

General Topics :: dark night of the soul

dark night of the soul - posted by Spitfire, on: 2004/9/9 6:23

Has anyone ever heard of a "dark night of the soul"? Is this something that happens more than once? I'm really in agony right now and I feel that it has been brought on by my own attempts to lay down my life.

Re: dark night of the soul - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/9/9 6:41

Hi Spitfire

the phrase comes from a mystical treatise by St John of the Cross. The whole document is available here; dark night of the soul

Mysticism is an area where I dare to disagree with Saint Tozer. He felt its dangers were exceeded by its benefit; I think the opposite. Mystics taught that holiness was achieved by suffering and frequently administered their own suffering with whips and hair-shirts. They also believed in absorption into the divine; a kind of Christian version of transcendental meditation. To me the benefits would have to be very great to outway these poisonous notions.

The phrase is often used by Christians in a less technical sense to describe times when they lose their consciousness of God's presence. There can be many reasons for this, and many godly folk have experienced it.

however, even when you cannot see His face you can still shelter under the covering of His Wing.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. (Heb 10:35-39 KJV)

Re: dark night of the soul - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/9 6:41

THE MORE WE LEARN OF God and His ways and of man and his nature we are bound to reach the conclusion that we are all just about as holy as we want to be. We are all just about as full of the Spirit as we want to be. Thus when we tell ourselves that we want to be more holy but we are really as holy as we care to be, it is small wonder that the dark night of the soul takes so long!

A. W. Tozer

Re: dark night of the soul - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/9 6:58

The old writers used to tell us of the dark night of the soul. There's a place where a Christian goes through darkness, where there is heaviness. God isn't going to take us off to heaven all wrapped in cellophane, looking as if we ought to be hanging on a Christmas tree. God is going to take us there after He has purged us and disciplined us and dragged us through the fire and has made us strong and taught us that faith and feeling are not the same—although faith, thank God, brings feeling sometimes.

We used to sing, "High heaven that heard my solemn vow, that vow renewed shall daily hear." People are afraid of that kind of thing now, but I believe that just as Daniel determined that he would not eat of the king's meat and as Jesus set His face like a flint, and just as Paul said "one thing I do," the true follower of Christ must be a man whose will has been sanctified. He dare not be a will-less man. I never believed that when we teach the deeper life we should teach that God destroys our will. But God unites our will with His will and our will becomes strong in His will, and sometimes as we go on in God we hardly know whether it is our will or God's that is working at a given moment.

A. W. Tozer

Total commitment to Christ

Holiness is practical, not mystical.
The cross is a must, not a mystery.
Daily walk with the Lord may take us through darkness over and over, but the Lord is a faithful shepherd.
To many, this walk is a horror; to a believer who dares to give his life away this walk is precious.
L.W.

Re: dark night of the soul - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/9 10:23

The number is great of those who will no longer admit that spiritual victory often comes through wrestling in a long, dark night of the soul.
"That is not for us," they contend. "Jesus did all of the suffering so we can be happy. And we are going to be happy even if we have to invent new ways to happiness!"

The worst part is that we also expect Jesus will do all of the loving. We have largely forgotten the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."
What I am anxious to see in Christian believers is a beautiful paradox. I want to see in them the joy of finding God while at the same time they are blessedly pursuing Him. I want to see in them the great joy of having God and yet always wanting Him!

A. W. Tozer
Men who met God

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/9/9 11:53

Quote:
-----The number is great of those who will no longer admit that spiritual victory often comes through wrestling in a long, dark night of the soul.

I am sure that this happens in the lives of many, however the danger is in making it an expectation and methodology of the experience. The safe way is always to ask what does the Bible say about 'long dark nights of the soul'? and the answer is little if anything.

