

The Cross In Relation To The Refining, Threshing and Winnowing Processes - Part Two

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That He Might Grow

Between salvation and eternity with Christ there is a very, very important process that we all need to pass through. It is a practical and daily reality to all who want more of Jesus formed in them. The apostle Paul called this extremely important process, "Christ being formed in you" (Romans 8:29, Galatians 4:19).

At salvation the Seed of Christ was planted into the soil of our hearts. **But that Seed needs to grow!!!** Baby Jesus was born in Bethlehem and it was glorious. But baby Jesus needed to grow into a man that would eventually die for the sins of the world. The Seed that was born in Bethlehem eventually matured until He was able to be sown at Calvary so that He could bring forth much fruit (John 12:24). That same Son that was born in Bethlehem was planted into your heart at new birth. If we want to be fruitful, then we must let Jesus grow until His Life is formed in us and given through us.

The focus of our sharings this year will involve the necessity of Christ being formed within every Born again believer and the processes involved in bringing forth His increase. Throughout this entire series of articles we will be looking at several different examples of this work as seen in processes such as refining silver and winnowing chaff. In this section we are going to continue from our last article by focusing on some practical aspects of the threshing process. Once again, threshing is the farming process of loosening chaff from the seed. It is a process that involves some tribulation in order to shake loose the chaff so that it becomes separated and eventually removed from the seed. In terms of the deep and spiritual reality of threshing, this work is the process of separating our flesh (old selfish nature) from the Pure Seed of Christ in us. In order for there to be a fruitful harvest this process must take place in each one of our lives.

Peter's Threshing

A wonderful example of a believer going through the threshing process is Peter. No one doubts Peter's desire to be fruitful or his passion for God. In the Gospel of Luke we hear Peter declaring unto Jesus his glorious commitment unto death, *"I am ready to go with you into prison and into death."* And then we hear Jesus' response to Peter, *"And Jesus answered, "Peter, the cock shall not crow today but you will three times deny that you even know me" (Luke 22:33-34).* Peter was preparing himself for a glorious martyrdom while Jesus was trying to prepare Peter for a time of threshing. Jesus knew that in reality Peter was about to go into a heartbreaking threshing experience that was necessary to prepare Him for Christ to be His Life. Peter was full of himself, like a vessel brimming over with His own righteousness and resources. How could Peter receive the Seed of Christ as His Life when He was already completely filled with the chaff of His own life? The true "need" was not for Peter to be more committed unto God, but to be emptied in such a manner that his true need was God Himself IN Him.

It is important to notice that the hour of Peter's threshing was not during the Sermon on the Mount when powerful words of life were flowing in ways that astonished multitudes and made people's hearts burn within them. Peter's hour of threshing was not on the Mount of Transfiguration when the glory of God was shining out of Jesus before his very eyes. The hour of threshing was not at a miracle service when thousands were fed or while Peter was walking on the water. The hour of threshing came when the disciples were scattered, the enemy appeared to be overcoming God's people, and Jesus was dying

on the cross as a criminal. In this threshing hour everything looked out of control. It appeared that the enemy and circumstances were getting the victory over the Son of God Himself. In our own lives, this hour of threshing can look out of control also. But it is not out of control, it is a time of threshing. During such seasons it can appear that the tribulation we are experiencing is meant to beat us down to destruction! Yet the heart of a farmer in threshing season is simply to bring forth a fruitful crop from the earth. God's motive and heart in all things is to conform us to the image of His Son (Romans 8:28), and not destruction or punishment (Isaiah 28:27-29).

Consider the difference threshing will make. For the Sermon on the Mount to become fruitful in Peter, a cultivation of the Seed of Christ in him had to happen. For the glory that was revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration to become glory in Peter, the hour of threshing had to happen. For Peter's prayer of dedication to become truly possible, the Divine Nature of God had to grow within him. Thank God for the hour of threshing!

Not I...

