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The Cure for being Straitened in Our Own Bowels

The Conclusion to our Two-part Article on this Troublesome Ailment

Without a doubt if we are straitened in our own bowels we have a troublesome ailment. For all the while that it is interfering with our godly edification and causing disruptions in our sonship lives, it is seriously impairing our vocational education and training as God’s “new creature.” But this is not all. It is also robbing us of the full measure of Godly joy, happiness, satisfaction, and contentment that God our Father has designed for us to have as His “sons.” For as God’s “sons” in this present dispensation of His grace we have been given the unprecedented honour to live our sonship lives with the very ‘heart and bowels of Jesus Christ’ operating within us, and to enjoy the fruits thereof.

In doing this our Father has designed to reproduce in us the very same kind and same measure of joy, happiness, satisfaction, and contentment in our sonship lives that the Lord Jesus Christ has experienced, (and still does experience), in His own sonship living. And without controversy, there is no greater joy, happiness, and satisfaction that we could ever experience than that which is experienced by God our Father Himself and by our Lord Jesus Christ.

But as noted we are robbed of this when we foolishly choose to stick with our own worldly ‘heart and bowels,’ instead of acquiring ‘the heart and bowels of Jesus Christ’ by means of our sonship establishment and through the course of our sonship education. And we truly are robbed. For when we operate upon our own ‘heart and bowels’ we become “straitened” at the very things, (and at the only things), by which our Father has purposed for us to experience the *full measure of His joy and His happiness and His satisfaction and His contentment* as we live our sonship lives during this present dispensation of His grace.

Wherefore when we are ‘straitened in our own bowels’ at any of our Father’s expressed will and desires for us as His “sons” we have a self-induced ailment that not only is a persistent troublemaker as it repeatedly sabotages our

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sonship lives, but it is also a horrendous thief as it goes about robbing us of unspeakable joy and happiness. All the more reason, therefore, for wanting and needing to be cured of this grim ailment.

The Cure

Unlike many physical ailments for which there is no known cure, or for which research hopes to eventually find a cure, the cure for being ‘straitened in our own bowels’ is clearly known and is readily available. For since the cause of our ailment is having a heart whose ‘table of likes and dislikes’ does not properly, or fully, conform to our Father’s own ‘likes and dislikes’ for us as His “sons,” then obviously the cure lies in remedying this discrepancy.

In other words, we will not be straitened in our own bowels at either the demands of sonship living, or at being “made as the filth of the world,” or at partaking of any of “the sufferings of Christ,” (or at any other sonship matter), if we *truly like these things*. And we will like them, if we have come to see eye-to-eye with our Father on them.

Now when we do not ‘like’ any of these matters, (or any aspect of them), the problem is that we do not think about them exactly as our Father does. This in turn makes it so that we do not really apprehend their value, and so we do not treasure them in our heart as much as we should. Oh, we may give mental assent to their importance, and even speak of their worth. Yet if we are nonetheless straitened at them in our walk, the truth of the matter is that our heart’s ‘likes and dislikes’ are not *truly* adjusted to those of our Father, no matter what we profess.

So in essence the cure for our ailment lies in us being honest with ourselves and with our Father, and undergoing *an heart operation* to fix the discrepancy between our heart’s ‘likes and dislikes’ and those of our Father.

From EBM To You

Every facet and aspect of the curriculum for our sonship education in this present dispensation of God's grace is glorious to consider. Especially as we perceive how that our Father has impeccably designed each of its forms of doctrine to effectually work within us in such a way that they are able to progressively and fully conform us to the image of His Son.

In view of this, one of the most fascinating things about our sonship education and its "godly edifying" is its *mighty power to operate in our inner man*. Particularly its capacity and ability to actually make real adjustments to our mind and heart, even to the point of restructuring them, (and also refurbishing them), so that our mind and heart can function and perform like Jesus Christ's.

Now God's power to make such adjustments is especially needed when it has to overcome any of the various forms of stubborn resistance that can exist within us. But thanks be to our Father that His word is more than capable of doing this. For as Hebrews 4:12 says...