Mysticism manifests itself in all religions. Buddhism specializes in trance states, as does Sufi Islam. There are Jewish Catholic hasidic groups which still emphasize mystical Judaism such as the Chabad Chasidim and the Braslev Chasidim. Catholic mysticism was extra-biblical revelation and advocated ascetic practices to bring the soul into submission. The Discalced Carmelites (Barefoot Carmelites) which St John of the Cross co-founded shut themselves away in cells and 'mortified' their flesh with beatings and long fastings. He taught the necessity of the "Dark Night", which consists in the passive purgation, where God by heavy trials, particularly interior ones, perfects and completes what the soul had begun of its own accord. The perfect purgation of the soul in the present life leaves it free to act with wonderful energy: in fact it might almost be said to obtain a share in God's omnipotence, as is shown in the marvelous deeds of so many saints. As the soul emerges from the Dark Night it enters into the full noonlight described in the "Spiritual Canticle" and the "Living Flame of Love". St. John leads it to the highest heights, in fact to the point where it becomes a "partaker of the Divine Nature". It is here that the necessity of the previous cleansing is clearly perceived the pain of the mortification of all the senses and the powers and faculties of the soul being amply repaid by the glory which is now being revealed in it.

GHLang once wrote that the essential and hurtful element in mysticism is that it directs men to seek God within ourselves, whereas the Spirit leads us to acquaintance with God in his own realm above. The difference is momentous in both its nature and its effect.

You may note that mysticism teaches that these experiences produce the state in which man becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Peter of course says that it is through exceeding great and precious promises (given unto us): that by the

se ye might be partakers of the divine nature,. It is not by mystical experiences that we become partakers of the divine nature but by receiving his word into our lives.

The language of the 'dark night of the soul' can be very expressive for a Christian but do beware of the theology that lurks behind it.

Re: dark night of the soul - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/9 12:00

Now let us keep our theology straight about all this.

There is not in this painful stripping one remote thought of human merit. The "dark night of the soul" knows not one dim ray of the treacherous light of self-righteousness. We do not by suffering earn the anointing for which we yearn, nor does this devastation of soul make us dear to God nor give us additional favor in His eyes. The value of the stripping experience lies in its power to detach us from life's passing interests and to throw us back upon eternity. It serves to empty our earthly vessels and prepare us for the inpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The filling with the Spirit, then, requires that we give up our all, that we undergo an inward death, that we rid our hearts of that centuries-old accumulation of Adamic trash and open all rooms to the heavenly Guest.

The Holy Spirit is a living Person and should be treated as a person. We must never think of Him as a blind energy nor as an impersonal force. He hears and sees and feels as any person does. He speaks and hears us speak. We can please Him or grieve Him or silence Him as we can any other person. He will respond to our timid effort to know Him and will ever meet us over half the way.

However wonderful the crisis experience of being filled with the Spirit, we should remember that it is only a means toward something greater: that greater thing is the lifelong walk in the Spirit, indwelt, directed, taught and empowered by His mighty Person. And to continue thus to walk in the Spirit requires that we meet certain conditions. These are laid down for us in the sacred Scriptures and are there for all to see.

The Spirit-filled walk demands, for instance, that we live in the Word of God as a fish lives in the sea. By this I do not mean that we study the Bible merely, nor that we take a "course" in Bible doctrine. I mean that we should "meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2) in the sacred Word, that we should love it and feast upon it and digest it every hour of the day and night. When the business of life compels our attention we may yet, by kind of blessed mental reflex, keep the Word of Truth ever before our minds.

Then if we would please the indwelling Spirit we must be all taken up with Christ. The Spirit's present work is to honor Him, and everything He does has this for its ultimate purpose. And we must make our thoughts a clean sanctuary for His holy habitation. He dwells in our thoughts, and soiled thoughts are as repugnant to Him as soiled linen to a king. Above all we must have a cheerful faith that will keep on believing however radical the fluctuation in our emotional states may be.

The Spirit indwelt life is not a special deluxe edition of Christianity to be enjoyed by a certain rare and privileged few who happen to be made of finer and more sensitive stuff than the rest. Rather, it is the normal state for every redeemed man and woman the world over. It is the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:26-27)

Faber, in one of his sweet and reverent hymns, addressed this good word to the Holy Spirit:

Ocean, wide flowing Ocean, Thou
Of uncreated Love;
I tremble as within my soul
I feel Thy waters move.
Thou art a sea without a shore;
Awful, immense Thou art;
A sea which can contract itself
Within my narrow heart.

