

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” Matt. 5:8

AN HONEST HEART

The early radical disciples, Peter, John and the rest, were far from perfect. For every Spirit-led utterance that Peter brought forth (and there were many), there were two other flesh-induced statements that he would have been better off swallowing. Yet, all of these men had honest hearts. They had determined that they were going to follow Jesus, obey Him, and allow Him to transform them, regardless of the cost. Remember what Peter said to the Lord: “We have left everything to follow you.” (Matt. 19:27).

Each of us must have that same kind of honest heart if we intend to become radical disciples. **The Lord isn't asking us to be perfect; He is asking us to be honest.** And an honest heart, in God's eyes, is a pure heart.

What constitutes an honest heart? First, we must realize that most of us think we are far better Christians than we really are. God sees us as we are. We see ourselves as we'd like to be; or as we fantasize in our dreams. So, we must allow God to dissect us and show us what truly is in our hearts. It will likely surprise us; it will definitely bring us

down a notch. But that is where the spiritual healing must begin. When we can say to the Lord that we are willing to allow Him to heal us, regardless of how much it hurts, we have taken the first giant step into Radical Discipleship.

MAKING US LIKE JESUS

God's purpose for us is to conform us to the likeness of Jesus (Rom. 8:29). Paul says the same thing: “*And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*” (2 Cor. 3:18). How are we conformed or transformed into the likeness of Jesus? God does the work; we yield. That is where the honest heart comes in to play. We must desire all that God has for us; we must desire to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus; and we must be willing to allow God to do that work, regardless of the cost, the pain, the suffering, the misunderstanding or the shame. Will it be easy? No!

Will it be worth it? Absolutely!

The more we yield to God, the more He will show us what must be healed. He will do the work, but we must be obedient to everything that He shows us. It is this process that brings about the difficulty. Our self (flesh) doesn't want God to do this work. Our spirit does. Who will win out? Remember this: when you, with your honest heart, yielded to God and told Him to go ahead with this work, He heard you. And he will not forget what you said.

“I have a grip on your heart, son. Don't worry! I'm not going to let go.”

There is a very beautiful thing that occurs when a Christian, with an honest heart, yields to the Lord. Jesus reaches in and takes hold of that heart; and if you listen closely, you will hear Him say: “I have a grip on your heart, son. Don't worry! I'm not going to let go.” That is why we will make it all the way through the process. **Our conformation to the likeness of Jesus is not dependent on our faith; it is**

dependent on His faithfulness. We yield; He works. We obey; He heals; we empty out; He fills us up with Himself. We can trust God. He is faithful.

WHY WE MUST SUFFER

There is a tendency with Christians, here in the west, to assume that we do not have to suffer because there is no persecution here. We simply have not read the word of God deeply enough. Jesus promised us suffering. Promises are good things. We, therefore, must embrace suffering. Does that mean that we, too, are going to be persecuted? No. That is not what it means. We *may* be persecuted. We have no idea what the future holds for us or for our country. But Jesus promised suffering for those who are willing to be radical. The deep truths that permeate through the whole idea of following Jesus, especially as a radical disciple, are hidden from the pseudo, weak-kneed Christian. If we are intent in serving the Lord on His terms, we need to come to grips with these truths.

A.W. Tozer says: “The perfect will of God is a place of blessed, painful, fruitful trouble.” Look at those four words. They are like following a tennis match, going from one extreme to the other and back again. Is the perfect will of God really

like that? Both blessed and fruitful; *and* painful and trouble? Yes. But it only makes sense when we understand the deep truths of the gospel.

The cross you will carry will be the pain and suffering, the discomfort and misunderstanding, the difficulty and trouble that will come because of your obedience to all of Jesus’ commands.

One of the reasons there is no power in modern Christianity is because there are so few who are willing to accept and experience the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. You cannot walk in the perfect will of God without going through the cross – and all that the cross represents. Jesus said you must carry your cross daily. The cross you will carry will be the pain and the suffering, the discomfort and the misunderstanding, and the difficulty and trouble that will come because of your obedience to all of Jesus’ commands. Tozer says: **“God will crucify without pity those whom He desires to raise without measure.”** Do we understand what “without measure” means? God is saying that there are no limitations to what He will do with us, for us, in us, and

through us; and there are no limitations to that which He will bestow upon us – if we allow Him to have His way with us. Is that worth the price of admission, regardless of how steep is that price?

