things seem silly and completely irrational, but what is the difference between these examples and Christians who try to overcome, minister, and bear fruit apart from the Life of Christ being formed in them?

Waste or God's Wisdom?

Is it a waste of time to allow a seed to grow, a child to mature, and a caterpillar to transform? Is it really loss to allow a piece of precious metal to pass through fire in order to remove impurities? Is it cruel and unnecessary to remove wasteful materials so that the refined metal can become useful to its Master? Is a parent a fool for taking time to raise and discipline his children so they might know and grow in the family nature? Is a farmer just wasting time when he sows the seeds he gathers from the threshing bin? When a seed falls into the ground and dies deep beneath the Earth's surface, it may look and feel like loss and death only, but if you wait long enough, increase will eventually burst from that dark tomb of dirt and bring forth a fruitful tree (John 12:24)! The problem with this method is that the change does not come instantly or without cost. If our highest goal is to look good in the eyes of man, build our reputation in the community, and appear effective and fruitful immediately in order to validate our spirituality, then will we find ways to avoid this process. In essence, we will find ways to avoid God bringing forth His Son in us and choose instead to offer up our best flesh, which is an offering that God has already rejected. We may embrace the work of the Cross at salvation when we received God's Seed into our hearts at new birth, and then reject the work of the Cross in conformity when it is time to allow Calvary to have a deeper work within. Another way of saying this may be that we accept God's Son at salvation, but reject Him in the time of allowing Him to mature in us.

Counting the Cost and Resting in Love

Once we have counted the cost and found Christ more valuable than reputation, ambition, and personal glory, we will pray; "Lord no matter what the cost may be, let your Son be formed in me." Our focus will turn from immediate fruit to the Father's wisdom as He nurtures His Son in us. We will begin to see all things in the light of the eternal view, and reckon heavy trials as light affliction in comparison with the Son who is growing within (II Cor. 4:17-18). We will be willing to go through whatever it takes in order for our fruit to truly be Christ and not us. In essence, our hearts will be prepared to flow with the Lord in this season of Christ being formed in us. Like Ruth, we will be able to rest with the Lord even during times of tribulation and threshing (Ruth 3). We will know His heart during this process and trust His skillful hands to work all things together towards the glorious end of an increase of Christ in us (Rom. 8:28-29). Rather than becoming caught up in the commotion of the threshing floor, we will find peace at the feet of our beloved Boaz who represents Christ. We must know that our Lord's desire is towards us in all of these trials, and find comfort in His love.

The Seasons of the Harvest

We must understand that to receive a harvest requires a process. It is interesting to note that the calendar of Israel is based on the feasts of the harvest. In essence, it is a farming calendar. Yet, in reality it is the testimony of a people who based their times and seasons on the maturity of the seed (the Seed representing Christ IN us (Gal.3:16). The first feast is Passover, representing a Lamb dying, God's Seed being sown. The last feast, tabernacles, celebrates a mature harvest being gathered into the barn. Is our calendar based on ministry works, church events, observing the times and seasons of this earth, or God's Seed in us growing? Do each of us know where we are on God's calendar according to the seasons of His Life forming in us? Once we understand the season we are in, we can easily flow with God in that season and understand the wonder of His working in us at that stage of maturity.

Flowing with the Lord in the Seasons of Conformity

There is a time to sow, a time to thresh, and a time to winnow. We must not be threshing that which is to be winnowed, or sowing that which is to be threshed. In upcoming articles we look at these different stages more in depth, but for now let us simply acknowledge the necessity for the different stages and seasons of growth. Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 says, *"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted:"*. All living things and all living relationships pass through seasons as they grow and mature. It is part of the cycle of life and it is part of being one with the LIVING Christ and not just a doctrinal religion. If we comprehend from God the spiritual ramifications of threshing, then we can choose to press past our depressing lack to the glorious hope of the Seed of Christ forming within us. There is rest and hope in understanding that if we turn our hearts towards the Lord for Christ to be formed in us, then even our worst mistakes and failures can be used towards the glorious end of Christ's increase. Though we will have to bear the oftentimes painful consequences of sowing to our flesh in this earth, we can still maintain a heart towards the Lord and a desire for Jesus to live through us.

Once we embrace the season we are in, we can flow with God in that season. What would have brought a sense of fatigue or failure now brings anticipation of New Life. II Corinthians 4:16 says, *"There is no thought of fatigue or failure or surrender here; the outward man begins to give place before the advent of that inner man who is forever renewed, even whilst the outward man shows the evidences of death. A far more exceeding weight of glory and hope is coming into the light, and completely counterbalancing and outweighing these temporary trials"*. Once we see what is really going on, we are able to let the outward man perish and quit trying to repair him! We can shed that mortal coil of our old man with his abilities and strengths, knowing that the power of an endless Life will be our limitless resource from within. Like a tree in the autumn, we can allow our leaves to fall away and die off, letting the old be stripped as we shed that dead skin knowing that the sap of Jesus' Life within will bring forth fruit in His season. We no longer need to justify, identify, hold onto, or offer up what God has crucified, rejected, and threshed away in His Son. Even as we bear the consequences for our own foolish choices, we can still turn our hearts to God and cry out for more of Jesus to grow in us! Nothing needs to stop our hearts from panting after more of the living God filling us, His very own Body.

Beloved Ones of God, let the song of the Lord's desire to dwell in you fill your heart always! We can sing in the shedding and hope in the sowing! *Psalm 126: 5-6 "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."* May we shed our tears to water God's Seed in us, and not to mourn our corruption. It is time to bring forth New Life.... His Life!

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