

Our Debt to the Holy Spirit **by Chris DeWelt**

When we speak of our debt to the Holy Spirit, we are most certainly embarking on a discussion of a vast sea of blessing. His work in and through us has an enormous role in how we come to be in Christ in the first place, it is critical in our growth in Christ through the process of sanctification and it will be the very empowerment which will raise us on the day of resurrection.

My focus here is limited to a brief discussion of the second aspect of those three broad scenarios, the work of the Holy Spirit as related to the formation of the character of Christ in our lives as Christians.

Or put in a simpler form, how do I look more like Jesus?

My Search for Christ-likeness

Three things are key in thinking through what it means to see the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Looking like Jesus by allowing the Spirit's work to take place involves:

- Purity of heart

A deep desire to see God

Christ-like character

Now wait a minute, how can part of the method be the goal at the same time? I was hoping you would ask that question!

Jesus spoke revolutionary words to the hundreds on the hillside through the Sermon on the Mount. The beatitudes set the stage. God is much more interested in your attitudes and your character than He is in your activities. Your activities will be the evidence of your character.

People had settled in to hear what they needed to do. This was not an uncommon thought then or now. As the rich young ruler put it: "Good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life?" The response was both simple and seemingly impossible. Have a pure heart!

In the Beatitudes Jesus speaks of the Divine interest in our hearts in this way: "Be poor in Spirit. Be one who mourns. Be a peacemaker. Be pure in heart. Be meek. Hunger and thirst after righteousness."

The concern is first for Tightness of heart - Tightness of deed will then follow as naturally as day follows night. And so Jesus changes our expectations and our mindset with a few pithy statements.

- Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God

Story of tourists in Hawaii - leper colony - worker tenderly wiping away ooze of disintegrated flesh -the smell was overpowering - the heat was oppressive - the claminess was sickening - One tourist said, "Boy, I wouldn't do that for a million dollars." Instantly the worker was heard to softly respond, "Neither would I."

- Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God

When we built our house - something territorial - local - as a child I had found a piece of marble in Carterville - "oh, that's from Carthage" Mental image of beautiful marble floors etc. So we are putting in a fireplace and I think "wouldn't it be neat if the hearth were made out of Carthage marble?" Trip over -to Carthage. - Marconi or Spanzoni marble company - Looking around - do they really get all of this from right here? Laughed - no - it's imported from Italy! And for a fairly small piece the price wasn't too bad - color gray/white - very hard surface - 2-3 months after installation noticed a small tan colored stain on the marble - 2-3" across - Wayne had allowed something to get into the cement mix that he laid it with and now it had leached clear through that hard hard stone.—Since then it has spread until it is 10-12" wide.

Amazing isn't it, how a small impurity can cause such a large stain - something completely hidden from view

- Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

More than anything else -I want to see God - don't you?? Not in the usual way of observing what He has done or where He has just been - No, I mean to literally see God.

I believe this deep desire is related to the image of God being stamped in our souls, the *imago dei*. A desire which largely lies dormant until it is awakened by the work of the Spirit in our hearts.

Our desire to see God may have something to do with the first breath ever taken by a human being. God breathed into Adam the breath of life, which means that the first thing that the first human being ever saw was the very face of God.

Oh, I know what you are thinking about anthropomorphism and the like, but if we apply some of the very characteristics of God which He applies to Himself in Genesis (walking in the garden, talking, etc.), then I think that there is a strong case for a face to face first encounter.

Further, if you follow the beautiful symmetry which always surrounds our Creator God, you will note that at the close of man's history the simple statement is made:

3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

(Revelation 22:3-4)

The face of God in the beginning and in the closing of history. But what about in between? Or what about his appearing?

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Hebrews 11:5-6 - How does the Father reward those who diligently seek Him? By letting them see Him!!

6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

2 Corinthians 5:8 - We would prefer (by far) to be with Him - "As the deer panteth..."

As someone I know liked to sing, "Oh, I want to see Him and look upon His face..."

•Purity of heart

A deep desire to see God

Christ-like character

Do you want to look like Jesus? It has something to do with our willingness to look at Him. Transition: My difficulty in finding Christ-likeness

Do any of you struggle with this as I do? Does your very soul seem to rail against you at times because you know that you are nowhere near where you should be? Does it particularly gail you in light of the fact that many look at you as a Christian leader? Do you ever stand up in front and wonder why everyone is listening to you?