A.W. Tozer
Pursuit of man

Re: night seasons - posted by moreofHim (), on: 2004/9/9 12:46

Hello Dian,

I have had a few of these seasons myself. 3 to be exact. Each time was definitely a test of faith for me and I hung on for dear life and here I am today. :) I do have to admit that my last season of this dark night was dealing with the temptation to go back to "Egypt" (go back to some of my old life) But even after I had surrendered the right to go back and committed to total obedience, it still lasted a while. Many, many people mistake this for clinical depression. It actually would have been an easy "out" to go to a doctor or counselor and told of my woes- but I knew the truth and the truth was that this too would pass, I just needed to hang in there and TRUST God. Thank the Lord He gave me the grace to hang in there with no visible or tangible evidence.

I read some great articles by lady named Nancy Missler who has experienced this as well. Her articles were a great comfort to me (as much as you can be comforted at these times). You can find her series on Faith in The Night Seasons here: <http://www.khouse.org/articles/nanscorner/faithinthenightseasons.html>

Here is a sampling:

What are "Night Seasons?"

Trials come to all Christians. They come because of personal sin, the sins of others, the schemes of the devil and the fallen state of the human race.

According to the Bible, a true "night season" is none of these! A true Biblical night season is a God-sent, Father-filtered period of time where He specifically strengthens our faith and teaches us to walk only by His Spirit, not by our flesh. It's a time where God lovingly removes all our natural and comfortable "support systems" (inside and out) in order to replace them with total and unshakable faith in Him.

It's a time where He leads us away from depending upon "self," to depending totally upon Him. It's a time where He allows circumstances into our lives that darken our understanding, that negate our feelings and that put to confusion all our own plans and purposes. Listen to how Madame Guyon describes this period of time in her book *Final Steps in Christian Maturity*:

"There comes a time in the believer's life when the Lord withdraws the joy. He will seemingly withdraw the graces. At the same time, the Christian may also find himself in a period of persecution-persecution, no less, than that coming from Christians in religious authority. Further, he may find much difficulty in his home or private life. He may also be experiencing great difficulties with his health. Somewhere there will be a great deal of pain or other losses too numerous to mention.

"The believer may also be undergoing experiences which he feels are totally unique to himself. Other Christians, in whom he has put his trust, may forsake him and mistreat him. He may feel that he has been very unjustly treated. He will feel this toward men and he will feel it toward his God, for-in the midst of all this other pain and confusion-it will seem that God, too, has left him!

"Even more believers give up the journey when the Lord seems to have forsaken them in the spirit and left their spirit dead-while the world and all else is crashing in on them, friends forsaking them, and great suffering and pain abounding everywhere in their lives. But, the true land of promise always lies beyond a vast wasteland. Promise is found only on the far side of a desert.

"When you can go beyond that place and, not seeing your Lord, believe He is there by the eyes of faith alone; when you can walk further and further into Christ when there are no senses, no feelings, not even the slightest registration of the presence of God; when you can sit before Him when everything around you and within you seems to be either falling apart or dead; and when you can come before your Lord without question and without demand, serene in faith alone, and the

re, before Him, worship Him without distraction, without a great deal of consciousness of self and with no spiritual sense of Him, then will the test of commitment begin to be established. Then will begin the true journey of the Christian life."

Trusting God in the Darkness

Since most of us are unable to learn these lessons through our reason, our intellect or our emotions, God must teach us these things by darkening these areas of our soul and forcing us to rely totally upon our faith and the eyes of our spirit. Thus, the name The Dark Night.

Remember Isaiah 50:10, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?" Notice something important here: this person not only fears the Lord, but he also obeys His voice. In other words, there is no disobedience or sin involved, and yet, this person still walks in darkness.

Although it's hard for us to imagine that God, who is light, could ever dwell in darkness, the Bible tells us that at times God does dwell in the dark. This is His "secret place." (Psalm 18:11) In 1 Kings 8:12, it says, "The Lord said that He would dwell in the thick darkness." And in Exodus 20:21, Moses approached "the thick darkness where God was." The Bible tells us that God not only "forms the light," but He also "creates the darkness." (Isaiah 45:7) Darkness and light are the same to Him.

