

We're unhappy with our spiritual lives. Our relationship with God hasn't the happiness or satisfaction we expected of it.

Not even getting really "moved" in a time of prayer, praise, or fellowship seems to last.

We strain and strive. We try to discipline ourselves. We try hard to measure up to religious norms. At least many of us who know the Lord sometimes do in an effort to be acceptable to God.

On the other hand others of us, and perhaps all of us at times, give all too little attention to the development of our walk with God. We're content to go through the religious routine of our particular church . . . much as merely religious people do. We practice our religion and wonder where our spiritual life is.

Others of us have learned that the only way to walk with God is to rest quietly in Him in peace in full anticipation that He will keep His promise: *"he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 1:6).

But we may find that even this ends up producing a less than satisfying relationship with God.

What's Wrong?

You may have made the terrible mistake of somehow expecting this rest in the Lord to mean that life would be serene and peaceful. And instead it may have been more rocky and troubled than ever before. You've forgotten that the Lord needs to use suffering, pain, and distress to perform His perfecting work. God is only purified in the fire. So are we.

The pain has made you hurt and resentful. The rest and peace are superficial at best. Perhaps they're more hopes or memories than they are realities.

You may have made another equally fatal mistake. You may have mistaken a kind of careless fatalism for rest in the Lord. True rest in the Lord is simply trust with its boots on. We're actually and practically to trust God implicitly to bring good through every evil circumstance just because His Word says He will. We trust Him to do it quite regardless of what our feelings tell us to the contrary.

Rejoicing in Suffering

So the Apostle Paul counsels us in Romans 5 to exult in God, to exult in His glorious presence, and to exult in our sufferings or pressing burdens. Why? Because these pressing burdens are used so generously by the Lord to transform us, giving us stamina, hope, and enjoyment of His indwelling love even in the midst of this sin sick, hurting, and hurtful world from the agony of which there's no escape until we leave it altogether.

In refusing to relish the work of God reflected in our pain and suffering, we refuse the hand of God. We refuse God Himself. Then we wonder what happened to all our visions of magnificent spiritual development??

It's a fact: We can't rejoice in God without rejoicing in all He sends our way as from His own good hand of love.

Prices To Pay

There are always prices to be paid for

anything of value. No less so in the spiritual dimension than elsewhere. The price is no less than death to all our human ideas of what is good for us. Our ideas must be replaced by His. Our values by His.

This world is no friend of grace to help us on to God, as the hymn writer put it. James tells us in the Word that the very friendship of the world is enmity with God. We can't enjoy the friendship of God, let alone His fullness and be cozy with the world at the same time. We must be willing to reject this stifling, choking, dying and stinking world to enjoy the freedom of the cross. We need to be willing to let go more and more of its toys, its games, its lusts, its passions, and its pleasures to give ourselves to seeking God as the only true value in time or eternity.

Living For What Will Endure

All that endures is not of this world or its prince Satan, but of the spiritual and eternal world and our God and His Christ.

Oh, my dear one, tell me, how can we think of living for that which will be without value a thousand years from now when God offers us so much that will endure forever?

Oh, may God, and the things of God, and eternity, and heaven, and hell be the stuff of which our thoughts are made night and day. Let them no longer be crowded out by thoughts of friendship here, and food, and money, and decaying possessions, and always-threatened wealth, and passing passions and pleasures, or even the knowledge that puffs

up. May we rather see these fleeting fancies being constantly crowded out by thoughts of God, His gracious Person and good pleasure.

Let us be forever seeing the reality of the fires of a terrible eternal hell as the proper place for the consumption of all that is defiled by sin and opposition to God and never redeemed by His blood and renewed by His Spirit. So may our perspectives be refined. Let us give ourselves to waiting on God night and day that His image may be formed in us, His name glorified, and His work accomplished.

Moving Toward Perfection

But, you ask, where is the promised rest?

In its ultimate completion, it, like all else touched by the human, must wait to be perfected until the day of Jesus Christ and eternal perfection in eternal glory with Him. Still, the rest and peace that we can know now indeed pass all understanding. They're not humanly possible in a sinning, hurting world. But God makes them to a considerable degree possible in the trusting heart willing to forsake its own devices to quietly trust Him to meet every need and bring good out of every difficult or impossible situation.

This trusting heart rejects the notions that it can expect ease in this life, that rest in the Lord is a sort of lazy Christian fatalism, that God has forsaken us when we suffer, that because all is of God we need not apply ourselves energetically to seeking the Lord, His will and work.

It is not a lazy or careless heart. By no means. It seeks to apply itself fully to seeking the Lord, to rejecting the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to rejoicing even in the pain that God uses in love to draw us to dependence on Himself.

So, imperfect as we are, poor, needy, hurting, and sinful, yet He graciously makes us useful vessels from which His Spirit may be poured out to others, and purifies and purges us so we may more fully enjoy Him evermore.



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ChristLife

PO Box 1033, Niagara Falls, NY 14304

Ph: (716) 622-7320

E-mail: Christlife@Christ-like.net

Visit us at www.Christ-like.net

NO LAZY SAINTS



By Pastor Ron Marr