I used to think that as I aged, things would get easier with respect to holiness. However, the more I know the Lord, the more I realize that all I am wearing is filthy rags.

And, that is a good thing... To know that I live by His grace and that I am even now being saved by His grace.

Oh, I do want to see Him! I want to know Him! I want to be holy!

Here are six thoughts on what His presence in my life should mean:

The Holy Spirit

Yes, you have him, but does He have you? - His presence means something!

1. Power To Change - Romans 8:13 -

For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live -

Reading this text makes me think of the monks of Tibet who believe that by pursuing the "Eightfold path" of Buddhism, they can achieve change. However, according to them, that change will not come in this life, but in the next round of the wheel of incarnation. Their accumulated good works pile up and build their level of karma to the point where true peace is always just ahead. Imagine their horrible shock when they pass to the other side of their last heartbeat only to discover that they were fooled by the deceiver in a very cruel fashion. They truly believed that change for the better would come with death and they literally bet their lives on the lie from the Liar of liars. What a travesty! They (350 million strong) along with the Hindus (900 million) hold fast to these teachings.

Putting to death the misdeeds of the body is only possible through the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts.

When we speak of power, we speak of the ability to fulfill one's own desires. Only God possesses that power, ultimately.

So, then, who has the power to change and what is the method?

"Put it to death" is Paul's instruction. - But how?

The question is not whether He can, the question is "do I want Him to?"

To return briefly to our Buddhist and Hindu friends, one of the greatest reasons that they choose to hold fast to a lie rather than believing the truth is their failure to see change, true change in the lives of those who purport to follow Jesus of Nazareth.

2. Power to love beyond my capacity - Ephesians 3: 16-19 -

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in

love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Here we have power again, but now it has a specific objective

f* What will happen to you when you are filled with the fullness of God?

*• Do we have any idea what that means??

rNiagara Falls - Shut it down - thundering waters - Dixie cup (nighttime bathroom cup) and set it on a rock at the bottom.

What will happen if God really fills your being?

Will you bark at the moon? Will you empty the hospitals? Will you throw mountains into the sea??

Are we ever overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of what we are doing? No, I don't mean in trying to get 35 youth to come out on Sunday night instead of 25. I mean the magnitude of what the Father has commanded us to do! Think about it a moment. Every nation is to hear. He is not willing that one person

rshould perish! I am not talking about the neighborhood, nor the county, nor the city, nor the state nor the whole country. I am talking about six billion people!

It's too much, Lord! How can you possibly expect me to care about everyone you care about. It is impossible.

All humans have some capacity for love. But it is a limited capacity. Only through the work of the

rSpirit in our lives can we ever begin to access the limitless love of Christ. The very thought that we can

be connected to that kind of ability to love should stagger our thinking.

For example, imagine a man you don't know, living on a street you don't know, in a city with

^ unpronounceable name, in a country on the other side of the planet.

How can you ever be expected to

love a person like that? Like Wei Jyen? Or Aziz? Or, well you fill in the blank. How, Lord?

The amazing answer to that question is that He gives us the capacity to love those people and it is through the work of His Holy Spirit inside of each of his disciples.

Further, you only access that power as you move, not in the direction of trying to "work harder" at

having His compassion and concern, but rather as you move more deeply into Him. Your time with Him

will transfer His heart to yours; in fact it will replace your heart. You may not care about those people,

but He does! (Ever hear of John 3:16?) The more closely we walk with Him, the more our eyes are

« opened, the more we see as Jesus saw, and love as He loves.

Is this not the greatest evidence of the fact that He dwells in our hearts, richly?

3. Power to be transformed! Burning His Image In My Soul

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 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 Corinthians 3:17-18)

The incredible power of this text can hardly be overstated! Not only do we have access into the very presence of God, not only do we have the privilege of contemplating Almighty God in the person of Jesus Christ, but in doing so the Holy Spirit transforms us into the very likeness of Jesus himself!!

