

“The Winnowing of the Holy Spirit”

Threshing Part 4

Overwhelmed With the Chaff

There are times in all of our lives when we wonder, “How can God possibly glean anything out of this terrible situation?” In times of failure we may think, “Once again, my life falls short.” Many troubles and tribulations over a long period of time can begin to break down our faith and weary our souls. One failure after another begins to stack up, burdening our tender consciences with an identity outside of Christ. Memory upon memory of heartbreak and hurt feelings begins to clog our thought-life. For some, a sense of desperation turns into a numb acceptance that this is just the way it will always be. Hope for change falls into quiet resignation. The heart of God in His passion to form Christ in us becomes overcome and hidden away as we look only at the temporal realm and the cluttered threshing floor of our Earth circumstances. In a true sense it is as if piles of chaff are heaped up so high that we have forgotten that the Seed of Christ is hidden in there too! To us during these times, our reality becomes the sense of doom that our overwhelming trials bring rather than the flame of eternal destiny that the Seed of Christ within us carries. Our gaze drops from God’s face to our failures. Our eyes focus intently upon “the things which are seen” forgetting the transforming beauty of the “things that are not seen” (II Cor. 4:18). We leave the ministry of eternity to fall into the desperation of the temporal. This condition can grip us for a lifetime if we let it, pressing us into a depression of seemingly meaningless trials. Yet at any moment our hearts can arise from deep within, beneath the crush of the memories and the chaff of many failures, and cry out, “Father, I believe you are above all of this and even able to use all of these things to bring forth more of Jesus in me and in us. You are God above my failures and above my hurts and fears. You do more than forgive me and heal me... You bring forth a glorious harvest of Christ through me and use all these things to fertilize and cultivate my heart for His increase. Open my eyes Lord, to the work You are doing in my life. I want to lift up my gaze back to Your heart and eternal purpose in me.”

The Winnowing of the Holy Spirit

As our heart turns back to God in this way, the winds of the Holy Spirit come, moving again with the eternal purpose of God’s heart. It is the time of our “spiritual winnowing” and as we will see, this is an extremely important part of the threshing process. The

technical farming process of threshing tells us that after the seed has been separated from the chaff, the chaff needs to be blown away. Winnowing is a huge part of the threshing process. Winnowing uses air fans to blow away the chaff and dust from the grain. We can see how this is a shadow of the spiritual process of threshing and winnowing. Once the true Seed (which is Christ) has matured from our trials and tribulations, the chaff is no longer necessary. From some of our past experiences, we can point where God was forming His Son. When that trial has done its job, it becomes chaff. However, it is human tendency to brood over our past trial, which causes the chaff to clutter our hearts. The time comes when the chaff needs to be blown away by the tender winds of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit begins to blow upon the chaff, reminding us of how all those failures convinced us that we are not the Son or the Glory that the Father wants. Branded into our being now is the reality that our flesh, our good works, and our attempts at being godly are like the chaff that needs to be separated from the Seed of Christ through all those trials. Before these trials we thought we were something special; we focused on our own ability rather than the life of the Seed of Christ in us. Now all hope, glory and increase goes to the Seed alone. Our ground is made ready for Christ and His fullness only. We are prepared for Jesus to live in us in a way we have never been before... all because of the threshing these hard times work in us. Once again, threshing is the process of separating the chaff from the seed, our flesh from Christ. We remember that to God it was never about our failures or even our victories... but about His Son being able to grow and live in us. The Holy Spirit reminds us afresh and anew that "all these things HAVE worked together for the good of Christ being formed in us" because we do love God and His purpose for His Son in us (Romans 8:28). We are ready for Christ alone to be our strength, our righteousness and our Life. Yes our ground FEELS plowed and exhausted.... but now, like never before, it is GOOD ground ready for the Seed of Christ to grow.

And so the Spirit of God begins to blow away the excess clutter caused by these temporal trials from our hearts and minds (Isaiah 41:16). He is winnowing the chaff into the wind so that only the Seed will remain. The threshing has done its separating work. The chaff of old memories, hurts, and ways of relating begin to be carried away from our identity and heart in the cleansing winds of the Holy Spirit. He is preparing us as the temple of God to be made ready for the Life of Jesus to fill us. These piles of chaff were filling the temple where God is meant to dwell. In order for the Son to form and grow and fill His temple these lingering elements of past threshing need to be removed. Oh, what joy to yield to the Holy Spirit in His winnowing work. He will not only blow out the old with its excess, but He will show us who we now are in union with Christ as vessels of His Life (John 14:16-20), (Isaiah 21:10).

Winnowing in Relationships

Winnowing is something that can apply to all relationships, whether it is your marriage, family relationships or friendships. This particularly applies when people are gathered together because of Jesus. The relationship may not be built yet, but these two people have “gathered” together because of a mutual love for Jesus and for each other. Yet the closer they draw the more “dross” comes to the surface. The more they try to relate to one another the more the chaff appears as it is threshed out in daily trials and tribulations. But, like dross that emerges from the refining fires, that dross is not the core of the relationship! Remember, there is the gold of Christ in there, and the Seed of His Life deep within. There is a preciousness not yet revealed or formed that defines what this relationship really consists of and eternally will be.

There is a tempering together that will happen once Jesus comes out from the threshing, once He emerges from the fire. He will draw, knit and forge that relationship together in a oneness that is Him, which no gates of hell can destroy. There is no trial or tribulation that will undo what the Lord has built when He has formed His Son between us. We must not be discouraged in the threshing. Try not to get burnt or disheartened in the refining, “Think it not strange” that you can’t get along with those that you were meant to get along with (I Peter 4:12). Allow the dross to come forth, let the chaff be threshed out. Let all the elements of our flesh and old nature be removed, but REMEMBER that this is part of the process God uses to BRING FORTH HIS SON IN US in an eternal and formed way!

In time the winds of the Spirit will blow the chaff away like dust carried away from our hearts and minds. The dross of hurt caused by the fleshly ways of relating will be skimmed away and discarded. What will remain will be something that is eternal. That relationship can become something that will be built, solid, and filled with the glory of God. That relationship at its core will bear Christ, not just in this life... but forever more.