

September 7, 2010

## They Will Never See Jesus FOREVER!

In the greatest commandment, God calls us to love both Him and one another with the same life-sustaining devotion we give to our own care: "**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind**"; and, '**Love your neighbor as yourself.**'" (Luke 10:27). Every other command in both testaments builds off this command to love, and demonstrates by actions and attitudes what that love looks like. Biblical love is the foundation to confronting sin. Love, and the courage to take on sin redemptively, go hand-in-hand. Are loving courage a character combination that motivates your life?

**"Today You are driving me from the land,  
and I will be hidden from Your presence;  
I will be a restless wanderer on the earth,  
and whoever finds me will kill me."** (Genesis 4:14)

Pause for a moment and try to sense the emotions of Cain in his response to God's curse on him for killing his brother, Abel. And then consider this: the worst part of his punishment is that he would never see the presence of God; he'd never experience the intimacy of knowing God and being with Him forever. Our caring and loving God had earlier warned Cain to resist sin by *doing what was right*: "**Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it**" (Genesis 4:6,7). By refusing to *master sin*, he became enslaved by it.

While stationed in California in the 1970s we met a fellow follower of Jesus we'll call Jerry. He'd previously been a pimp in Houston, Texas. In a bar one night some men looking to take revenge on another pimp mistook Jerry for that man. With razors they sliced him over his entire body. Jerry subsequently bled to death in the emergency room. During his death experience Jerry found himself in the Biblical "outer darkness of weeping and gnashing of teeth." There he suffered great agony, hearing others also cry out in pain but realizing that he was also alone in the darkness, unable to communicate with anyone.

Then Jerry realized what the greatest pain of this kind of hell is: **You will not see Jesus forever**. At that moment, after some 20 minutes of being declared dead on the emergency room table, he cried out to the Lord Jesus Whom his mother worshipped — and his heart began to beat. The medical staff was astonished and had no explanation for his resuscitation! During his recovery in the hospital God told him, "Go to Oxnard, California." That's where we met Jerry, scar-covered but rejoicing in the God Who was using him to reach out to those imprisoned by the sex trade.

In that darkness of death Jerry understood the reality of what Cain had feared: never

experiencing the presence of God. Many self-proclaimed Christians who entertain ongoing sin in their lives and ignore or neglect the righteous requirements of God's Word are unaware that this is their destiny as well. They have wandered from the truth of the Bible and refuse to **submit themselves to God**. Willfully deluded by the world's rationale and philosophy, they reject the command to **resist the devil, and make him flee** (see James 4:7).

Brothers and sisters, our God is well-aware that you have a sin nature that's constantly warring against His Spirit in you, yet He has not removed that nature from you. As with the Apostle Paul, you are daily faced with the temptation to *not* do what you ought to, and find yourself doing the very things you know you shouldn't (see Romans chapter 7). Take a peek at Romans 1:28-32. Is this world with its propensity to not only sin but to seek ever greater forms of evil any different from the world which provoked the Flood? (See Ephesians 4:17-19.) Has the pain in His great heart lessened any when He sees the wickedness today to which His children give way? **"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that He had made man on the earth, and His heart was filled with pain"** (Genesis 6:5,6).

Our holy Father Who yearns to live in Covenant union with each of His children is pained when we sin. His Spirit grieves when we are not in fellowship with Him because we hold onto unconfessed sin (see Ephesians 4:30,31; 1John 3:6-10). Could this be you? Are you causing pain to your Father because of tolerated sin in your life?

The most common source of sin today emanates from the heart of people who are feeling sorry for themselves. Over the years, we've ministered to thousands of people yet have heard from only a few afterwards. We're not complaining; when Jesus healed the ten lepers in Luke 17:12-19, only one returned to thank Him—and a loathed Samaritan at that! We bring up this point because we've recognized that so many Christians today live with ungratefulness toward God. He's "failed" their expectations! All they want is for their problems to go away so they can have some level of happiness based on the world's standards. They expect Him to serve *them* and pay no attention to the thread of loving obedience to Him that permeates all of Scripture!

We noted in our previous e-mail that our Father tests His children in order to prove our faith to be authentic. Consider the perspective of Paul and James regarding these times of difficulty we go through: they produce character traits that wouldn't grow in us otherwise!

**"Therefore, among God's called-out ones we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring"** (2 Thessalonians 1:4);  
**"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything"** (James 1:2-4).

Satan loves to agitate Christians who are bereft of joy in their circumstances. Their very

lack of joy defames our Father because it shows they don't trust Him in every matter of their lives. How very few people we've encountered whose unwavering trust in our Father results in a joyous countenance because of His faithfulness. Painful circumstances are often beyond our control; how we respond to them, however, evidences our trust in the One Who has allowed them to happen.

The prophet Habakkuk captures the attitude and response our Father calls for in His children when they are confronted with what the world would call catastrophe or trial: ***"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior"*** (Habakkuk 3:17,18; see also Job 1:21). Are you *determined* to trust in your Father's sovereignty in ALL matters? His Spirit is looking for you to yield to that absolute trust that picks itself up when you stumble and stands firm in confidence in His mighty love. That's the key to the joy that praises Him in the midst of all circumstances! (See Romans 8:35-37.)

Sadly, too many Christians are ruled by the sin of **false expectation** — in bondage to believing they deserve something better in life, whether in their relationships, lifestyle or health. This one sinful attitude is all Satan needs to entice you into other sins. Take a good look at yourself: Does your face radiate the joyful trust in a Father Who loves you more than anyone on earth ever could? If it doesn't, call out to Him for the power and the will to represent Him as His beloved child. A hopeless world is waiting to see if He's real in you. Don't disappoint them! (For further study, see [Discussing How to Restore the Early Church: Lesson 32, Removing Presumption and False Expectation.](#))

Our heart's desire is that everyone who is using what our Father gave us to share will one day be welcomed into His presence with joy in His faithfulness.

**Mike & Sue**