This is simply saying that the "things of God" are far beyond the human eye and the human ear. They are "dark" to us, because they are beyond our human understanding. Thus, if we are to continue our inward journey towards intimacy with God and experience His fullness, we must choose to walk purely by faith in the darkness, clinging to the assurance that God has allowed whatever is happening in our life for a purpose and that His will is being accomplished. Being able to unconditionally trust God in the darkness is essential, because if we give in to doubting His Love and care at this time, we can easily lose our way. (This is what almost happened to me, as I shared in last month's UPDATE.)

Many of us will struggle in this new realm of faith, just as a swimmer fights the powerful current that draws him into deeper water. The swimmer will drown unless he quiets his fear and calmly rests in the water. The believer, likewise, will drown in this dark time unless he learns to be still and to quiet his soul. God is simply using the darkness to accomplish His will: to form Christ in us so that we might enjoy not only His abundant Life, but also intimate fellowship.

Yet, many of us completely misunderstand this aspect of discipleship. And because we cannot grasp God's mysterious ways, we often distrust His motives. When God allows painful circumstances into our lives, we hastily assume that He is punishing us or that He has forsaken us, yet nothing could be further from the truth. He is simply attempting to "free us" from our "soulish" limitations and lead us into the wider realm of His Spirit. But, because so many of us lack understanding of this spiritual discipline, we naturally assume the darkness has come forth from the enemy, and that it is intended for our destruction.

As Alan Redpath, the notable English writer, assures us, "The devil has nothing to do with (these dark times). God has brought us to this experience. He wants to replace us with Himself." I love that! God uses these dark times to simply "replace us with Himself." This is the whole Christian life in a nutshell! This is God's will: to empty us of ourselves so He can simply replace us with Himself.

Re: dark night of the soul - posted by 5nva (), on: 2004/9/9 12:47

Spitfire:

May I suggest you listen to a very old message by David Wilkerson called "Making Of A Man Of God". Greg has it on the site under David Wilkerson Downloads.

Pastor David maybe doesn't call it "dark night of the soul" but I remember him saying something like every man (person) of God will drink their cup of pain and have their night of confusion.

This message may encourage you and reveal something to you.

God bless and keep clinging to Jesus.

Mike

Re: dark night of the soul - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/9 13:59

Dark, Dark Night of the Soul!
A. W. Tozer
From: I talk back t the devil

01.

Â“Remember how they nailed Jesus to a cross. Remember the darkness, the hiding of the FatherÂ’s face. This was the path Jesus took to immortal triumph. As He is, so are we in this world!Â”

I AM CONVINCED that in New Testament Christianity the object of the Holy Spirit is twofold. First, He wants to convince Christians that it is actually possible for us to know the beauty and perfection of Jesus Christ in our daily lives. Second, it is His desire to lead us forward into victory and blessing even as Joshua once led Israel into the promised land .

The first is not too difficult. Most Christians will honestly confess that there are still spiritual frontiers before them which they have not been willing to explore. There is still ground to be taken if our object is to know Christ, to win Christ, to know the power of His resurrection, to be conformed to His death. If our object is to experience within our beings all of those things that we have in Christ judicially, we must come to the place of counting all things loss for the excellency of this knowledge.

We know our lack, but we are very slow in allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us into deeper Christian life and experience, that place where the intent of our heart is so cleansed that we may perfectly love God and worthily praise Him. In spite of our hesitation and delay and holding back God does not give up, because the Holy Spirit is faithful and kind and patient and ever seeks to lead us forward into the life of the special kind of Christian.

I well remember the caution of one of the old saints I have read who pointed out that Â“a persuaded mind and even a well-intentioned heart may be far from exact and faithful practiceÂ” and Â“nothing has been more common than to meet souls who are perfect and saintly in speculation.Â”

Jesus did not say, Â“You will be my disciples by speculation.Â” He did say that by your fruit and by your behavior you will be known. This is one rule that is never deceiving, and it is by this that we should judge ourselves.

God will sift out those who only speculate about the claims of Christ and He will lead forward those who by His grace see Him in His beauty and seek Him in His love.

Illustration of Gideon

The story of Gideon is an illustration of how God seeks His qualities within us and is not concerned with us just as numbers or statistics. Gideon was about to face the enemy and he had an army of 32,000 soldiers. But the Lord said to Gideon, Â“You have too manyÂ—let all who are afraid go back.Â” So Gideon gave the word to the troops, and 22,000 of those men turned back. Then the Lord said to Gideon again, Â“There are still too many. I can see those among you who are not prepared for what we are going to do. You will Â“ever be able to make Israelite soldiers of them.Â”

I presume that there are few preachers among us on the top side of this terrestrial ball who would have turned down those 22,000, but God was putting the emphasis on quality, on those who would cooperate in the performance of the will of God.

