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NOT AN APPEAL FOR LEGALISM

by Jonathan

GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT AND SANCTIFICATION

Growing in Jesus is tremendous. The process however, is not always a bed of roses. It is not automatic. It is not always easy and storm-free. Still, growth in the Christian life is essential if we are serious with God. This can be likened to building a house. For a house to withstand a tempest, strong foundations must be laid from the beginning, layer upon layer. Now, can we say the same for our spiritual houses?

Dealing on my own, I realize that I cannot earn anything to deserve God's unmerited favour. In all truth, I do not deserve heaven. But thank God, through His love, His mercy and His grace, there is redemption in Christ Jesus!

Through the Lord Jesus Christ, I now have imputed righteousness (righteousness by virtue of what I am in Him, through Him, by Him and because of Him). In other words, I owe it all to Jesus, absolutely and completely. And it amazes me that the more I draw close to God, the more I see my own unworthiness and spiritual inadequacy. Instead of "feeling spiritual", I have the opposite feeling. Instead of feeling like a "spiritual Samson" (I have attained victories in the spiritual realm), I can't help but realize that it is Christ who helps me play my role in these battles. And instead of trusting my own ability to handle the rough situations of life, I am learning to lean on Jesus, constantly seeking His wisdom and guidance. As I write this message (RAPE OF BIBLICAL MORALITY), I am overwhelmed by the grace and patience of God in my own life. Yes, I strongly believe in the grace of God. But in studying His Word and in living for Him, I also believe in His infinite holiness, His government, His justice, His judgment and His righteous anger in dealing with sin. God's attributes really do not contradict each other. Actually, it is His mercy and patience that leads us to repentance.

In decrying the various manifestations of carnality, it is not my intention to kick fellow believers who are having the problem of carnality. But I've always believed that I have a God-given duty and responsibility to warn those who call themselves Christians but are "walking deceitfully" (read Ezekiel 3:17-21, Ezekiel 33:1-9 and 2 Corinthians 12:20-21).

Having said this, I realize that God deals tenderly with each individual and works with him or her accordingly. Sometimes, we have the tendency to point an accusing finger on others too easily. We are too quick and too prone to judge others when they fail. This should be avoided! For example, we should not be too critical of baby Christians who are somewhat prone to making mistakes or even committing sins. In their early stage of development, I believe God will be patient, merciful and compassionate to their tendency to stumble. I believe that God will be fair and reasonable: He will not expect a baby Christian to behave like a mature Christian overnight, but after a while, however, He will begin to deal with him or her more seriously and He will say, "Child, it's time to grow up, it's time to overcome besetting sins!" Slowly but surely, God will lead this ex-baby Christian to where he or she should be in Christ Jesus. And then, he or she will be confronted with the need to "let go and let God". I would take it to mean that this Christian will have to make an active effort to truly live for God and to adhere to His standard of holiness and purity, according to His Word. He or she will be taught self-denial and will allow Christ to be in control of his or her life. As for sanctification, we basically teach both imputed sanctification (sanctification by virtue of Christ's expiatory work at Calvary- read Acts 20:32, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Hebrews 10:9-10 and Hebrews 10:14) as well as practical, progressive sanctification (the desire for holiness, purity, righteousness and separation from the world that comes with Christian development and growth- read 2 Corinthians 7:1 and 2 Timothy 2:21). For our purpose, we want to deal only with the practical, progressive aspect of sanctification. As I understand it from the Word of God, I find that God expects a greater degree of separation (from the world) out of the individual who has a greater development than He does of one who is still a baby Christian. True, the unmerited grace to live the Christian life comes from God and extends to all, but the choice to develop and progress with God is ours. Will we respond to the grace of God upon our lives to earnestly walk with God, to truly live for Him?

For further study on the subject of holiness, righteousness, sanctification and spiritual cleansing, you may want to turn to the following verses of Scripture: Exodus 19:22, Leviticus 11:45, Leviticus 19:2, Leviticus 20:26, Joshua 3:5, 1 Samuel 16:5, 2 Chronicles 29:5, Hosea 10:12, John 17:17, Acts 26:18, Romans 15:16, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Ephesians 4:24, Ephesians 5:26, Philippians 1:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, James 4:8, 1 Peter 1:16 and 2 Peter 3:11.

(This message is an excerpt taken from Jonathan's book, *Rape Of Biblical Morality*, written in the late 1980s. Some parts have been edited for context and space.)

Your WORD Is Strength

A LIFE-APPLICATION DEVOTIONAL

BY BROTHER JONATHAN

THE HOLY REMNANT

"And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:41-44).

In the strictest sense, even though this passage of Scripture has reference pertaining to actual literal and physical earthly empires and kingdoms, I believe it can be used to talk about judgment and separation in the house of God- "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:17-18).

I do not want to be cranky. I know it breaks the heart of God and mine, as it does to some of you who still have spiritual convictions in this lax age. The church is becoming too worldly in its approach and conduct- too much hype and pleasure, lacking in discernment and holy anger. We are losing too many sons and daughters of the nation as well as the church to drugs and illicit sex instead.

True, we are living in the days of mass evangelism, but God is more jealous and concerned with making radical disciples, "I AM the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into fire, and they are burned" (John 15:1,2,6).

Our great and awesome responsibility is not only to "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), but also to teach them to "observe all things whatsoever I (Jesus) have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:20); "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:15).

No, we do not need more self-appointed prophets who seek a name for themselves or merely draw a crowd to promote their careers, but what we critically need are shepherds whose hearts cry is to lift up the name of Jesus, that "He will draw all men unto me (Jesus Himself)" (John 12:32).

Let me tell you from the holy Scriptures how you can and will know whether a man or woman is of God or not, "And now I (Ga-ma'li-el, a doctor of the law) say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:38-39).

Are you part of God's holy remnant today? No, I am not asking you whether you are religious or not, but I am asking that if Jesus suddenly appears, do you have "the hope that purifieth"- "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure?" (1 John 3:3).

Another question is, Do you have mixtures in your life? Supposing your best-loved or most respected living Christian fell, would you lose your faith and your way with God as well? If yes, then he or she has become your god. You need to repent of this.

But if you have consistently stayed faithful and obedient to God, you will still be heartbroken for any failures. You will have a holy hatred and intolerance for his or her sins, but you will also be forgiving and loving in recognizing a repentant heart, seeking to hold and restore him or her with God's great mercy.

Now, God's holy remnant is not for the self-righteous, not for the false prophets and their followers, but will be "the remnant of my flock out of all countries wither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 23:3-4).

"God, give us shepherds who are after the Shepherd's heart. We want to feel a portion of Your heartbeat. To weep when You weep, to rejoice when You rejoice. In Jesus name."

(This message is an excerpt taken from Jonathan's book, *Your WORD Is Strength Volume One: A Life-Application Devotional*)

THE GOOD NEWS

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

Please pray this prayer and do mean it with all of your heart:

"Dear Lord Jesus, I now recognize that I am a sinner and I am in need of salvation. I accept the sacrifice You paid for me on the cross of Calvary and I allow Your precious shed blood to cleanse me. I now surrender myself to You and invite You to be my Lord and Saviour. Please come into my heart. Take full control of my life and help me live and serve You from this moment forward. I ask in the name of Jesus. Amen."

Jonathan Heng

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Your friend in Jesus,
Jonathan Heng

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