12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

So then we should have full confidence in its ability to cure us of being straitened in our own bowels, just as the conclusion to our two-part article describes.

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**Our thanks to those
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This, therefore, means that our heart needs to be "enlarged" to embrace our Father's 'likes,' so that instead of being 'straitened in our own bowels' at aspects of His will and desire for us as His "sons," we welcome them and we delight to engage in them.

Now this is the very thing that Paul said the Corinthians needed when he dealt with them about being straitened in their own bowels at partaking of some of the more demanding and costly "sufferings of Christ."

11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

13 Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto *my children*,) be ye also enlarged. (II Corinthians 6:11-13)

As Paul says, both he and Timothy had an "enlarged" heart. And it was because of this that they were not 'straitened in their own bowels' at partaking of any of "the sufferings of Christ"; nor were they shrinking back from their desire to have fellowship with the Corinthians in these sufferings.

This, therefore, means that since the Corinthians were 'straitened in their own bowels' when it came to partaking of some of "the sufferings of Christ," and since they were shrinking back from their desire for fellowship with Paul in these sufferings, then they obviously needed for their heart to be "enlarged" too. They needed the same kind of 'enlarged heart' that Paul and Timothy had in order for them to be cured of their ailment.

And so as Paul's fatherly exhortation says...

13 Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto *my children*,) be ye also enlarged. (II Corinthians 6:13)

An Enlarged Heart

When we speak of someone having an 'enlarged heart' we often simply mean that he is very affable, sociable, friendly, welcoming, as well as generous and kindly in his dealings with others. But this is not its only meaning. For we can also speak of someone having 'an enlarged heart' in the sense that he is very agreeable and sympathetic to the wishes or desires of another person, so that he gladly

goes along with those wishes and desires, and also works to promote them or fulfill them, even at the expense of some of his own desires.

In this sense a person is said to have 'an enlarged heart' because he has *selflessly filled his own heart with the desires and wishes of another*. In other words, he has brought the desires of another person's heart into his own heart, and in so doing he has embraced them, making them his desires too.

Now this is the very kind of 'heart enlargement' that is naturally supposed to occur in sonship. For after a father gives his child "the adoption of sons," his son is then expected to begin to 'enlarge his heart' by starting to fill it with the content of his father's heart. Moreover this enlarging of the son's heart is something that takes place on a regular on-going basis throughout his sonship education and edification.

In accordance with this a father is supposed to intelligently work to purposely 'enlarge' his son's heart at strategic points in his sonship edification, just as is described, for example, in Proverbs 23.

26 My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.
(Proverbs 23:26)

As the preceding context to Proverbs 23 relates, the father has already been at work 'enlarging' his son's heart on a number of occasions. But having now brought his son to a significant juncture in his sonship education, the father specifically works to 'enlarge' his son's heart some more so that he will earnestly desire to partake of the next advancement in his sonship edification and life.

The father does this to make it so that his son will *strongly* desire the next step in his sonship life, especially in preference to certain powerful worldly desires and seductions which his son will face. For the father knows that not only could these temptations seriously interfere with his son's sonship edification if his heart inclines unto them, but they could also derail it, even destroying his son's ability to go on.

Wherefore the father beseeches his son to 'give him his heart,' and to set his eyes upon his father's 'ways.' By so doing the father can then 'enlarge' his son's heart with

the knowledge of ‘his ways,’ and thereby have it so that his son will much more prefer to walk in ‘his father’s ways’ and to fulfill ‘his father’s desires’ in connection with them, rather than those of the world or those of his adversaries.

In accordance with this the remnant of Israel, for example, will want their heart to be ‘enlarged’ as they progress through their sonship education during the final installment in God’s program with Israel. In that day as wise sons they will fulfill the words of the Psalmist saying to God their Father...

30 I have chosen thy way of truth: thy judgments have I laid *before me*.

31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.

