

Which way will you choose?

Renewal, part 2

Thank you for reading the last post, [“How Can We Have Renewal? part 1”](#).

The importance of practicing the presence of God cannot be overstated.

When we find ourselves confused, bewildered, angry, doubtful, grief-stricken and ready to “throw in the towel”, where do we turn? What immediately comes to mind? Is it exercising, gardening, pursuing a hobby, cleaning the house, or going for a walk? Some of these activities I think can be healthy outlets to taking our minds off that which we obsess and at the very least have us doing something constructive. Many people have learned over time to turn to unhealthy habits such as work (when the family is neglected), alcohol, drugs, pornography, sex, gambling, shopping, abusive anger and other addictive vices.

We all have times where we start obsessing on things and situations in our lives that don't make sense, are painful, painful to others and incredibly frustrating. Things that, for the most part, are beyond our control. These painful and confusing situations we face are common to everyone. No one on the planet past, present or future is immune from pain, including Jesus. As humans, it is simply not healthy to bottle up the pain or ignore it.

Eventually, the pain becomes so great that we cannot ignore it.

If we continue to wallow, obsess and focus on the painful circumstance that surrounds us, the anger will build up, the depression will go deeper, the isolation will increase and we become weak in so many ways. The pain gets worse, friends

disappear and God becomes more distant. After a while, after staying in the muddy and murky situation we become hardened, lifeless, and without joy. For those that harbor resentment, anger, un-forgiveness, and depression, their physical bodies begin to suffer. The result of this can be ulcers, hair loss, headaches, heart conditions, cancer and ultimately death.

How do we turn the tide and let go of it? How do we get out from under this murkiness? Remaining in this lowly place is as sinful as anything else. For when we stay there, we lose faith, lack hope, have no love to offer and really become unproductive and useless for God's purposes. This is right where the devil wants us.

What can we do? What remedy do we have?

The answer can be seen in the actions of a young child. When a three-year-old boy falls and scrapes their knee, where does he go? How about when a child has her toy taken away, where does she turn? When a child disobeys and her privileges are removed, who does she cry out to? That's right, they come to their mommy or daddy for consolation and comfort. They will crawl into mommy's lap and she will kiss their boo-boo and somehow make all their pain go away. Mommies and daddies have a way of doing this by just their mere presence. Not long after a child cries for what seems like hours, the pain is gone. The toy is forgotten, they've learned their lesson, and the boo-boo is hidden by a Flintstones bandage.

It is most joyful to know that coming to God brings the same result, that is when we know and love Him as our heavenly Father. The more you love and know Him, the more joyful this relationship becomes.

Galatians 4: ⁶ And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." ⁷ Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made

you his heir.

Of course, this message only applies to the believer, those who fear God and put their trust in Him. They know who their heavenly father is.

“There is no peace for the wicked.” (Isaiah 48:22)

For those people that do not know Him cannot take solace in this message. I have no hope to offer those that reject Him. They reject their Creator and remain ignorant, some willfully.

2 Peter 3: ³ Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. ⁴ They will say, “What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.”

⁵ They deliberately forget that God made the heavens by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. ⁶ Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. ⁷ And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed.

Just as flesh and blood are common to all people, past, present, and future, so is the Creator common to all people, past, present, and future. He created you and knew you before you were born. He wants you to know Him and to be your Father.

If you aren't a parent, pretend for a minute that you are. Imagine your child crying out to someone else's parent. What if your ten-year-old child visits your neighbor's house when he's hungry. Imagine your sixteen-year-old daughter seeking

advice from their friend's parents or asking them to buy a prom dress. As a parent, would this not make you a bit angry or in the least be painful?

How do you think God feels when we treat Him like this?

Isaiah 65:

² All day long I opened my arms to a rebellious people. But they follow their own evil paths and their own crooked schemes.

³ All day long they insult me to my face by worshiping idols in their sacred gardens. They burn incense on pagan altars.

As a small child, all we knew was to cry out to mom or dad but as we grew older and if that dependency was not transferred to the Eternal One that we are ultimately accountable to then we learn to trust in everything but God. This is why it is so essential for fathers to teach their children about trusting in God and setting this example.

Deuteronomy 4: ⁹ *“But watch out! Be careful never to forget what you yourself have seen. Do not let these memories escape from your mind as long as you live! And be sure to pass them on to your children and grandchildren. ¹⁰ Never forget the day when you stood before the Lord your God at Mount Sinai, where he told me, ‘Summon the people before me, and I will personally instruct them. Then they will learn to fear me as long as they live, and they will teach their children to fear me also.’*

If we trust in everything but God, where will that lead us?

That could mean we trust in people (friends, family, and

anyone else that seems smart) or governments, banks, employers, horoscopes, religion and everything in between. In other words, idolatry. Then when the people, governments, banks, employers, horoscopes, and religion fail us we seek comfort through those activities mentioned earlier for relief.

Deuteronomy 30: ¹⁵ *“Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster. ¹⁶ For I command you this day to love the Lord your God and to keep his commands, decrees, and regulations by walking in his ways. If you do this, you will live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you and the land you are about to enter and occupy.*

Knowing this should make our choice between life and death ever so clear. It is to choose God or anything else. This makes it very simple for the devil. He will think to himself “If I can only keep people distracted by anything instead of knowing the Almighty God in Heaven, I will keep them from life.”

The choice we have to make is a daily one.

Am I choosing to start each morning by yielding myself to God? Do I surrender to Him before doing anything else? Am I setting apart time each day to read His Word and seek Him in prayer? Do I meet with His followers regularly to give encouragement and receive comfort and sense of family?

God loves you and He wants you to get to know Him. It is a win-win situation when we decide to make every effort to put Him first in our lives, give everything over to Him and pursue Him wholeheartedly.

Hosea 6:

⁶ *I want you to show love,
not offer sacrifices.*

*I want you to know me
more than I want burnt offerings.*

Let these words from Jeremiah sink into your soul.

Jeremiah 17:

⁵ *This is what the Lord says:
“Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans,
who rely on human strength
and turn their hearts away from the Lord.*

⁶ *They are like stunted shrubs in the desert,
with no hope for the future.
They will live in the barren wilderness,
in an uninhabited salty land.*

⁷ *“But blessed are those who trust in the Lord
and have made the Lord their hope and confidence.*

⁸ *They are like trees planted along a riverbank,
with roots that reach deep into the water.
Such trees are not bothered by the heat
or worried by long months of drought.
Their leaves stay green,
and they never stop producing fruit.*

⁹ *“The human heart is the most deceitful of all things,
and desperately wicked.
Who really knows how bad it is?*

¹⁰ *But I, the Lord, search all hearts
and examine secret motives.
I give all people their due rewards,
according to what their actions deserve.”*

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¹⁴ *O Lord, if you heal me, I will be truly healed;
if you save me, I will be truly saved.
My praises are for you alone!*

Will you turn your heart toward Him?

“Dear God, please have mercy on me. I am such a sinful creature, completely lost and hopeless without You. You are my Maker, the One who knit me in my mother’s womb. Please show me how to follow you more faithfully. Help me to learn how to trust in you. Keep me on your path so that I might have the joy that only you can give and sing praises to you so that everyone may hear. For your namesake Lord, please keep me from falling away. I want to know you more, please reveal yourself to me. Thank you for having patience with me and for all that you have done in my life. Let all that I am praise the Lord! In Jesus’ name, I pray this prayer, Amen.”

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