Then Gideon took the 10,000 men to the river and tested them as God had directed and when this sifting was all done, Gideon had an army of 300 men. God seeks out those who are willing that their lives should be fashioned according to His own grace and love. He sifts out those who cannot see GodÂ’s purpose and design for our blessing.

Some of you know something of that which has been called Â“the dark night of the soul.Â” Some of you have spiritual desire and deep longing for victory but it seems to you that your efforts to go on with God have only brought you more bumps and more testings and more discouragement. You are tempted to ask, Â“How long can this go on?Â”

Let me remind you of the journey of Jesus Christ to immortal triumph. Remember the garden where He sweat blood. Remember PilateÂ’s hall where they put on Him the purple robe and smote Him. Remember His experience with His closest disciples as they all forsook Him and fled. Remember the journey up the hill to Calvary. Remember how they nailed Him to a cross, those six awful hours, the hiding of the FatherÂ’s face. Remember the darkness and remember the surrender of His spirit in death.

This was the path that Jesus took to immortal triumph and everlasting glory, and as He is, so are we in this world!

Re: - posted by Gideons (), on: 2004/9/9 14:32

I saw your post Spitfire and you've been on my mind ever since I read it.

The quotes are great and here's a few scriptures that I pray will encourage you as well:

2 Samuel 22:29 - For thou art my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness.

Job 29:3 - When his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness;

Psalms 18:28 - For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

Isaiah 50:10 - Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.

Micah 7:8 - Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.

As someone who is going through this to some degree now myself, I would encourage you to focus on the light (i.e. Jesus Christ). He is light in the midst of the darkness.

Re: dark night of the soul - posted by Spitfire, on: 2004/9/9 16:31

You Folks are great encouragers! Thanks for all the good scriptures and recommended reading and audio. I'll listen well. I know God is so very faithful. It ain't like I've never been through this before.

Re: - posted by seekinggod (), on: 2004/9/9 21:27

Quote:
-----The phrase is often used by Christians in a less technical sense to describe times when they lose their consciousness of God's presence. There can be many reasons for this, and many godly folk have experienced it.

I just exited a 4 month period like this. I was studying my Bible one night and I had a feeling like God pulled the plug. Previous to this event, I had been praying that God break me and rebuild me for an extended period of time.

Having since exited this "dark" time in which I questioned some things, I am regaining my walk stronger than ever.

I don't know anything about the article/essay you speak of, but I do know that regardless of how we "feel", we are called to follow. This was a tough, but fruitful lesson for me.

Re: - posted by seekinggod (), on: 2004/9/9 21:30

moreofhim said:

Quote:
-----I have had a few of these seasons myself. 3 to be exact. Each time was definitely a test of faith for me and I hung on for dear life and here I am today. :)

This is the season I just recently experienced. I was holding on by a thread, and my prayer life consisted of "Lord, where are you?"

Re: - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/10 2:03

02.

Few enter into the light

Yes, there is a dark night of the soul. There are few Christians willing to go into this dark night and that is why there are so few who enter into the light. It is impossible for them ever to know the morning because they will not endure the night. In The Cloud of Unknowing, we have been told: "This work asketh no long time before it be truly done, as some men think, for it is the shortest work of all that men may imagine. It is neither longer nor shorter, but even according to the stirring that is within thee, even thy will."

The stirring within us often is not enough. There are too many other factors—there is not yet a vacuum within, a prepared place into which the Holy Spirit may come and be at home.

I think the more we learn of God and His ways and of man and his nature we are bound to reach the conclusion that we are all just about as holy as we want to be. We are all just about as full of the Spirit as we want to be. Thus when we tell ourselves that we want to be more holy but we are really as holy as we care to be, it is small wonder that the dark night of the soul takes so long!

The reason why many are still troubled, still seeking, still making little forward progress is because they have not yet come to the end of themselves. We are still giving some of the orders, and we are still interfering with God's working within us.