32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart. (Psalm 119:30–32)

As the Psalmist says, not only will the wise “sons” of the remnant understand that God their Father works to ‘enlarge’ their heart with His will and desires, *but they also will want Him to do this*. In fact they will make the enlarging of their heart a matter of their sonship prayers, especially when they know they are in need of it.

Hence when the time comes that the members of the remnant of Israel will encounter the increasing demands pertaining to living their sonship lives, (e.g. when they will face very strong and persistent temptations to prefer other things more than that of getting their sonship education, or when they will be sorely tempted to avoid suffering for Christ’s sake because of its high cost), they will intelligently acknowledge the need for their Father to ‘enlarge their hearts’ through the effectual working of His word in them. For they will know that only then will they will be able to ‘run the way of His commandments’ and delight therein, and not turn aside from ‘the way,’ or be dissuaded from going on.

Enlarging Our Heart

In accordance with the need for a son to have his heart ‘enlarged,’ God our Father works to do the same with us in this present dispensation. In fact from the time that He teaches us that He has given us “the adoption of sons” He goes to work on effectually dismantling the structure of worldly desires and carnal standards that naturally exist within our hearts, and then He begins to restructure our heart’s desires and standards after the pattern of His own heart. As He does this He begins the process of ‘enlarging our heart’ by starting to fill it with the knowledge of His will and His desires for us as His “sons.”

Together with this our Father works to produce within us a growing and powerful drive and passion for fulfilling His will and desires for us. In fact He wants to produce within us a drive and passion for getting our sonship edification and for living our sonship life that is actually equal to the strength of His own Fatherly drive and passion for us, which in turn will have it so that we esteem this world’s passions and pursuits to be of no account, and to be nothing but a waste of our time and energy.

In essence, therefore, God our Father works to get it so that we, like David, are “a man after his own heart.” He works to make it so that from the outset of our sonship life, (as well as throughout its duration), whenever He asks us to ‘give Him our heart’ that we will reach out to encompass His heart. That we will wrap our heart around His and absorb its contents into ours. For this will ‘enlarge’ our heart, making it so that we will passionately desire more than anything else to fulfill His will for us as His “sons.”

So then whenever we ‘come down with’ the ailment of being ‘straitened in our own bowels’ at some aspect of our Father’s will and desire for us as His “sons,” (whether it be at fundamental matters pertaining to sonship itself, or at more advanced issues like

partaking of “the sufferings of Christ”), the root of the problem is *in our heart*. And so as previously noted, we need to be willing to undergo an operation on our heart, if we are to be cured.

Our heart needs to be operated upon and ‘enlarged’ by the effectual working of specific doctrines *that are purposely designed to make adjustments to it and in it*, so that we embrace our Father’s will for us instead of shun it. And this is how we heed and fulfill Paul’s fatherly exhortation...

13 Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto *my children*,) be ye also enlarged. (II Corinthians 6:13)

Prescribing The Cure

The degree or extent to which we are ‘straitened in our own bowels’ determines what *specific corrective doctrines* we need to hear so that we can begin to embrace and welcome what we have been ignoring, or shunning, or refusing. And though we can be ‘straitened in our own bowels’ at any aspect of our Father’s will or desires for us as His “sons,” we will briefly look at the cure for the kinds of ‘straitening’ that we cited in the first part of this article.

Therefore in connection with our sonship status itself, if we are straitened in our bowels at the issue of properly applying ourselves to getting our sonship education, (i.e. if we prefer other pursuits in life to that of getting our sonship education; or if we are more happy having the merchandise of this world rather than the merchandise of sonship wisdom; or if we prefer the world’s definition for ‘living life to the fullest’ to that of God’s definition; or in short, if we are in any sense “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God”), then our heart needs the most basic form of ‘enlargement.’ For we clearly are not as passionate about our sonship status as we should be.

However if we do have a positive and proper measure of commitment to getting our sonship education, and are

pursuing it, but sadly we find ourselves straitened in our bowels at suffering opposition to our godly living, or at experiencing any of “the sufferings of Christ,” then our heart needs a different prescription for ‘enlargement.’ One that specifically addresses our heart’s dislike for these kinds of sufferings, and can effectually remedy it.