The word for "transformed" is none other than the word that is transliterated, "metamorphis." The only other use of this word in the New Testament is in Romans 12:2 "...be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Two very important things to notice here. First of all, this transformation requires passivity on our part. The use of the word for transformation is passive in mood. That means that it is something that happens to us rather than something we do under our own power. The "being made into the likeness of Christ" is something we receive.

You all know that what we are talking about here is the process of sanctification. It is God at work in us to bring about His purposes for us as

individuals, for us as His community, and for the unsaved world that they might know Jesus.

The illustration of Moses has, in part, to do with the reaction of his countenance by being in the presence of God. His face glowed! In fact, it glowed to such a degree that the people did not want to look at him. The light of Moses' face was not generated by his own effort, rather it was the effect of being in God's presence. What a glorious thing it must have been!

The word used by the NIV "reflect" is a weak translation here, but the word and the context are complex. The word carries with it the multiple meanings of (1.) looking directly at the glory of God without fear of harm or damage; (2.) it also carries with it the fact that what we are contemplating is Christ himself and that (3.) we look at ourselves as in a mirror, taking note of the fact that we are being changed into his likeness. (Ash)

So then, we do nothing? No, I did not say that. The transformation process does require passivity on our part when it comes to the power to change, but it also requires activity on our part in the area of obedient faith. By that I mean the kind of faith that places us in a position to be changed.

In the same way that we receive salvation by obedient faith, so also we receive transformation by obedient faith.

The work of sanctification -

It requires constant adjustment - astronomer illustration of photographic film - the star burns the picture on the film - but the astronomer has to keep adjusting the telescope to the changing circumstances of where he is located

HIS WORK - adjusting the knobs (optical distances), polishing the mirrors, keeping the interior lights dimmed, loading the camera, watching the time, etc. etc.

The star does not change in position, but the earth moves. The star does not change in its brilliance, but the conditions here do. - this takes constant vigilance and care - but the results are truly spectacular!

Does the astronomer create the image? NO

The star does.

But, the astronomer has to do something to receive the image on the film

For people to see the image of Jesus in you!! - That is the work of the Holy Spirit - His presence is there - The source of strength and power and the ability to create the image of Jesus in your life is there.

DO YOU CARE enough to keep yourself positioned in His presence?

Friend, this is what spiritual discipline is all about. Constantly re-orienting ourselves to where He is and what He is doing! Letting him do the work of changing, and me keeping myself close to Him.

As a matter of fact, to live with Christ did produce this effect. It produced it in the case of Paul. And during Christ's lifetime the experiment was tried in an even more startling form. A few raw, unspiritual, uninspiring men, were admitted to the inner circle of His friendship. The change began at once. Day by day we can almost see the first disciples grow. First there steals over them the faintest possible adumbration of His character, and occasionally, very occasionally, they do a thing or say a thing that they could not have done or said had they not been living there. Slowly the spell of His Life deepens. Reach after reach of their nature is overtaken, thawed, subjugated, sanctified. Their manner softens, their words become more gentle, their conduct more unselfish. As swallows who have found a summer, as frozen buds the spring, their starved humanity bursts into a fuller life. They do not know how it is, but they are different men. One day they find themselves like their Master, going about and doing good. To themselves it is unaccountable, but they cannot do otherwise. They were not told to do it, it came to them to do it. But the people who watch them know well how to account for it—"They have been," they whisper, "with Jesus." Already even, the mark and seal of His character is upon them—"They have been with Jesus." Unparalleled phenomenon, that these poor fishermen should remind other men of Christ! Stupendous victory and mystery of regeneration that mortal men should suggest to the world, God! (Drummond)

4. Power to truly desire God - Ephesians 5:18-

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

To desire God the way an alcoholic desires drink.

Do any of you know alcoholics? Or drug addicts?

To be so in love with God that you cannot think of anything else - again, the source is there - it is available!

Two totally opposite yet similar alternatives to "evil days"

Both have a profound but opposite effect

They are mutually exclusive (can't do both)

Pentecostal mistake of seeing drunkenness (drunk on the Spirit)

Spirit heightens rather than dulls the power, love, and self-control of 2 Timothy 1:7

5. Power to change my thought life - Romans 13: 14 -

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature,

Galatians 5: 16-

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

What about your thought life? This is related to the text about taking every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:5)

For what you do now is what you thought about yesterday

And what you do tomorrow is what you think about now!!

