

Spiritual Lassitude

In only one field of human interest are we slow and apathetic, that is in the field of personal religion, for some strange reason our enthusiasm flags.

People, including church-going people, habitually approach the matter of their personal relationship with the Creator God in a dull, half-hearted way which is altogether out of keeping with their general temperament and wholly inconsistent with the importance of the subject.

It is true that there is a lot of religious activity among those who are part of a church fellowship, devotional hours to camping trips or picnics, fundraising events to ministerial breakfasts, all of these semi-social events are carried on with great effort and enthusiasm.

But as soon as we enter the sacred precincts of our personal religion, away from the crowd, we suddenly lose all enthusiasm.

If there is any part of human experience that is by its very nature worthy to challenge the mind, engross our thoughts and bring our total life into focus, it is the reality that revolves around the person of Jesus Christ. If He is who and what the Christian message declares Him to be, then the thought of Him should be the most exciting, the most stimulating thought to enter the human mind.

Ephesians 5:18 [New King James] *“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,”*

It is not hard to understand the statement of Paul where he joins wine and the Holy Spirit in one verse.

When the Holy Spirit presents the reality of Jesus Christ to our inner vision it has an exhilarating effect on our heart [motivating force of our physical body] and our “human spirit” [Job 32:18; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11] in the same way wine does on our physical body.

In fact a Holy Spirit filled person may literally dwell in a state of mild spiritual inebriation.

The Creator God dwells in a state of perpetual enthusiasm, filled with His original goal of creating a family of beings with whom He could share His life and love.

Genesis 1:26-27 [New King James] *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”*

Every physical human being is created in the “image” of the Creator God; the Hebrew word “*tselem*” means resemblance, shadow, outward form, material representation. This can be created instantly as it was with Adam, [**Genesis 2:7**] but the second part of this creation, the Hebrew word “*demûwth*” meaning manner, attributes, model, character, **cannot** be created instantly, for it is the result of time being spent in the presence of the Being whose character we wish to reflect.

Galatians 5:22-25 [New King James] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”*

These “fruits” of the Holy Spirit who is one Person of the Godhead, depict the very character of God, and only as we follow His lead will we begin to take on these characteristics and begin to be formed in the “likeness” of the Godhead.

No wonder the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost as a sound of rushing mighty wind, and sat in tongues of fire on every forehead, [Acts 2:1-4] in doing so He was acting in character with His position as one Person of the enthusiasm-filled Godhead.

Whatever else happened at Pentecost, one thing cannot be missed by the most casual observer was the sudden up-surfing of moral enthusiasm, those first disciples were enthusiastic to the point of complete abandon.

Revelation 3:14-22 [New King James] *“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.””*

This low level of enthusiasm among any Christian fellowship or personal Christian may have a significance far deeper than we are willing to believe, rejection by Jesus Christ unless we repent of this attitude in our religious life.

There are certain causes to this lack of enthusiasm –

A deadened sense of sin –

The very word “*sin*” is **not** in good standing in present-day philosophy and psychology.

The intellectuals have placed us on the defensive and have made us ashamed to believe in sin as a reality, not in keeping with our advanced scientific knowledge.

The relativity of morals has been taught to our young for a long time to give the idea to affect the whole concept of right and wrong.

Hence there is no sharp line drawn between good and evil, even among people who are part of a Christian church fellowship.

The false “*scientific*” concept of evolution has helped this downward concept of no clear dividing line between right and wrong for it seeks to prove there is no need for a Creator God who will call us to account for our life, and judge if we are fit to be given eternal life or eternal death.

The result of the message to just “*accept Jesus Christ*” is to do so with **little or no** real conviction of sin and hence without radical repentance.

John 16:5-8 [New King James] *“But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:”*

Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit to accomplish three things in the lives of all whom God is calling at this time for their opportunity for salvation, [John 6:44; John 15:14-16].

But the essential active presence of the Holy Spirit is only for those who obey, [Acts 5:32].

“Accepting Christ” is **not** an “over-the-counter insurance policy,” it involves a complete change of life, that shows just how grateful we are for what God the Father has done for us through His Son Jesus Christ, extending His love and mercy towards us.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”

The Greek word translated “bodies” is “soma” meaning whole life, physical body, mind and “human spirit,” [Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11].

This is the starting point of really “accepting Christ,” for this total surrender to Him as Lord as well as Saviour will motivate the real conversion work of the Holy Spirit in us.

Romans 12:2 [NIV] “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

The re-education of our minds away from this world towards the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Luke 14:26-27, 33 [New King James] “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” ... “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”

The Greek word translated “hate” is “misēō” meaning to love less by comparison, [John 13:34-35].

No personal experiential encounter with the eternal Creator God –

This is only ours when the above two debilitating attitudes of mind have been set aside.

We have examples of this personal encounter with God in His Word, the Christian Bible. These are not alike except in their spiritual content and their clear and lasting effect upon the individual heart and mind.

Abram fell on his face and God talked with him, [Genesis 17:1-7].

Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God, [Exodus 3:1-6].

The Word of God, the Christian Bible, itself grew out of such personal experiences.

The apostle John fell at the feet of Jesus Christ when he experienced in vision a personal encounter with Him as the resurrected King of kings and Lord of lords, [Revelation 1:10-17].

This personal encounter is weak or non-existent among Christians today.

The significant words of prophet and apostle were “I saw ... I heard ... the heavens were opened ... I saw the Lord,” and other similar expressions.

Today we try to substitute a pale “faith” for such encounters.

No wonder the Church has taken on the general tone of a convalescent home instead of the camp of a victorious army.

Absence of a focal point of our devoted worship –

This is another cause of our lack of moral enthusiasm.

The great spiritual people of other days had such an object for their worship.

In the Old Testament the spiritual great, such as David, were frankly and unashamedly in love with the Most High God. Read the Psalms of David to see how powerful this was in his life.

When the Most High God became flesh and dwelt among us, [John 1:1-3, 14] He came nearer still to the hearts and lives of His people.

The apostle Paul's heart exploded into a burning volcano of love for the Lord Jesus. It was this love **not** his theology alone that made Paul the fiery spirit he was.

The worship and total obedience to Jesus Christ is the starting point of all the writings of the apostles, each introduced themselves as the servant of Jesus Christ, [Romans 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1; Revelation 1:1]. In each case the Greek word used is “*dōulōs*” meaning a bond slave that had been purchased as every true Christian accepts as their relationship with their Saviour Jesus Christ, [Acts 20:28].

A bond slave has no personal “rights” only responsibilities towards their Master.

Their Master is the focal point of their human life, their reason for life is to bring honour and glory to their Master.

If on honest personal examination of our spiritual lives we see this lack of enthusiasm we need to take the advice that was given to the church of the Laodiceans by Jesus Christ through the apostle John.

Revelation 3:18-22 [New King James] *“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Jesus Christ is waiting for us to open our eyes to this dangerous condition and accept any course correcting chastening that God will cause us to experience.

Hebrews 12:1-8 [New King James] *“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.”*

[Please download and meditate on the articles on “*the seven church attitudes*” listed under the main heading ‘*Church*’ on this website.]