Curing the Initial Form of the Ailment

If we are ‘straitened in our own bowels’ at properly applying ourselves to getting our sonship education, (preferring other things instead of it, or giving little time to it), then we need to honestly confront ourselves in a ‘straight-shooting,’ no nonsense way with the *folly* of what we are doing.

And I do mean folly. For since we are God’s “sons” it truly is foolish for us to desire other things in this world over that of getting our sonship education and living our sonship life. Wherefore as the opening fatherly admonition and exhortation in Proverbs declares...

7 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.

8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

9 For they *shall be* an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. (Proverbs 1:7-9)

By confronting us with the reality of our folly, this is how our Father begins working in our heart to conform it to His. For as we honestly deal with the truth that “the fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction” God frankly deals with us about the folly of not passionately pursuing our sonship education.

As God does this He works at dismantling our heart’s table of worldly desires, and He provides for restructuring it to conform it to His. For when we give honest heed to what He says,

He searches our heart, going through its ‘table of likes and dislikes’ item-by-item. And He confronts us with any discrepancy that He finds between ours and His.

Now when a discrepancy is found we can deal with it. That is, we can respond positively to what He exposes by honestly acknowledging our folly, and by choosing to replace any of our heart’s worldly desires with His desires.

So if we do “despise” the “wisdom and instruction” of our sonship education and edification, preferring other things to it, let’s briefly consider how much of a fool we are, just as Prov-

...the merchandise of this world is not even the same kind of merchandise that “the creature” wants to use.

verbs 1:7 says. In fact even a very simple description of just a few of our follies is enough to confirm this, and to label us a “foolish son.”

For example, since our sonship education is our vocational education and training for our role as God’s “new creature”; and since the time for getting this vocational education and training is now; then we are “fools” if we are wasting our time pursuing this world’s fashionable gains and its symbols of success, instead of investing our time in getting our sonship education. For none of this world’s gains have any eternal value or profit. And none of its symbols of success, or definitions of success, are the same as God’s.

In fact, what the world calls success and gain is actually failure and loss in God’s eyes. Which is what we will find them to be at the judgment seat of Christ, (and this to our grief), if we have spent our time pursuing them.

For which, if any, of this world’s gains and successes will be genuine gain and success for us when it comes to our vocational education and training as God’s “new creature”? For example, can gaining “the wisdom of this world” educate us in “the creature”? Can it teach us what it is and how it operates, and also what its intelligentsia is and how they operate? Can it teach us the kind of ‘creature-skills’ that we will need for our vocation, or train us in their use? Or can it develop within us any of the special ‘creature-capacities and abilities’ that should be developing within us right now, which will qualify us to function in the creature’s positions of intelligentsia?

In short, can gaining “the wisdom of this world” do us one whit of good, or make any real contribution whatsoever to our vocational education and training as God’s “new creature”?

Obviously the answer to each of these questions is a resounding “no.”

So if we spend more time pursuing “the wisdom of this world” then we need to honestly face up to the folly of what we are doing, and respond positively to our Father’s reproof of our foolishness. In so doing we can then enlarge our heart by wisely jettisoning such time-wasting and worthless pursuits, and in their place fervently embrace the pursuit of getting our sonship education, with all of its godly wisdom and its inestimable and eternal worth.

Likewise we are ‘foolish sons’ if we engage in the pursuit of materialistic gains. For this is just another waste of our time, and also of our resources.

For which, if any, of these gains are going to translate themselves into godly gains for us in our ‘life which is to come’ as God’s “new creature”? Not a single one. For not only is it absolutely impossible for us to carry “the merchandise of silver” and ‘the gain of gold’ out of this world, but the merchandise of this world is not even the same kind of merchandise that “the creature” wants to use. For “the crea-

ture” wants to use merchandise that is purchased with the ‘spiritual money’ of the godly knowledge, wisdom, discernment, perception, and the like, that comes from our sonship education.

