

July 7, 2010

Don't Let Your Lifestyle Bring Shame To Our Lord

- "I am sending you to them:***
- to open their eyes***
 - to turn them from darkness to light,***
 - from the power of Satan to God,***
 - so that they may receive forgiveness of sins***
 - and a place among those having been sanctified by faith in Me"***

(Acts 26:17,18)

This passage has special meaning for the two of us. It encapsulates how we understand the ministry of sharing the Hebraic foundations our Father gave us in Israel. We're serving as those *sent forth* in the manner of apostles over the centuries who were given a specific mission to complete. The mission our Father imparted to us was "to share" the Hebraic foundations. Using every kind of media which the Spirit has shown us, we continue to reveal what our Father gave us: ***"Through Him and for His Name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith"*** (Romans 1:5).

In our various materials you'll notice their intent and purpose:

- to open your eyes to what our Father is restoring;***
- to turn you from the darkness of obligatory religious practice to the light of His Kingdom;***
- to free you from demonic strongholds and the unChrist-like behavior and attitudes they have developed in your soul;***
- to help you recognize all types of sin that hinder you from authentic fellowship with our Father and His Son, Jesus—especially sins of bitterness and unforgiveness which keep many throughout Christendom from being forgiven by our Father;***
- to enable you to cooperate with the indwelling Spirit of Christ Who sanctifies you so that you may increasingly become like Him and fulfill your part in His Kingdom for our Father's glory and praise.***

These various goals are found throughout the materials His Spirit inspires us to produce, and they accord fully with His Word. But the materials are useless to you if you're not motivated by wholehearted love for Jesus to *put them into practice*. They're absolutely useless to you without *life application*—just another batch of knowledge to talk about then ignore...

Just about everything we were given to share, in one way or another, will require your sanctification; that is, being *set apart by the Spirit* to walk HIS path and purpose, instead of your own or the world's ways. Although the Bible commands Jesus followers to confront His people when they see sin in us (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Thessalonians 5:12),

it is only the Spirit of Jesus that can change you to become more like Him. This is an important point: sin must be *confronted* — it's detestable to God and breaks fellowship with Him (1 John 1:5-7). Change is accomplished by the grace provided by the Spirit of Christ. Remember, **grace is the desire and power to do His will and become more like Him.** Grace is NEVER God's means of excusing your sin, the message so many in westernized Christendom falsely live by today. Notice Who the Sanctifier is:

"In Him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ" (Colossians 2:11); ***"...circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit..."*** (Romans 2:29).

[For more on both *heart circumcision* and *sanctification* and its importance as we follow Jesus, see [Lifebyte 33. Do You See As God Sees?](#); and [Lifebyte 68. What God's People Must Do To Regain Spiritual Power \(Part 1\).](#)]

"God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you"

(Romans 2:24)

For decades now a conscious, militant effort to *minimize sin* has taken place throughout westernized Christendom. When you minimize the reality and detestability of sin, you *nullify any need* for repentance. As a result, you *empty the cross* of why Jesus died as our Substitute Sacrifice (1 John 2:2; 4:10). Nullifying the issue of sin is a very serious matter in God's sight. We must comprehend the interconnectedness of sin, Jesus' atonement on the cross, and the Holy Spirit:

1. Our Father established the manner in which mankind could be reconciled to Him through the shed blood of Jesus (Hebrews 9:22).
2. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross so that we may repent of them and receive forgiveness. Repentance involves both forsaking our sin *and* replacing it with God's way (Romans 12:2; Acts 26:20).
3. The Holy Spirit was sent by the Father to convict us of our sins (John 16:8) so that we would repent. Denying sin inevitably abolishes a purpose for which the Holy Spirit was sent, and this blasphemes His particular role in the Trinity. Through the Spirit of God the Kingdom of God has come upon us. Blaspheming Him is THE unpardonable sin (Matthew 12:31).

For centuries our Lord has been profaned through the core teaching of Roman Catholicism: *Anyone who believes that the death of Jesus on the cross is sufficient for paying the penalty for sin is considered "accursed."* *Good works and keeping the sacraments are **also** necessary.* Since the blood of Jesus to pay the penalty for sins is nullified, people are required to *do penance* for their sins—to perform priest-assigned rituals or good works and receive absolution (forgiveness for their sin).

