

Milk & Honey

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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

Blessed In Christ

Colin Anderson

We are either represented by Adam and what he did in Eden (sin) and what he in consequence became (a sinner), or by Christ and what He passed through in His death and resurrection. The multiple benefits of the Saviour's work on behalf of those who have faith in Him are the subject of large sections of the New Testament. Believers are taught there to see themselves as "in Christ" for He fully represents what they now are before God. They should never consider themselves apart from that fact, it is one that puts them —

Beyond Condemnation

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom.8:1) You may feel condemned as you consider your past, how stubbornly you resisted the gospel, ridiculed Christians or revelled in your sin etc. The Apostle Paul permitted himself to recall his past when occasion called for it, but note how he used it to magnify the grace of God in 1 Tim. 2:13-17, moving immediately from what he had been in Adam to what he was now in Christ.

On the other hand it may be that you feel condemned because you are discovering that though you came to the Saviour some time ago, your most earnest efforts at self improvement have met with no success. Instead there are ongoing disclosures of the weakness of your flesh; a situation so graphically described in Romans 7. That chapter ends in utter despair. Again Paul counters with what is true for all those "in Christ." They are not under law (what man should do and be) but under grace (what God in Christ has done for us). Any self-condemnation that is experienced arises from either ignorance or unbelief as to all that the gospel provides.

Appreciating The Cross

The nature you inherited from Adam will not change, you cannot improve it, and to think that you may some day personally gain victory over it is to entertain a false hope. But on the Cross and by His death Christ delivered believers from all condemnation associated with it! So the gospel does not reach its climax in Romans 5 with us being justified by faith from our sins, but continues on to chapter 8. That chapter begins with us being freed from the condemnation

due to us because of our sinfulness. Our condition as well as our conduct had to be dealt with to the satisfaction of God. Jesus bore our sins in His body on the tree and God at the same time "by sending His own Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh". It was for sin in our flesh, but born by Him in His holy flesh! Any condemnation I still feel results from a failure on my part to appreciate the Cross, it is unbelief.

Another thing. For Samuel to continue mourning for Saul after God "had rejected him from reigning over Israel" displeased the Lord (1 Sam. 16:1); the prophet needed to anoint his successor. When we still hope or want to improve anything which God has condemned we likewise hinder His work in and through us. His judgment of the flesh is clear. Let us bow to it and move on! As Paul says, "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Appreciating The Resurrection

Christ's death, burial, and resurrection were three days apart. Forty days later He ascended and was seated at the Father's right hand, having completed the work He was sent to do (Jn.17:4).

Each of those events had its own significance for Him and for us. They may be viewed separately as they sometimes are in the Scriptures, but each is incomplete without the others. Ignore or overlook one and there is no good news to tell.

When we receive Christ we enter into benefits that He obtained for us by His work "Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him..." (Rom.6: 3,4). So the first half of the action in a believer's baptism pictures that the life we inherited in Adam was brought to an end at the Cross according to God's reckoning. The second action declares similarly that we were raised with Him. (Col. 2:12). How these two truths should affect our present conduct has to be worked out, but the Holy Spirit declares them as being things already accomplished and thus to be believed.

A Shared Inheritance

We are now seen as being "in Christ" and joint heirs with Him (Rom. 8:17). No wonder Paul prayed that "the eyes of your understanding might be enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the

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Spiritual Ecology

Carl Knott

Today people are better informed about pollution than ever before in history. Besides the media attention given to the problem, now young people are actually taught about it in school. Yet school yards, school neighborhoods, and other places where these informed youth congregate continue to have problems with litter and property defacing. Pollution is a serious, growing problem in spite of all the ecology lectures and environmental awareness. Everywhere we see trash in the streets, beside highways, in parks, rivers and lakes, on the seashores, in the air, and believe it or not, there's even trash in space! But there is a worse problem with pollution than this, and it is spiritual contamination and pollution. The pollution that entered the world in Eden when our first parents sinned is sometimes invisible, but deadlier than any oil spill or radiation.

The Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy, and us, "Keep thyself pure." He doesn't say, "pray that the Lord will keep you pure." His inspired choice of words indicate a personal responsibility: "Keep thyself pure." The Lord isn't going to do it for us, we must act. Pure is how we began the Christian life. The moment we believed the Gospel and trusted the Lord, all our sins were forgiven and we entered perfect fellowship with the Lord, nothing between our soul and Him. Happy day! I wonder, is it still that way with each of us? Remember the saying, "an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure." Paul doesn't say to Timothy, "clean yourself." That's a different matter covered in other texts, and important. But prevention is better, and he says, "keep pure."