Therefore we are indeed “fools” if we spend our time pursuing the philosophic or materialistic gains of this world, in preference to getting our sonship education. For we are not only wasting our time on things that are of no value to us in our vocational education and training as God’s “sons,” but we are also actually letting the Adversary’s “course of this world” entice us and enchant us, and so beguile us and rob us of what truly is gain and success for us as God’s “sons.”

Likewise we are foolish if we are more captivated by the popular carnal and hedonistic pursuits belonging to “the fashion of this world,” than by the pleasures belonging to our sonship life.

Along with this we are also “fools” if we think that what this world offers in terms of living a meaningful life, (and also in terms of happiness, satisfaction, and contentment), could even compare with what God our Father offers us. For this world operates upon a make-believe substitute reality for the truth. As such it has an artificial and contrived ‘meaning of life.’ Plus its brand of happiness, satisfaction, and contentment in life is at best a poor substitute for God’s variety.

Wherefore if we prefer other things in this life to that of getting our sonship education and operating upon it, then we foolishly forfeit all of the glory and joy of operating upon verity instead of the fallacy and fabrications of men’s imaginations. Plus we forfeit the unspeakable joy of experiencing God’s own brand of pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, and contentment in our daily lives.

Now these are but just a few of the many follies that can make us ‘foolish sons.’ In fact, the more we honestly consider why we prefer other things to that of getting our sonship

education, the more follies we will find. And the more closely we examine them, the more foolish we will find them to be.

But again, we do not have to be ‘foolish sons,’ who are straitened in our own bowels at the responsibilities of sonship living. For we can respond positively to our Father’s effectual rebuking of our follies. In so doing we can change our mind about them, and replace them with the appropriate passion for getting our sonship education and for living our sonship lives.

Curing a Tougher Form of the Ailment

Just as God our Father makes provision for enlarging our heart at the outset of our sonship lives, so also does

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He provide for enlarging our heart more and more as we progress through the curriculum for our “godly edifying.” For as was previously noted, there are strategic points throughout the course of our sonship education and lives when our heart needs to be enlarged further.

One of these strategic points is when we become eligible to partake of any of our prescribed *sonship sufferings*, like those we cited in the first part of this article. For due to their nature there is a strong tendency for us to be straitened in our own bowels at them, just as the Corinthians demonstrated. Therefore they can constitute a tougher form of the ailment.

So if we have doctrinally arrived at one of these strategic points, and we are straitened in our own bowels at the corresponding suffering, then we

need to avail ourselves of the cure that is given at each of these points. For in connection with each of our sonship sufferings, our Father makes appropriate provision for further enlarging our heart so that we can embrace it.

Now the cure for being straitened in our own bowels at any of our sonship sufferings starts with us learning to be impressed with just how great an honor and a privilege it is for us to partake of the suffering. And then once we are suitably impressed with the privilege, our heart can begin the process of being enlarged.

So if we, (like the Corinthians), are straitened in our own bowels at suffering opposition from this ungodly world for living godly lives in its midst, then we need to avail ourselves of the cure that is in I Corinthians 4:8–17.

Wherefore when Paul says...

9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. (I Corinthians 4:9)

...he actually begins providing for us to be cured of our ailment. For when he speaks of being “made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men,” this entails the special privilege that belongs to this sonship suffering.

Now the reason that suffering for godliness’ sake truly is a privilege for us is because of the “spectacle” aspect of it. For as Paul sets forth, the issue in being “made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” is not simply that of being the object of this ungodly world’s contempt for godliness. But it is also the issue of us being *a showcase for God*. In particular a showcase in which He is able to visibly display *through us* His great longsuffering, and His graciousness, and His lovingkindness to this world, in the face of its contempt for Him and for His righteousness and Holiness. This indeed makes suffering for godliness’ sake a privilege, to say the least.

Hence in accordance with this special and privileged aspect of being “made a spectacle,” Paul describes his corresponding participation in it when he says...