Denying the self and carrying the cross are prerequisites to following Jesus. If the first two conditions are not met (denying and carrying), according to God’s will, then the third (following) can only be done in a pseudo, weak-kneed manner. Carrying one’s cross is a voluntary action. It is a matter of obedience vs. disobedience; for we do have free will. **The difference between sainthood and spiritual mediocrity depends upon the choice one makes regarding his cross.**

The radical disciple must embrace the cross. He must embrace the fellowship of Christ’s suffering. He must allow God to do whatever He wants in his life. God’s ways are not just higher than ours, they are higher as far as the heavens are above the earth. *As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts then your thoughts.* (Is. 55:9). God is not like us. He is so far above us that it is incomprehensible. He made us in His image in the sense that we, too, have a spirit and a mind. And we experience emotions as does He. But God is the creator of the universe. Without God,

there would be no life – at all! God doesn't need us. It is we who need Him. We will never understand all that God does, but we can trust Him fully. If He says we are to suffer, than we need to trust Him. If He says that carrying our cross is going to be difficult, then that is the way it is going to be. The bottom line is this: Our time on this earth is like one grain of sand among all the seashores of the world, compared to eternity. We cannot afford to live our lives according to this world's standards. We are citizens of Heaven, sojourners on earth for a short period of time; and our thoughts and decisions must be in congruence with Heaven's perfect will if we expect to get through this life in the manner that God desires for us. **It is to God that we belong. We do not belong to the earth.**

For each of us, individually, all of eternity is determinate on the decisions we make during our few years that we walk this earth.

TRUSTING GOD

We can trust God in this transformation process. He will only do that which is good for us. But do we trust Him? Do we trust Him

completely? When God says that in order to have all of Him, He first must have all of us, do we understand what that means? And are we absolutely willing to yield all to him? What does "yielding all" mean? It means you must yield your body, your spirit, your mind and your will. It means you must yield your wife, your husband, your children, and your grandchildren. It means you must yield your wallet, your finances, your retirement, your vacations, your job, your business, your reputation, your hobbies, your phone-gabbing, your TV time, and more. Does that mean you have to give up all of those things? Not necessarily. But it does mean that you will allow God to determine which of those things He chooses to give back to you. He will sanctify some, if not all, of those things. But you must relinquish them first. You might say, "Well, some of those things God would never give back to me – like some of the TV programs I watch." Well, dear friend, if you already know that God is not pleased with those programs, why are you still watching them?

For each of us, individually, all of eternity is determinate on the decisions that we make during the few years that we walk this earth. How important is eternity to us? It is not difficult to roam through the Scriptures and

groan and moan at all the commands that Jesus gives us. Yet, obedience to those commands will bring more love, joy and peace than anything else that we will ever experience in our entire life. We tend to look at the trip instead of the destination. And it is because we have allowed ourselves to be programmed by the spirit of the world; that is why we live this way. God wants to re-program us by His Holy Spirit. Then, we will think differently.

We really can trust God. He is absolutely trustworthy. No one cares for us more than He does. And His way is always the right way. He has our best designs in mind. It just happens that the road we are to walk is not easy. But what difference does that make? Look ahead to the destination. Stop looking at the road. You have an honest heart. Jesus has promised not to let go of that honest heart. He will do all the work. You simply need to allow Him to do so.

AN HONEST HEART IS ENOUGH

It is important that we understand that God looks at our hearts. When He sees an honest heart, one that is willing to yield completely to Him, He already has what He wants. He is not overly concerned with the fact that we occasionally fall. As long

as we wear these earthsuits, or as A.W. Tozer puts it, “the goat on which we ride”, we will fall. We are not perfect; the enemy will always be right at our side, just waiting for us to slip. But God knows that falling and rising is part of the process. As long as after we have fallen, we confess our sins with a contrite heart; and refuse the condemnation of the devil; and determine to continue our walk with even more temerity than before, God is pleased. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9).

And when the battle takes a seemingly negative turn, we need only to move our head slightly and steal a glance at our stalwart traveling companion, the Captain of the Lord’s Host.

And we do not walk this road alone. A spectator, seated in eternity’s grand arena, watching this action,

would see the frenetic, abusive, no-holds-barred battle waged by the imps of hell against the radical disciple, the servant of the Lord. He would also see God patiently observing all that is being done on the narrow road. And at the right moment, he would see God simply lift His hand and the devil and his imps would have no recourse but to turn and flee, like a herd of deer at the approach of the hungry lioness. And he would see the weary but victorious traveler cock his head skyward and smile, acknowledging the Heavenly intervention; he would see the traveler take a deep breath, set his face like flint, and power on.

You, radical disciple, have entered onto the narrow road to holiness. *And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way.* (Is. 35:8)

Though the walk on the narrow road to holiness is difficult, challenging and, as it so often seems, laid out through a spiritual mine field, it was never meant to be traversed alone. We walk with our heads held high,

observant, prepared for battle, and strengthened with a faith that is being tested and fine-tuned with each forward step that we take. And when the battle takes a seemingly negative turn, we need only move our head slightly and steal a glance at our stalwart traveling companion, the Captain of the Lord’s Host.

And our concern becomes a smile and that slight tinge of fear becomes a tower of confidence. We, once again, set our faces like flint, and power on.

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