Daniel as a young man, captive in the courts of Babylon, purposed in his heart not to contaminate himself (Dan. 1:8). This is a key to personal holiness, fellowship, growth and usefulness in the Lord's hands. It is found at the beginning of the book, and in a sense the rest of the book builds on that important decision. It doesn't say that Daniel wished he could be pure, he didn't say, "Oh, if only I could be pure, if only I could have stayed in Jerusalem and been in the temple each day, but alas, here I am just a young man far from home, with no fellowship, no spiritual encouragement and surrounded by iniquity." He didn't arm himself with rationalizations and excuses for failure. He didn't say, "when in Babylon, do as the Babylonians." He purposed in his heart. That's where spiritual ecology begins, in the heart, the control room. No one else could do that for him, nor for us. Each of us is responsible for what he purposes in his heart and what he allows in there. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Daniel not only did not eat the food offered to the idols, but he stayed away

from their social events, the parties and feasts. It is interesting to read in Daniel 5 how when the handwriting appeared on the wall in Belshazzar's feast, they had to call for Daniel to come interpret. He wasn't there with a cup in hand, laughing and socializing with them, but they knew of him and knew where to find him when he was needed. Separation from the world is still important in avoiding spiritual pollution. Just like we avoid smoke-filled rooms, we should avoid places with worldly, sinful atmospheres.

James 1:27 instructs us in what true religion is: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Again we see instructions concerning spiritual ecology, and they don't say, "...clean yourself up after getting spotted by the world." The thought here is prevention: "keep...unspotted." Avoid spiritual contamination. Spot removers are common laundry items, and there are many different kinds, but spot prevention is a different matter. Take care not to get a stain, they are hard to remove. We must guard our eyes from so many defiling sights, and our ears and minds from the defiling music and lyrics of the world. Many who would not enter a casino or a brothel nevertheless contaminate themselves by what they see and hear

2 Timothy 2:22 advises us what kind of company to keep in order to avoid spiritual contamination, "them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." This is a strict criteria, and many do not follow it in their friendships, but be sure of this, God is not mistaken and one day we will have to give account of the kinds of companions we choose. Our choice of friends is extremely important, because they will have an effect on us. It is true, as some are quick to point out, that Christ ate with sinners and was called the friend of sinners (Lk. 7:34). But before using this defense of ungodly friendships, remember that the Lord testified to them right from the beginning and kept it up. He didn't spend years being tolerant, not preaching, but simply "building bridges of friendship" and get slowly and gradually around to eternal truths. He spoke plainly on spiritual matters and reproved sin. How long would worldly friendships last if we were as faithful and straightforward as our Lord and Master? If we have to disobey 2 Timothy 2:22 and ignore Christ's example in order to maintain certain friendships, then we are doing wrong and being spiritually polluted by it. Such are not true friendships nor are they approved by the Lord. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25). Fellowship with the Lord's people and in the meetings of the assembly is where to begin in associating with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

1 John 3:3 says, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Every believer

should be concerned, and as they say, “proactive,” about spiritual ecology. This is all the more true when we consider that the Lord could come at any moment and take us away to heaven. If we have attitudes, habits, likes, friends or activities that displease the Lord, that are not pure as He is pure, then we are contaminating ourselves, and it needs to stop. Not only that, we are responsible to purify ourselves, the text says. The emphasis here is not on positional purity which we have by being in Christ, but rather on practical purity which is clearly our personal responsibility. Positional truth is not meant to make us passive nor arm us with excuses for unholy behavior. It should motivate us to live in such a way that our practice reflects our position. Each of us should reflect on this and ask, “What can I do to purify myself?” in light of the blessed hope of the rapture. Proverbs 28:13 speaks of confessing and forsaking sin, that is, not just admitting it is wrong, but making a clean break, forsaking it. 1 John 1:9 reminds us of the importance of confession. The word translated confession means literally “to say the same thing,” or to call sin what God calls it, to look at it as He does. True confession is not just an intellectual admission, but a heart response when we take God’s side against our sin, and who would not feel shame and remorse upon so doing? But the Lord is faithful and just to forgive those who do, and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness. True confession is good for the spiritual ecology!

2 Timothy 2:21 advises us thus, “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” Once again we are reminded of our human responsibility in spiritual ecology. When there is an oil spill, people don’t sit there with folded arms and ask God to clean it up. They get busy using everything at their disposal to stop, contain and clean up the pollution. When do they stop? When it’s all cleaned up and the ecology is restored or recovering. When our clothes are stained, we don’t ask God to get the spots out. We use detergent, stain remover and scrub brushes. When do we stop? When the spot is gone. That’s what it means when it says, “if a man therefore purge himself from these.” A person can be saved and yet useless to the Lord because he refuses to purify himself. He can appear to be saintly in the congregation and be living a spiritually contaminated life all the rest of the

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York Bible Study Program September 2013 - May 2014

Date	Topic	Teacher
March 8	Messianic Prophecy	Bob Spender
April 12	Fruit of the Spirit	Mark Shelley
May 10	Today’s Dangers	John Gordon

Thank You!