And, since the blood of Jesus was insufficient to pay the penalty for sin, another ecclesiastical doctrine came about: purgatory. After death, those whose sins aren't heinous enough to warrant eternity in hell are to suffer punishment in a fiery place called "Purgatory" for a period of time until the penalty for their sins is paid for. This stands in direct contradiction of Hebrews 9:27,28: ***"Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him."*** Like much of Protestantism, Roman Catholicism has toned down mention of sin, opting instead for messages that exalt a grandfatherly view of God as love that would never bring about any suffering or hold people accountable to live according to His Word. Today many Roman Catholics have adopted the ecumenical, "universal salvation" view that has deceived many Protestants: **"All good people go to heaven regardless of their pathway to God."**

In a much more subtle manner, another blasphemous heresy denies both the reality of sin as utterly detestable to God and the command to forgive if we are to be forgiven by the Father. This has proliferated through "Christian counseling" programs which now dominate organized religion of all stripes in the US, much of Protestantism included. Emotional problems are seen through a *psychological* lens, using psychological techniques which ignore the reality of sin, its impact and its healing through Christ alone. Through thorough examination of the painful experiences in a person's past, counselors identify someone to blame for the emotional wounds. Since the counselee sees himself/herself as a perpetual victim, the need to repent for their own ongoing sin of unforgiveness toward the perceived offender is seldom or never called for. Therefore, the pain continues because the need to forgive from the heart and *be forgiven* for sin is never dealt with.

Some personal history:

I (Mike) became a follower of Jesus in 1977 after reading the Bible through for the second time. It was during this second reading that the Spirit convicted me of my sins and my need for the shed blood of Jesus in order to be forgiven. At that time I recognized what it was to love the Lord for His amazing grace to me and to want to obey Him. In 1979, while at seminary, I was required to take a "Christian" counseling course. In almost every class throughout the semester the professor and I disagreed.

The professor taught that human problems were psychological in nature, and could therefore be addressed and overcome through man-made techniques. I perceived these issues as *sins* as cited in the Bible that must first be repented of. It was a matter of conflict between darkness and light, between righteousness and wickedness (Proverbs 4:18,19). While I was in the Navy I'd seen demons come out of people through the power and authority of the Name of Jesus. The professor, however, discounted demons altogether. The spiritual truth was totally discarded in favor of modern psychology's doctrine that every human problem had either a psychological or physical root.

Because of our workbook, ***Demolishing Strongholds***, in the mid 90's we were asked to address the International Conference of "Christian" Counselors. After discussion with

the person responsible for inviting conference speakers, the offer was rescinded. He and those in attendance were looking for psychological techniques that would enhance their work. We were offering them lasting fruit through the spiritual freedom ONLY Jesus can give.

**THE SOUR FRUIT OF MANMADE "CHRISTIAN" COUNSELING
EXTENDS FAR BEYOND THE INDIVIDUALS BEING COUNSELED.
IT HAS PERMEATED CHRISTIANITY TO SUCH AN EXTENT
THAT SIN AND THE NEED FOR REPENTANCE HAVE BEEN
ALL BUT ELIMINATED IN MOST CORNERS OF WESTERNIZED CHRISTENDOM.
AS A RESULT, THE CROSS IS EMPTIED OF ITS PURPOSE AND POWER,
AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IS BLASPHEMED.**

**A FEELINGS-BASED MENTALITY — "I'LL OBEY WHEN I FEEL LIKE IT"—
HAS REPLACED THE OBEDIENCE-BASED TRUST
OUR FATHER REQUIRES OF HIS CHILDREN.**

When our Lord speaks of His called-out ones (the literal meaning for *ekklesia*, the "church") in Matthew 18:15-20, He is commanding us to love enough to confront sin in those who claim to belong to Him. Most Christians have forsaken this responsibility and replaced it with **toleration for sin**— they're more concerned with the feelings of the unrepentant than they are with the righteous reputation of God. Consider this: In our Father's sight, if His children *don't* confront brothers and sisters who hold onto sin, or if they support or join in with those who do sin, they're escalating their advance toward hell (James 1:13-15). And if you think standing back in silence is okay with God, think again. Your silence will be taken as approval for the sins of people who claim to be Christian, and you didn't warn them! ***"Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them [they participate in sin because they have no fear of a holy and righteous God]"*** (Romans 1:32; see also Jeremiah 4:22).