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;

12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

13 Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, *and are* the offscouring of all things unto this day. (I Corinthians 4:11–13)

Once again, suffering for godliness’ sake, (and thereby being “made a spectacle” for God’s sake), is indeed a privilege of God’s grace unto us.

In fact in connection with us being conformed to the image of God’s Son through our sonship education, (and also in accordance with the issue of us putting our conformity to Christ on display in our lives to our Father’s glory), this sonship suffering is one of our most phenomenal sonship graces. For when we suffer for godliness’ sake, (and in response we display the very same graciousness and lovingkindness that our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ have), God is able to showcase how that through the effectual working of our “godly edifying” He has been able to reproduce within us a very significant amount of likeness to Himself and to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore if we are straitened in our own bowels at suffering for godliness’ sake, (preferring that men would think of us as being “wise in Christ,” instead of being “fools for Christ’s sake”; or preferring to be looked upon as “strong,” instead of “weak”; or desiring to be “honourable” in men’s eyes, instead of “despised” by them, etc.), then we need to learn the basics of the privilege of this sonship suffering. For this is how we will begin to get cured of our ailment.

But then we need to honestly deal with all that God our Father has Paul teach us in I Corinthians 4:8–17. For we need to become *fully impressed* with this great privilege, so that the process for effectually dislodging and fully displacing our heart’s ‘dislike’ for this suffering can occur. This in turn will pave the way for us to sincerely appreciate this sonship suffering, and for our former ‘dislike’ for it to be replaced with a strong ‘godly like’ for it.

Then with our heart enlarged to embrace this sonship grace, we will no longer need to be straitened in our own bowels at partaking of this sonship suffering. Instead we will be able to fulfill Paul’s fatherly exhortation...

16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. (I Corinthians 4:16)

Curing Even the Toughest Forms of the Ailment

As we saw in the first part of this article, it is also easy for us to be straitened in our own bowels at partaking of “the sufferings of Christ,” which Paul describes, for example, in II Corinthians. This is especially so when it comes to the ones that are very discomforting, and that can have serious intimidating consequences to them, like those that the Corinthians balked at as described in II Corinthians 4–6.

Yet even if we have one of these toughest forms of the ailment, we can still be cured. Moreover, just as it is with the cure for being straitened in our own bowels at suffering for godliness’ sake, the cure for these toughest forms of the ailment also begins with us becoming suitably impressed with the privilege that it is for us to partake of “the sufferings of Christ.”

And indeed it is a great privilege for us to partake of these sufferings too. For when we partake of “the sufferings of Christ,” we are partaking of *Christ’s own sufferings*. Or in other words, we are partaking of specific sufferings that are of the very same nature as those that our Lord Jesus Christ

experienced and endured in the earthly aspect of His sonship life. And we are given the opportunity to do this because of their integral role in furthering our conformity to the image of Christ.

Wherefore what a tremendous privilege it is for us, (and what a glorious grace it is unto us), to be able to partake of them. How wonderful it is that our Father has provided for us to experience sufferings *of the very same nature as the Lord Jesus Himself experienced!* And then on top of this, how much more glorious it is for us to have the ultimate privilege of being able to operate upon *the very same kind of effectual working of God’s word within us as that which the Lord operated upon in His sufferings!*

In fact, as far as our sonship education and lives are concerned, there is no greater privilege for us.

So once again, if we are straitened in our own bowels at partaking of any of “the sufferings of Christ,” then we need to begin getting cured by learning the details of what Paul sets forth in the opening of II Corinthians regarding the marvelous privilege that it is for us to partake of them.

However since being straitened in our own bowels at “the sufferings of Christ” is one of the toughest forms of the ailment, we should not be surprised to learn that it might take more than this to effectually dislodge and fully displace any of our heart’s ‘dislikes’ for “the sufferings of Christ.” And indeed it can.