Let us recall that threshing is defined as "separating chaff from the seed". In spiritual terms it is the separation of our life in contrast to the Life of Christ in us. God already knows the difference between the old nature (chaff) and His Son (the Seed). Threshing is necessary if we have not yet seen that ONLY CHRIST is the fruit the Father wants. Until this division occurs, we will offer up our own works, righteousness and life instead of the only sacrifice God receives, which is His Son in us. Threshing is not fully accomplished until we are convinced there is no good thing in us (Philippians 3:3). As long as we still have confidence in our flesh we will not allow the Seed space to grow in us for our ground will be cluttered with our own good works. Paul declared with all his heart, "Not I... but CHRIST lives in me! (Galatians 2:20). This resounding, "NOT I" will be engraved in our being forever and nothing will ever change that after the threshing. This contrast is meant to bring a mortal wounding so devastating that our hearts will enthrone Christ alone as King and Life. The "soil" of our hearts will then be consecrated unto the increase of the Seed alone.

You Must Fail

The law of contrast works to help distinguish wheat from chaff, (us from Christ), in the threshing process. Part of being able to separate the Seed (Christ) from the chaff (us) is to be able to comprehend the difference between the two. Peter's experience in his hour of threshing presents a very clear picture of how this law of contrast works (Luke 22:54-65). Peter was on trial at the same time as Jesus, yet there was a difference. Peter was warming himself by a fire while the Lamb of God was being roasted in the flames of Calvary. Peter was opening his mouth and cursing, while the Lamb opened not His mouth except to bless His accusers. Peter was seeking to save his life at the same moment Jesus was being led to crucifixion. Just consider the devastation your heart would feel if you saw the very Lamb of God looking you in the eye as He is being led to slaughter, while you are standing by cursing and denying that you even know Him. Allow your heart to ponder the contrast in Peter's hour of threshing. The Son of God is dying on a cross, and Peter is running away from the cross despite his promises and vows to be with the Lord unto prison and death. We need to see the difference between our old selfish nature and the nature of the Lamb. No matter how dedicated we are, only the Lamb embraces the Cross and willingly lays down His life for others. When placed on trial, only Christ will go to the slaughter willingly. It may break our hearts and cause us to weep bitterly, but we must see that we will ultimately fail the Lord until Christ's nature is formed in us. We can recount our failures all day long and think; "If I could do it again I would say something different and I would react

differently.” But the truth is that we will fail over and over again until Christ is formed in us. We must fail. We have to fail. Failure is part of this process. We must let the failures work to divide out us from Christ, the Seed from the chaff, the dross from the Gold. We must so clearly know the contrast between us and Christ that the Father can form His Son in us without us cluttering up His work with our pride and self righteousness. We must not resist acknowledging the contrast by self-justification, excuses, or trying to make ourselves look better. Let the Lord have His way. We must come to understand what God is doing so that we can be with Him in it.

Satan's Plan and God's Heart

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not. And when you are converted, strengthen the brethren. And Peter said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death” (Luke 22:31-33).

Because of our weakened state in the hours of threshing, we can feel more susceptible to the dangerous wiles of the enemy who comes to attack us. Jesus knew just when the hour of threshing would be upon Peter, and that Satan would use that time as an opportunity to attack Peter. Before Peter ever made his glorious vows of commitment, Jesus was preparing Peter for the threshing he was about to enter into and the attack Satan would bring when He said, “*Peter, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat (Luke 22:31)*”. Jesus chose to define Satan’s attack towards Peter as a “sifting of wheat” which is a form of processing wheat, similar to threshing. Jesus knew Satan would try to pervert the threshing process in a manner that would destroy the harvest. Listen to the wording of this scripture, “*Satan hath desired to have you.*” Satan wants to use the threshing process to separate us unto himself. God wants to use the threshing process to separate us unto Christ in us. There is a twisting of this process that the enemy uses to bring us into his realm of darkness. Satan distorts the true purpose of threshing to make it feel like pure condemnation and to make the cross seem like a tormenting, punishing cross. Satan wants us to feel condemned, discouraged, depressed, suicidal, and quit. The enemy may inspire thoughts such as, “The gospel does not work. I have failed God too much and I am too far-gone. There is no hope for me.” Those types of thoughts come from Satan trying to sift us unto himself; while God is trying to bring forth His Son in us. We must not let the enemy rob the threshing floors (I Samuel 23:1)! May we not allow the enemy to destroy opportunities for more of Christ to be formed in us. We can find the purpose of God in our lives and let all things work together to the glorious end of Christ being formed in us (Romans 8: 28-29). God threshes us unto Himself, unto eternal union with His life in fruitfulness and increase. God desires us to understand His heart in this process so much that when the tribulation comes that is involved with threshing, our hearts will be persuaded that NOTHING can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ (Romans 8: 35-39).