We struggle to keep up a good front, forgetting that God says the most important thing is for us to be humble and meek as Christ gave us example. It seems that Christians are obsessed with keeping up that good front. We say we want to go to heaven when we die to see old Jordan roll, but we spend most of our time and energy down here just putting on that good front. It seems that many of us say to God, as did King Saul the apostate before us, "Oh God, honor me now before these people!"

Re: - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/10 8:47

03.

Hiding our inner state

We also are guilty of hiding our inner state. The Bible plainly tells us to expose our inner state to God, but we would rather cover it up. God cannot change it if we cover it and hide it.

We disguise the poverty of our spirit. If we should suddenly be revealed to those around us on the outside as Almighty God sees us within our souls, we would become the most embarrassed people in the world. If that should happen, we would be revealed as people barely able to stand, people in rags, some too dirty to be decent, some with great open sores. Some would be revealed in such condition that they would be turned out of Skid Row. Do we think that we are actually keeping our spiritual poverty a secret, that God doesn't know us better than we know ourselves? But we will not tell Him, and we disguise our poverty of spirit and hide our inward state in order to preserve our reputation.

We also want to keep some authority for ourselves. We cannot agree that the last, the final key to our lives should be turned over to Jesus Christ. Brethren, we want to have dual controls—let the Lord run it but keep a hand on the controls just in case the Lord should fail!

We are willing to join heartily in singing, "To God Be the Glory," but we are strangely ingenious in figuring out ways and means by which we keep some of the glory for ourselves. In this matter of perpetually seeking our own interests, we can only say that people who want to live for God often arrange to do very subtly what the worldly souls do crudely and openly.

A man who doesn't have enough imagination to invent anything will still figure out a way of seeking his own interests, and the amazing thing is that he will do it with the help of some pretext which will serve as a screen to keep him from seeing the ugliness of his own behavior.

Yes, we have it among professing Christians—this strange ingenuity to seek our own interest under the guise of seeking the interests of God. I am not afraid to say what I fear—that there are thousands of people who are using the deeper life and Bible prophecy, foreign missions and physical healing for no other purpose than to promote their own private interests secretly. They continue to let their apparent interest in these things to serve as a screen so that they don't have

to take a look at how ugly they are on the inside.

So we talk a lot about the deeper life and spiritual victory and becoming dead to ourselves—but we stay very busy rescuing ourselves from the cross. That part of ourselves that we rescue from the cross may be a very little part of us, but it is likely to be the seat of our spiritual troubles and our defeats.

No one wants to die on a cross—until he comes to the place where he is desperate for the highest will of God in serving Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul said, “I want to die on that cross and I want to know what it is to die there, because if I die with Him I will also know Him in a better resurrection: Paul was not just saying, “He will raise me from the dead”—for everyone will be raised from the dead. He said, “I want a superior resurrection, a resurrection like Christ’s!” Paul was willing to be crucified with Christ, but in our day we want to die a piece at a time, so we can rescue little parts of ourselves from the cross.

There are men and women who beg and plead for God to fill them with Himself for they know it would be for their good, but then they stubbornly resist like our own spoiled children when they are not well and they want us to help them.

You try to take the child’s temperature or give him medicine or call for a doctor and he will resist and howl and bawl. In the next breath he will beg for help, “Mama, I’m sick!” But he won’t take a thing, he won’t let you help. He is stubborn and spoiled.

Re: - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/10 11:45

04.

Let God have His way

People will pray and ask God to be filled—but all the while there is that strange ingenuity, that contradiction within which prevents our wills from stirring to the point of letting God have His way.

It is for this reason that I do not like to ask congregations to sing one of the old songs, “Fill Me Now.” I think it is one of the most hopeless songs ever written—gloomy and hopeless. I have yet to find anyone who was ever filled while singing “Fill me now, fill me now, fill me now.” It just doesn’t work that way—for if you are resisting God, you can sing all four verses and repeat the last one in a mournful melody but God will still have to wait for your decision on that part of yourself that you are saving from the cross.

Those who live in this state of perpetual contradiction cannot be happy Christians. A man who is always on the cross, just piece after piece, cannot be happy in that process. But when that man takes his place on the cross with Jesus Christ once and for all, and commends his spirit to God, lets go of everything and ceases to defend himself—sure, he has died, but there is a resurrection that follows!