For partaking of “the sufferings of Christ” also involves us experiencing strongly influential activities from Satan’s policy of evil against us, as well as strongly intimidating and discomforting ones. As such, these are designed to produce within us very powerful ‘dislikes’ for the consequences of those sufferings. And this in turn is designed to make it so that the ‘dislikes’ of our heart are very tenacious and difficult to dislodge.

Now unfortunately it is quite easy for our hearts to develop strong and tenacious ‘dislikes’ for aspects of our Father’s will and desires for us, particularly when we are unduly influenced by the ungodly opinions and carnal criticisms of unbelievers, or of false brethren. Which is why producing such influence is a big part of the Adversary’s policy of evil against us.

Nevertheless our Father has mercifully provided for dealing with this situation. Wherefore as He teaches us about “the sufferings of Christ” He also supplies us with a number of very powerful Fatherly probings of our heart. These are designed to pointedly attack the defiling influence that the policy of evil has upon us, and so work at overcoming the strong ‘dislikes’ that it has produced.

So if we, for example, like the Corinthians are straitened in our own bowels at partaking of “the sufferings of Christ” due to the ungodly opinions and carnal criticisms of unbelievers, or false brethren, then in order to counteract them and appropriately ‘enlarge’ our heart we too need to benefit from the effectual working of the following.

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (II Corinthians 6:14–18)

Through these five specific questions that accompany Paul’s fatherly charge to us, God provides for our heart to undergo a very penetrating analysis. For these five questions are not simply rhetorical questions for which the obvious answer is “None.” Instead they are highly thought-provoking questions, which when honestly dealt with by us are designed to effectually penetrate our heart and to work within it in a very special way.

For by means of the specific kind of thinking that they generate in our minds, they are able to ‘cut us to the quick,’ so to speak, as they reprove us for foolishly giving heed to the worldly opinions, estimations, sentiments, reactions, and

the like, of ungodly men; and as they rebuke us for allowing the Adversary to successfully do damage to our sonship lives by deceiving us and intimidating us into complying with thinking and living that is completely contrary to the godly aims, goals, and objectives of our sonship lives.

So very simply put, when we respond honestly to the specific thinking that each of these questions generates within us, our Father is able to work in our hearts not only to reprove us and rebuke us, but also to neutralize, nullify, and undo the defiling, polluting, and damaging influence that ungodly men and the Adversary have had upon us.

Whereupon we will then be able to fulfill Paul’s charge to us in II Corinthians 7:1...

1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (II Corinthians 7:1)

...and so enlarge our heart to embrace “the sufferings of Christ.”

Taking the Cure

As the perfect father that He is to us, God our Father not only knows in advance that we can easily become straitened in our own bowels at aspects of His will and desires for us as His “sons,” but He also has provided for curing us of this ailment whenever we ‘come down’ with it. Moreover in accordance with the genius of the overall composition of His curriculum for our sonship education, He has even incorporated the cure for our ailment right into the curriculum. And He has done this at the very points when we are most likely to develop the ailment.

However knowing what the cure is and having it readily available to us does not do us any real good, *if we do not take it*. What’s more, in accordance with being adult “sons,” it is *our responsibility* to avail ourselves of the cure.

So then if you are straitened in your own bowels at any of the demands of sonship living, or at the sonship grace of suffering for godliness’ sake, or at partaking of any of “the sufferings of Christ,” (or for that matter at any aspect of our Father’s will and desire for us as His “sons”), do not resign yourself to ‘just live with it.’ For this is neither a harmless nor a merely inconvenient ailment to have. Instead it truly can, and it truly does, wreck havoc with our sonship lives. And it will not go away, or get better, on its own.

Therefore, be a wise son and take the cure.

— K. R. Blades

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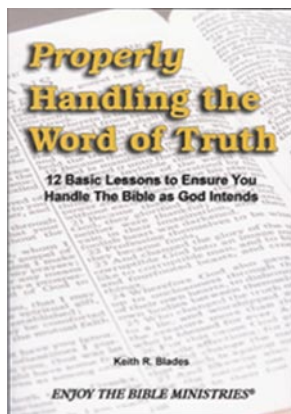
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