

How Then Shall We Live? Part II

(12/03/03)

Greetings to the Church from Betsy's House,

Our God is a wonderful God and we continue to learn from Him each and every day.

I am so ignorant that my learning seems to go on continuously.

I am eager to share with you what I have "learned" this past week. By the way, learning, as least as I am using it may not refer to new information. It also means to either see it more clearly or integrate it into my current thinking. A change in perception is still learning and perhaps the most profound of all. Often we only think of learning as new information. Discovery and creative applications are learning as well.

What I "learned" this week was how my flesh responds when things don't work out the way I expected. I gained some objectivity and observed, without being totally overwhelmed, just what I "felt". That, I submit to you, can be very helpful in learning how to live with our, as yet, imperfect selves.

Now, while these may not be earth shaking observations to you, I will encourage you to read the whole letter before passing judgment of their value to you.

What I observed is just how emotionally upset I felt when things didn't go according to my expectations and plans. Also I noted that I felt especially upset when a loss of money was concerned.

From those two simple observations it is easy to conclude the following:

1) The perfect world is a world that meets my specifications, my fleshly specifications. The flesh is for forever trying to make my subjective world according to it's design. We all design a "perfect" world for ourselves and then go about trying to bring it into existence in time and space.

2) The flesh finds security in the things of this world, especially money. Money is power, security and prestige. At least money represents those things in the paradigm of the world view. That perception has been sold as such and, for the most part, the world and my flesh have bought it lock, stock and barrel.

That leads me to the following conclusion:

As long as I am in this world my flesh is still very active and alive.

Now that is not a startling illumination, and the Bible certainly attests to the veracity of that conclusion, but what is startling is the manifestation of it in my own experience. It was/is clearly manifest for me to see. It is at that point that God's Word moves from the theoretical to the experiential. It is at that place where I come to believe, with a new certainty, a absolute conviction, a complete persuasion of the truth.

As with all things that is the beginning of real transformation. It is a different view not merely a intellectual agreement. It is the place of transformation.

Now I can deal with it with a certainty that I never had before. Did I believe it true before? Certainly, but not in the same way. When I finally recognized that I had a "drinking problem" on more than an intellectual basis I moved to deal with it and made decisions predicated on the "realization" and it is the same here.

The Word teaches us that the flesh and the Spirit are always in conflict. The real me, the person born in Christ, is always at war with the fleshly part of me that remains and was born into this world. That one was educated, brain washed, in the ways of this world system. The flesh has always been in control. As the real me, the spiritual "I" gains strength I am able to put the flesh in subrogation.

At that point I am free in Christ. I must, however, be constantly aware that sin and Satan are always present waiting to overthrow me and they make their entrance through my flesh. They are waiting for an opportunity to once again seize control and rule me.

That leads us to the question now under consideration, "how then shall we live?"

The answer is simple, so simple in fact that we will tend to disregard it. That, by the way, is but another very effective tactic of the flesh. Remember "learning" is often not found in getting new information but in seeing the information in a different way. A change in perception.

First, and foremost, I must look at myself honestly, bravely. I must not try to cover up those fleshly parts of me. I agree that they are there, that they are real, subtle, powerful and seductive.

If I deny that they are I've already lost and am under its spell. I am under the influence of the flesh. Ephesians 5:18 teaches the following, "do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit". We are all under the influence", it is just a question of what we choose to be under the influence of.

The things of the flesh are just like all "addictions", in that they live best in the dark. They hide themselves from the one who is afflicted with them. They seek to control through subterfuge. If they are detected and brought to light they run the risk of losing their power to control. They often will put on the "big push" when brought into the light in an attempt to overpower. I talk as if they are a person because they behave as if they are.

Christians, for the most part, do not want to confess (i. e. say the same thing that God does about them) to the presence of their flesh. They often try to gloss it over with "good works", so-called. Fleshly "good works" are to the Christian as is makeup on the face of a dead corpse. They don't change a thing they just make the dead face look a little better. They try to "save face", albeit a "dead" face.

Second, we then learn to cling to God who is our only hope against the flesh, sin and Satan. God is our only hope of victory over the unholy three. We must not only acknowledge but confess (i. e. say the same thing) that He alone is able to do it. He is our only hope in this world and in eternity.

When God was dealing exclusively with Israel in their early years He was all they needed. He was their everything. But, in time, they sought to be "free" from Him and do their own thing. They thought they

could live apart from Him. There is no life apart from the Giver and Sustainer of all life. It was the great "divorce". It affected them profoundly from that time forward. Their lives were in ruin and it went from bad to worse.

God has recorded their story for us in His Word. They, that is Israel, serve as undeniable examples of what happens when people are severed from Him. They are clear examples of the consequences of what happens when we try to live independent from God. It is a overwhelming case sturdy that cannot be denied. Their miserable failure is open for all to see and learn from.

In the compound names of God in the Old Testament, so-called, God reveals who He is by His names. One name is with which He identifies Himself is Jehovah Shalom, "I am your peace". Take careful note He did not say "I am going to bring you peace". In Ephesians 2:14 we learn, "For He Himself is our peace....".

God is the embodiment of peace and truth. He is not merely the purveyor of peace and truth. Apart from Him those things don't exist. All the world and Satan can conjure up is a shoddy counterfeit peddled to mankind as genuine.

If, in our own lives we desire to be free we must recognize and confess (i. e. say the same thing) that what He says is absolutely true. Mere intellectual agreement will not do. His Word is absolutely true---it is true---it is true---it is true!!!!

God is my hope, my salvation, my life----He is all I will ever need!!!

We will be meeting at Ukrops this coming Friday at the same time, same station.

In His Love,

Tomme