Your Core is not Defiled, Your Core is the Incorruptible Seed

The enemy wants to separate us unto himself through perverting the threshing process. One way he can do this is by tempting us to identify with our corruption instead of identifying in Christ. Satan will take advantage of the time when the chaff of our selfish old nature is revealed and the dross of our corrupt old life surfaces. Instead of embracing the faith that Jesus prayed would strengthen Peter, Satan wants us to drown ourselves in identification with the old man that was already crucified and buried in Christ. Remember, Jesus already bore the punishment of the true threshing on Calvary for us and as us (Romans 6:6). Jesus once and for all removed the chaff and dross of our old fleshly nature through His deep death alone. We deal with our chaff and dross by reckoning it dead with Christ already (Romans 6:11). God dealt with the old nature through the Cross. Now He is simply doing a work to make our

hearts better ground for the Seed of Christ to form in us. Satan wants to ruin that preparation of heart by making us identify in what God already crucified and removed rather than the Seed that is in us and wants to grow. God is allowing all this dross to come to the surface to be skimmed away and removed. The chaff is exposed so that we can reckon it dead and identify in the Son instead of in our own resources. But Satan perverts all that. He uses that vulnerable time of exposure when we feel so immersed in our ugliness to tempt us into identifying with the chaff instead of Christ. The enemy may inspire such thoughts as, "That dross and chaff is who you are even now after new birth. You are a hypocrite if you do not believe that your true identity is those horrible attitudes coming out of you. Those reactions are coming up from your innermost being. All that corruption is who you really are deep down inside. Your very core is defiled." Yet in I Peter 1:23, Peter declares that his true identity comes from an INCORRUPTIBLE SEED! Praise God that we are born again of incorruptible Seed. Our core is the incorruptible seed which Seed is Christ, and He cannot be defiled (Galatians 3:16b). He is our identity. He is our life. There may be some dross way deep down in our motives and intents that God brings to the surface in the trial, but that is not our core. Christ in us is our core and our identity. We are one with Jesus and that incorruptible Seed is our core. Satan cannot defile that Seed that is in us. He wants to make us feel like he can. He wants to sift us unto himself so we will not be separated unto that Seed. Satan wants to destroy Christ being formed in us through deception. He will use methods of sense realm distortions: trying to make us go by what we feel, see, and used to be. He wants us to deny the cross, deny the Lord's death and resurrection, and deny that Christ is our true life. No way! We must be converted and understand the conformity process so that we can be with God in it. Satan wants to stop the maturing process because he does not want that Seed of Christ to grow in you. The enemy's best tactic is to make you feel so depressed and defiled by your own corruption that you just quit. It is a bunch of lies. Jesus was made our corruption and He put it away through His death (II Corinthians 5:21). The dross comes to the surface so that we can skim it off because it is already dead and we must reckon it so. God uses the trials to work a contrast in us so that we will cleave to Christ and His nature rather than trying to offer up our best. It is a good work.

When You Are Converted Strengthen Your Brothers and Sisters

God wants us to know His heart so deeply in this process that when our brothers and sisters go through threshing we can sit down and strengthen their faith. Jesus exhorted Peter concerning this very thing when He said, "*Peter, I have prayed for you that your faith would fail not and when you are converted strengthen your brothers*" (Luke 22:32). When we are converted and have passed through this threshing process to some degree, we must go to those younger ones who need Christ formed in them and strengthen their faith. We can bring comfort to their hearts by sharing with them the things we have learned about the heart of God in our own circumstances. We can tell them, "Listen, this is part of the path to fruitfulness. You are one with Jesus, and God wants to bring forth more of His Son through the things you are going through. Be converted in your view and strengthened in your faith while you lift high the banner of Christ Who is your Life." We will speak to them from a place of knowing the Lord in deep places that flow with mercy and compassion. Our tenor and way with people will be tempered by His love and care because this process really does break us down in our critical and judgmental ways. Our harsh and prideful attitudes will have fallen away like chaff, and what will remain is a deep care for the body that desires to see them continue on until Christ is formed in them.

(Continued Next Month)