As a man thinks in his heart, so is he!" (Proverbs 23:7)

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The Inner Spring of your heart must be pure!!

Changing your thinking will change your desires.

Think about someone else who looked with an unveiled face at the glorious presence of His Lord - Fell down on the ground - looked and looked until scabs formed on his eyes - Until he could see nothing else -He wrote these words! He knew from experience!

So how do I become pure in heart?? How do I find Christ-like character (Glory)? How do I cleanse my thinking process? How are my desires changed?

Only if I am placing myself, by my own will in His glorious presence - Every day - Where? When? In your personal worship - In your closet - At your kitchen table - Wherever it is that you sit down and focus yourself on the Father.

If I will and If I do -I will be transformed degree by degree - with ever increasing character into His likeness.

The desires of the sinful nature will begin to die, for lack of being fed and watered.

6. Power to go to the cross - Galatians 2:20 -

/ have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

The fact that Christ lives in me, in the form of the Holy Spirit, drives me to the same places it drove him.

Don't misunderstand me - No, we are not to go to our own cross of atonement - that was done once and for all -

But - in the context of obedient Christ-like ministry - we ascend daily to a rough hewn wooden surface and "we are crucified with Christ" to no longer live to ourselves -

Ours is a cross - a daily cross of self-denial -

We know the Scriptures on this! We just try not to think about them. "Take up your cross and follow me" may mean going to the spiritual death that is so beautifully enacted at our baptism, but the idea is that you do it every day! You stay dead! And that's a problem.

Yes, you are crucified with Christ, Peter!

"For I am crucified with Christ therefore it is no longer I that lives, but Christ that lives within me!"

The very context of Paul's magnificent statement of being crucified with Christ is in reality the conclusion of a verbal scathing of Peter for his refusal to eat with the Gentiles - even after the council in Jerusalem in Acts 15, even after the personal lessons of Cornelius!!

It is all one train of thought - and the power of it is in seeing that how we see our own self-denial- has everything to do with how we view the lost of the world - yes even the people with whom we would never choose to associate!!

The cross is always the same and to be crucified with Christ means self-denial - how we view the lost world - How we see the crowds with the compassion of Christ - How we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts when we "look out at the multitudes."

How we see - you know - people like ~ Chinese, Hindus, & yeah, you guessed it, the Muslims!

What do we see when we see 1.2 billion Muslims - targets for our hatred?? - When is someone going to make a difference?

Did you know that more Muslims have come to Christ in the last 15 years than in all of history put together? Did you know that because of Sept

11, a huge stone has been set in the stream of Muslim thought - And now, every one of them must choose if his thinking will be more open - or more closed -

What an incredible opportunity is set before us!

You knew I would end up talking about missions didn't you! Maybe it has something to do with the Holy Spirit.

Six things:

Power to change

Power to love beyond my capacity

Power to be transformed

Power to truly desire God

Power to change my thought life

Power to go to the cross

The great paradox of our life here (and there are many) is that we seek to become in the physical realm what we have already become in the spirit realm -

So the struggle shifts from trying "to be more spiritual" - a virtual impossibility - to struggling with my own resistance to entering into His presence - To being in there where the power really is.

It is no great mystery - If you have no inner life, the outer life will eventually crumble.

Placing myself in His presence requires discipline - It requires effort—it requires my willingness to subject the flesh to the spirit - BUT it bears fruit - great fruit - It produces the fruit of the Spirit - Christ-like character

How does it happen? By spending time with Jesus - by learning of Him - by speaking with Him - By allowing His spirit to do His work in my heart and life - by removing any and all veils that would interfere.

How does it happen? By meeting Him in His Word - By subjecting my flesh to the point of setting aside time to place myself in His presence - By subjecting my flesh to where I might not eat (fasting) - I may not get to watch the late news - I may not get all nine hours of sleep that I really need (funny how I will give it up for other things) I may have to get up a great while before morning (Mark).

How does it happen? By placing myself, which take effort - in His presence so that He, like the star in the astronomer's lens - can burn His

image on my heart—Does it take adjustments? Oh yes! Does it take focusing? Oh yes! But it bears fruit - character - the fruit of the Spirit
Remember - Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God!!