

Self-Crucifixion 2-23-14

In Galatians 5:18-26, Paul writes to tell us that we are to put away the works of the flesh in order to harvest the fruit of the spirit. In this he commends us to crucify the flesh. How do we fulfill this commandment?

First, we ought to understand what it means to crucify the flesh. Obviously, it is not literal, but symbolic. We know that crucifixion was a shameful, painful death (Philippians 2:8). Jesus tells us that to follow Him we need to take up a cross (Matthew 16:24, Luke 14:27). More than this, we are told repeatedly that our old selves were crucified with Jesus when we obeyed the Gospel (Romans 6:6 Galatians 2:20, Colossians 3:5). Effectively, we need to put to death our lusts in the flesh, no matter how painful or humiliating that may be (Romans 8:7-13).

What is the flesh? It is an expression used to relate to those things which are also called carnal, natural, worldly, or earthly. In contrast, the believer attempts to be spiritual, divine, and heavenly. In a simpler sense, it is the difference between spiritual immaturity and maturity. Putting to death worldliness is quite simply learning to grow up in Christ.

How to Crucify Ourselves could be called a matter of four comparisons. In these comparisons, ask yourself where you are at in this scale, and you will find your spiritual development.

1. Self Identity and examination vs. Contentment and Ignorance

Paul commands us to examine ourselves in 2 Corinthians 13:5. We are too often unwilling to look at ourselves, content with our current situation. Such is just ignorance of the truth. Consider the moment when the prodigal son "came to himself"; he realized his situation was his own, and he could improve it with change.

2. Submission & Empathy in Fellowship Vs. Defiance and disregard

How well are we able to put ourselves in someone else's shoes? Paul speaks of this in Romans 12:16. This also requires us to learn submission, which is the very mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5, Ephesians 5:21). How well you submit shows your spiritual condition.

3. Selflessness vs. selfishness, or Materialism vs. contentment

We sing the song "All of self and none of Thee"; it reflects the spiritual change in a person who slowly learns to live not for themselves but for Christ. We need to make that change. The inability to sacrifice renders us unfruitful servants. We need to reject materialism, and be content with what we have (Hebrews 13:5, 1 Timothy 6:8)

4 Delayed Satisfaction vs. Immediate Gratification

Jesus told us to lay up our treasures in heaven, not on earth. It is hard to do this, when we can have something now. Yet what we have now is trivial compared to what we will have next. Moses was willing to suffer pain and humiliation for the next life (Hebrews 11:24-26), we should too (Hebrews 12:14 -17)

Being a Successful Christian means following the command. We must take up our cross every day. *Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Luke 9:23*