



RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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Psalm 22:6 – *But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people.*



THE CHURCH IS SHORT ON WORMS

One underlying theme among the great saints of the Church, from St. Augustine to the more modern A.W. Tozer, Watchman Nee, and Andrew Murray, among others, was their constant reminder to themselves that they were nothing but worms, unclean, ugly and festering; and unworthy, as John the Baptist immortalized, to untie the sandals on Jesus' feet. If that was true then, why is it not true today? **Where are the worms in today's modern Church?** Are we so self-centered and so self-righteous that we are unable to see our own pitiful state? Are we so full of our own lofty Christian self-centeredness that we cannot see what others clearly see? Where are those who, though they cannot see any humility in themselves, that same humility rises above their wormy state for all others to see so clearly? Are we devoid of such truly humble Church leaders?

Augustine in his "Confessions" states: "*But thou, O Lord, are forever the same, yet thou art not forever angry with us, for thou hast compassion on our dust and*

ashes. It was pleasing in thy sight to reform my deformity, and by inward stings thou didst disturb me so that I was impatient until thou were made clear to my inward sight."

This magnificent humble man never saw himself as anything but a worm, the lowliest of the lowly, one who could never understand the fullness of God, though, like all true men of God, he never stopped attempting to do so.

Ps. 22:6-*But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people.*

Is. 41:13-14-*"For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, 'Do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you,'" declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*

If Israel was a worm in God's eyes, and if Jesus, through the Psalmist's eyes, was a worm, how dare we think that we are not worms? Do we not think of ourselves more highly than we ought? Who are we to think that we should not have to stoop so low (recognizing that we, too, are worms) when all of the

spiritual giants before us found the need to do so?

But how does one become a worm? **It is not that we learn how to become worms, but rather that we realize that we already are worms.**

LOOKING DEEPLY, FINDING TRUTH

As we come before the Lord, humbly and gratified that there is a Lord to whom we can come, we must recognize that He will dissect us and allow us to see ourselves as He sees us. If we have not done that, the question should be asked: Why have we not done it? Are we too self-righteous to have the Lord show us what we truly are? Are we already strong enough spiritually that we don't need God's introspection?

Why must we be dissected by God? It is because we are far uglier, spiritually, than we believe we are. **If we are truly to be healed by God, we first must see how much healing is needed.**

After having been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, in February, 2005, it was determined, after multiple CT-Scans and other tests, that I was a candidate

for a major operation, which, if successful, might have given me an extra year or so of life. But after they opened me up, they saw a different picture than they had seen earlier. The cancer was much larger than they had estimated and had spread too far and the operation had to be aborted. But they had to open me up in order to find out the truth.

We have been seeing ourselves through a one-way mirror. But the picture we see is not the same picture God sees.

It is no different with the Lord and us. We have been seeing ourselves through a one-way mirror. But the picture we see is not the same picture God sees. He knows our hearts. He recognizes that our self is at enmity with Him and that it lies to us on a regular basis – and we believe the lies. When we allow God to dissect us, we will see ourselves as we really are. Only then can we begin to be healed. Because only then will we know how much healing is needed. Only then will we realize our need to throw ourselves on God's mercy. Only then will we get a glimpse of just how wormy we are.

It is at that point that we, too, will recognize that we are not what we thought we were. We are worse. And, if

we are truthful, if we are sold out to the Lord, if we are truly desirous of being healed, then from the depths of our beings, we, too, will call out, **“Woe is me. I am but a worm. I am nothing. I am the dregs of Christianity. Only a gracious and merciful God could have put up with all the dishonesty in my heart. Why am I even still alive, Lord? It is only by Your grace that I am alive. And only Your grace will get me healed.”**

Augustine saw that. Brother Lawrence, the 16th century author of “The Practice Of The Presence Of God”, saw it clearly. Thomas a Kempis, in the 14th century, saw it, as well.

We are all worms, but only a select few understand it. Why? It is because only a select few will allow God to dissect them. Only a select few are willing to see themselves through God's eyes. Only a select few are willing to walk the narrow road to holiness. Only a select few will allow God to be the All in All in them, including all that goes along with His being All in All.

Oh, dear Christian friend, let God do with you what He wants. The time is so short. You do not have the luxury of waiting. Time will catch up with you. Especially so now. Turn to Him. Throw yourself on His mercy. Allow Him to dissect you. He will heal you. He will take you

down that narrow road to holiness. Allow Him to. You won't regret it.

WHAT DOES A WORM BECOME?

This is a great question because the answer is stunning. **The Christian gets healed but the worm in him remains.** We must realize that we are what we are and that never changes. Just as we are always sinners who are saved, we are also always worms who, by the grace of God, are healed. **We will never be worthy enough for Christ's salvation; we will never be able to earn the magnificent grace that has been afforded us; we will never be deserving of all that God does for us; and we will never merit God's forgiveness, His mercy, or His love.** We will always be worms. But ... we will be worms that have been healed by the grace of God.