Once again the Lord showed His faithfulness in 2013. Many encouraging and helpful gifts were given to STW and commended workers. Over \$107,000 was distributed to over 140 commended workers and widows in North America and to assembly related ministries. It has also been the practice of STW to minister from our general fund to assembly camps and ministries when possible. Over the course of the year \$13,825 were ministered (down from \$31,000 in 2012) to camps and ministries which are involved in the distribution of the Gospel. We want to thank each one who financially supported Spread The Word in 2013. Your gifts have enabled us to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to provide spiritual food for the Lord’s people around the world.

In addition to the approximately 78,000 copies of *Milk & Honey* which were sent to a number of different countries, there were many thousands of Gospel tracts, and teaching booklets distributed free-of-charge. Your gifts have also supported the 9th Shepherding Conference held at Greenwood Hills — **next conference 9/18-20/2014** — and the York Bible Study Program, which completed its 25th year and continues to be well attended each month.

The 2014 Spread The Word conference is scheduled for **7/26 – 8/2**. Mike Attwood, Larry Price, and Bob Upton are the scheduled speakers. (GreenwoodHills.net) *

Spread The Word

2013 Income-Expense Report

Beginning Balance	\$111,367.31
Income	
Suggested – Workers	\$107,784.84
Tax Deductible Gifts	51,629.08
Other Income	1,939.31
Literature/CD Sales	<u>614.00</u>
Total Income	161,967.23
Funds To Workers	\$107,784.84
Postage/Shipping	17,947.53
Ministry from General Fund	13,825.00
Printing	9,505.17
Bible Study Program	4,980.82
Conference Expenses	4,296.47
Office Supplies & Expenses	2,251.55
Miscellaneous	267.59
Equipment & Software	229.72
Advertising (Gospel Outreach)	150.00
Literature	<u>85.50</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 161,324.19
Net Change	\$643.04
Ending Balance	\$112,010.35

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*To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us
accepted in the beloved. Eph. 1:6*

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exceeding greatness of His power...which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places..." (Eph. 1: 18,19). Earlier he had referred to the inheritance we have in Him. (v.11). I think that in these two phrases (emphasized in italics) we may be looking at two aspects of the same inheritance. Israel's possessing of their earthly heritage under Joshua's leadership might illustrate that.

After settlement in Canaan it would have been foolish for any Israelite to boast of his estate as being a sample of what the army had conquered, if he failed to give credit to the essential role Joshua played in the conquest. Without him there would have been no army and no military strategy and no victory. On his part, Joshua knew that it was God's purpose that possession of the land be realized through the nation he had led into it. His own portion and theirs thus forming a mutually enjoyed inheritance.

He and we, in coming glory
One deep joy shall share
Ours to be forever with Him,
His that we are there!

[Gerhard Tersteegen. Adapted] *

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2400 Admire Springs Dr.
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Editor: Stephen Hulshizer

Fax/Phone (717) 467-5729 phone/fax

Email/Web site info@STW1982.com / www.STW1982.com

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time. People can be deceived, but not God. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

James 4:8 exhorts, "...purify your hearts, ye double minded." This takes us back to Daniel 1:8 and Proverbs 4:23, the importance of purity in the heart. Our Lord pronounced a blessing on the pure in heart (Matt. 5:8). Again, prevention is better than cure. Daniel prevented spiritual pollution. This is what Paul urges young Timothy to do. But when we have been careless or failed, it isn't time to give up, but to confess our sin, turn away from it, and purge ourselves in heart and habit from spiritual defilement. In this way we receive paternal forgiveness and cleansing from the Lord, and thus purify our hearts.

It is important also to fill the heart with pure things, not the defiling trash of the world. The Word of God is pure (Psa. 119:140) and has a cleansing effect, "the washing of water by the Word" (Eph. 5:26). No wonder the devil tries to keep us too busy to spend much time in this Holy Book! "Take time to be holy" is one of those hymns that we hardly sing anymore, but it's message is ever necessary.

We have the Holy Spirit in us, and not only does He seal us and keep us, but another of His ministries is to help us be holy and avoid spiritual contamination. We must take care not to quench or grieve Him if we would grow in practical holiness.

Proverbs 22:11 says: "He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend". Do we love pureness of heart? If so, we must show it by our behavior, deeds, not just words. And the heavenly King eternal is the friend of all who love purity of heart. May it be so in our daily experience, for the Lord's glory and our blessing. *