The reputation of God is either upheld or brought down by the lives of those who claim to belong to Him. See Ezekiel 36:20-23, for example, for God's concern for the holiness of His Name and how His people profane it by their sinful actions and lifestyles. Remember, we who follow Jesus are called to learn from the examples presented in the Older Testament as *warnings to us* in our relationship with our holy God as stated in 1 Corinthians 10:6-12. He intends that He show Himself holy *through us* as we live in love-grounded obedient trust! Our *lives* authenticate the reality of our proclaimed relationship with Him in Jesus and our desire to live to please Him in every way — and that includes confronting those who are bringing down His Name through ongoing sin.

Pause here and take the time to read Romans chapter 1; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Galatians 5:19-21. Which is greater: your loving obedience to Jesus or your fear of hurting the feelings of those who are bringing down His great Name? Ask yourself, is there anyone you know who won't be welcomed into our Lord's Kingdom while you are

keeping silent when you could have confronted their sin? Picture yourself in front of the throne of Jesus if you've let Him be defamed by the sins of those in your family or faith family and haven't confronted them. Will He be pleased? Or will He respond, **"If you say, 'But we knew nothing about this,' does not He Who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not He Who guards your life know it? Will He not repay each person according to what he has done [or failed to do]?"** (Proverbs 24:12). Your silence in the face of sin denies and disowns the Lord Jesus Who commanded you to confront sin in those who are calling themselves His: **"But whoever disowns Me before men, I will disown him before My Father in heaven"** (Matthew 10:33; see also Ezekiel 3:18).

The evidential indicator of both your love for Jesus and for those you truly care about in your family or faith family is to confront them about their sin. They desperately need to see their sin from *God's perspective*, not from the deceit of their sin nature or the endorsement of the world. Anything less makes you complicit in their sin and verifies that you really *don't* love them as Jesus calls for. In the body of Christ we truly are our brother's and sister's keeper.

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of [Jesus]"

(Galatians 6:10)

We who follow Jesus as our Lord and King are privileged with the responsibility to benefit and bless other people. This calls for a determined and intentional effort on our part to be aware of what we can do to be our Lord's blessing to others. And this isn't limited to how we can bless the deserving! **"But I tell you who hear Me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you"** (Luke 6:27,28).

Here are a few suggestions for how you can make part of your inner motivation toward others a lifestyle that represents Christ in you:

- Express gratitude not only for what others do, but appreciation for them as unique individuals — they are made in God's image, and Jesus died for them.
- Cultivate optimism in yourself, knowing that you are the Father's ambassador.
- Ask people questions, especially queries that reveal their life motives and goals, with the desire to get to know them better. *No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.*
- Seek to extend your social relationships for the sake of extending the Kingdom. Purpose to not be an isolated 'cave-dweller.' Wherever possible introduce yourself to others and learn their name.
- Engage in gratifying activities that delight you and those in your fellowship family; an unedified follower of Jesus does a disservice to Him.
- Be on the lookout for "God sightings", that is, *Divine interventions* where you see Him at work. Then testify to what you saw.
- Be conscious of not wearing down the emotional capacity of others by causing them unnecessary anxiety and trepidation. Always look at yourself through their eyes and their emotional needs and perspectives.

- Guard yourself against giving in to the sinister slide of: *irritation* >> brings *annoyance* >> leads to *anger* >> ends up in *rage*. Succumbing to this temptation of agitation produces an apprehensive crop of emotionally wounded people. God uses irritations in our lives to let us know that we are exercising a right that He hasn't given us. As soon as we feel irritated, our Lord Jesus wants us to seek Him for His response. If you don't, you'll only hurt others.
- With God's grace, be the best possible reflection of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control toward others (see also Romans 12:9-21).

You may want to copy and paste the above recommendations and post it in a prominent place around your home or workplace. Make them your way of life and encourage those in your household to do the same. These are outworkings of the brotherly kindness and love referred to in 2 Peter 1:5-8. The apostle encourages us, ***"For if these qualities are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."***

With the help of your prayers, our deepest desire is that we fulfill Acts 26:17,18 as our Lord desires.

Mike & Sue