

The Ministry Of Separation!

By Jim Golden

Have you ever wondered why we have day and night? God could have just made our cycle of life either one or the other, but He chose to make both day and night because without the contrast it is difficult to distinguish or see clearly. The most difficult time to see is at dusk when the day and the night begin to blend into one.

As I lay in bed a conversation I had with my wife prior to falling asleep was running over in my mind. We had been talking about how a worship meeting she had attended went. I didn't want to attend due to tiredness and frankly disappointment over many past meetings I have attended. In the western church there is a deep unsatisfied hunger for the abiding presence of God and some or most with this hunger will go to great lengths to satisfy it.

There is even a term for these folks. "Glory-hounds" has been "coined" as a label for those who have experienced God's "manifested" presence and cannot live the quality of life they want without it. As a result they often go to great lengths to try and recapture a moment in time when they were in that coveted place of utter peace, joy and contentment. In that place you can actually experience and embrace His righteousness. Hmm, sounds like the Biblical definition of the Kingdom of God. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

I know that when most people are away from the familiar surroundings of their home for any length of time they can become "homesick" and melancholy. For those who have actually tasted and seen that the Lord is good the awareness of this "sickness" may become more familiar and stronger than those who have not. One writer said, "You can never go home." I think what they meant was, when you come to the place of being "homesick" it is because of some memory that you have of home that brings you peace or comfort. However, often when you try to find that same comfort by going back to a former geographical location the inevitable outcome is disappointment. Even if the surroundings are the same they no longer affect you as they once did because you, not the surroundings have changed.

I suppose that this explains my reluctance in chasing after the "home" experience when it comes to the "glory" experience. When my wife and I were talking about the meeting she attended she expressed some discouragement at not being able to capture the same type of intimacy she had experienced before when she attended the same meeting in earlier weeks. So often we think or feel that if we can just get all the right combination of things in the right order then we will be able to recreate the same experience we had before that brought us such joy or peace. In my experience that only works when you are talking about baking bread or cooking a steak and then

there are so many other things that must be taken into consideration in order for the recreation to be perfect. For instance the quality of the ingredients, the room temperature, the type and size of the oven, even the humidity in the air can all affect the outcome. Trying to recreate an experience we had with the Lord by following a formula can be as disappointing as a failed attempt at recreating your favorite dish.

Life is all about contrast. Maturity is having your senses trained to discern between good and evil. The Scriptures are full of contrast. The wheat and the tares, the sheep and goats, the precious and the vile, are only a few. Mixture will be with us just like night and day until the end of time as we know it. One day, however, God will create the new heavens and new earth and then and only then will there be no more day or night because God, Himself, will be the light of the “city”. Until then we have been entrusted with the task of doing the separating. The contemporary song writer and performer, Bruce Springsteen said it simply, “Those glory days will pass you by... .” The ongoing theme of the song paints a sad picture of those trying to live in the past on their memories instead of being able to live for and experience new ones. God promises that the glory of the latter house will exceed the glory of the former house.

It is a process and while there may those times in our experience when we have a taste of things to come it will do us well to remember that those times of “days of heaven on earth” are not meant to be continual until we cross over into eternity. We must learn the “art” of contentment by not only abiding, in the truth, not the feeling, of God’s word, but in God Himself. Many times the enemy of today or tomorrow is the past.

Salvation belongs to the Lord and so does glory and praise and honor and all the other “stuff” we long for, not to us. The secret to experiencing them on a consistent basis may be found by dying to our needs, wants and desires and living to find out what the needs, wants and desires of God and those around us are and seeking God for the grace to fulfill them. We must learn to separate the precious from the vile until the day that God does it for us and learn to love the day of His appearing.

Yes, the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy. And it is our Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom, but it is through many trials that we enter. One thing we know for sure is that the kingdom is in our midst or within and wherever the King is we may find the kingdom. Is the King sitting on the throne of your heart or is someone or something else there?

In closing, as we begin a new year, let us ask God for the grace to live in such a way that the wonderful events of the past do not become the disappointments of today, but the hope of today and tomorrow, remembering the faithfulness of our God in supplying all our needs according to His riches in Glory through Jesus!