The problem is that few of us recognize that we are worms to begin with. We see ourselves in our own light, filled with vanity. In truth, however, we are nothing. God is everything, and we are nothing. Many Christians mouth those words but few understand them. What does it mean to be nothing? It's probably not a good qualifier. Maybe “less than nothing” is more appropriate. When God shows us ourselves and we see that we are far less than

what we thought we were, it is stunning, almost devastatingly so. How could God possibly love us and care for us in the condition that we are in? He knew all along that we were being dishonest with ourselves, and with Him, too. But, you see, it is only here that we can see just how beautiful God's grace and mercy are. **To love not just a sinner, but a deceitful sinner; to forgive not just a sinner, but one who has lied and hidden from God; to be willing to heal not just a sinner, but one who has played games with Him for so long; it is that realization that causes us to see that we are but worms, the lowliest of the lowly, the dregs of Christendom.** Yet, God loved. God forgave. God healed. And He will never stop doing so.

It is vital for all Christians to recognize that there is a huge gap, a large chasm, between who God is and who we are (or who we think we are). Nominal, weak-kneed, powerless Christians never see this gap. God is their buddy-buddy, their magic genie. They never see Him as the Almighty Creator of all things. They may know it, by definition, but they don't know Him, in reality. And there is the crux of the problem. Too many Christians know all about God but do not know Him in actuality. It is in knowing Him that we come face-to-face with reality and see our

need for His dissection of our hearts. It is through knowing Him that we can see ourselves as the worms that we really are. It is then, through that operation, that dissecting of our hearts, that we see our unfaithfulness, our ugliness, and our stupidity – far worse than we had thought. It is then that we realize, even more so, that we are worms and yet this unknowable, beautiful, majestic, sovereign all-gracious God, on whose mercy we have thrown ourselves, smiles at us, hands outstretched, ready to receive us unto Himself. And when you realize that, you can do nothing but weep. It is only then that the huge chasm, between who God is and who we are, is traversed.

BALANCING OUR WORMHOOD

If we ever intend to be acknowledged in sainthood, we must first acknowledge our wormhood. And though we will always be worms, it is vital that we understand how God sees us – ultimately.

There is danger in overplaying our worminess. Doing so is, in itself, a form of pride. We must recognize our nothingness before God but not necessarily before man. True humility is seen more often in quietude than in self-effacement.

At the same time, we must have enough confidence and trust in the Lord to recognize that He will, in fact, heal us and, in our emptiness, use us. It is a form of defeatism, then, if God intends to operate through us, to constantly tell others how terrible a person we are.

There is a balance that we should attempt to strike. On the one hand, we do know that we are worms and that there is nothing good in us. That is Scriptural. On the other hand, God sees us as we will be. **He sees us as an empty vessel through whom He can and will do great and mighty things.**

So then, we must have confidence in the Lord, not taking Him for granted, but, at the same time, not overemphasizing our worminess. God already knows. And so do we. There is no value in telling others.

THE VALUE OF BEING A WORM

Not only is it imperative that we understand that we are worms so that we can see ourselves as we truly are, but it is only as we recognize our worminess that we can begin to allow God to do the work in us that will, by His grace, allow us to become nothing.

It is, of course, in our nothingness that God does His best work. **He does not need our help running the world. Nor does He need**

our help running the Church. He does, however, need our availability.

God is God and He can do whatever He pleases. He has proven, however, that He will use mankind to bring about His will upon the earth. God's purpose today is to bring Heaven to earth. And He can only do so through those of us who are yielded enough, empty enough, and transparent enough for Him to do in us that which He pleases.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for someone to be self-righteous and full of themselves and also empty enough for God to do His work. The two things just do not go together.

God's desire is to bring Heaven to earth. And He will do so through those of His children who are empty and transparent. **It can be said, then, that God does His best work through worms.**

Worminess is not a negative trait. It is simply a statement of who and what we are. Our acknowledgment is the first step toward healing and emptiness.

Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus.

Oh, yes, you are a worm and you will never be anything but a worm. But it is in your worminess, in your weakness, that His strength is found. It is as you are an empty vessel, your self having been crucified with Jesus, that God can operate

through you and bring Heaven to earth.

God's purpose is to bring Heaven to earth; and in God's wisdom, He has chosen to do so through worms.

I used to step on worms when I would see them on the driveway, sunning themselves. I now step around them.

Please join us at the Radical Discipleship meetings every other Monday at New Life Foursquare Church, 5913 Jefferson Pike, Frederick. We meet next on Monday, April 7th at 7:00 PM.

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