If we are willing to go this route of victory with Jesus Christ, we cannot continue to be mediocre Christians, stopped half way to the peak. Until we give up our own interests, there will never be enough stirring within our beings to find His highest will.

Why, then, does it take so long? Whose fault is it that we do not have the intents of our heart so cleansed that we may perpetually love Him and worthily serve Him, and that we may be filled with His Spirit and walk in victory?

I hope I have made it plain that it is our fault—and not God’s. “This work asketh no long time before it be truly done, as some men think, for it is the shortest work of all that men may imagine, according to the stirring that is within thee, even thy will.” If you are one of the fellows who is convinced it has to take a long time, you are wrong. It may be one of the quickest, shortest works that a man may know—just as short or as long as your own will decrees.

Many of us are hanging on to something, something that we hold dear to ourselves, something that comes between us and the Lord.

Some of you as young people may have a tiny baby that has now become your dearest treasure on earth. Perhaps you have heard the still small voice of the Lord saying, “Will you commit that tiny life back to me? Will you take your own hands from the direction of that life and put that direction over into the hands of the Holy Spirit?”

God deals with us all about His highest will for ourselves and for our children. Years ago when our two oldest boys were small I was away from home on a preaching mission. God dealt with me plainly about my possessiveness of the treasure which I had in those two sons. God spoke to me and asked me if I would give them up to Him, and I thought He meant that He wanted them to die. I was prostrate on the floor beside my bed and kicked my toes on the carpet and cried out to God—and I finally gave those two boys back to God. I have been able to see since then in raising those boys and the rest of the children that God doesn’t ask for our children for Himself—He just wants to bring us out into a place of surrender so that our children and our earthly possessions do not possess our wills to the point of worship. God puts us thro

ugh these times because there ought not to be anything in our earthly lives that we would knowingly hold back from God

I confess that I went through this matter of dying after each child that God gave us. When our little girl came to us, we dedicated her to the Lord in a morning service, but that was nothing. My own personal dedication of that child was a prolonged, terrible, sweaty thing. I finally said to God, "Yes, Lord, you can have her." I knew that God wasn't going to let her die, for I had learned that lesson years before with her two older brothers.

But the thing was this—I didn't know what He wanted, and it was a struggle to give up, to yield.

Later, in giving a testimony in our church, I said, "The dearest thing we have in the world is our little girl, but God knows that He can have her whenever He wants her."

After the service someone came and said, "Mr. Tozer, aren't you afraid to talk like that about your little girl?"

"Afraid?" I said, "Why, I have put her in the hands of perfect love and love cannot wound anyone and love cannot hurt anyone. I am perfectly content that she is shielded in the life of Jesus Christ, His name being love and His hands being strong and His face shining like the beauty of the sun and His heart being the tender heart of God in compassion and lovingkindness."

Re: - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/10 15:25

05.

Treasure possession

We who are Christians go through these times of testing and proving as our Lord seeks to deal with us about our treasures possessing us on this earth. With some it may be the commitment of a favorite boyfriend or girlfriend to God for His highest will. Some people have put life's highest value upon their job and their security in this life. With some it may be a secret ambition, and it is driving a wedge between you and the Lord. Others may be possessed by the amount of your nice little nest egg lying there in the bank, and you just cannot bring yourself to quit calling it yours. You just cannot let go and that is in spite of the fact that you know you can perfectly trust the Lord and the leading of His Spirit.

Do you remember a rather comic character by the name of Sancho Panza in that well-known book, Don Quixote? There is an incident in the book in which Senor Panza clung to a window sill all night, afraid that if he let go he would plunge and die on the ground below. But when the morning light came, red-faced and near exhaustion, he found that his feet were only two inches above the grass. Fear kept him from letting go, but he could have been safe on the ground throughout the long night.

I use that illustration to remind us that there are many professing Christians whose knuckles are white from blindly hanging on to their own window sill. The Lord has been saying, "Look on me and let go!" But they have refused.

Paul said we should be "straining toward what is ahead" (Philippians 3:13b)—but many are afraid. Happy are the men and women who have given God His way—they "press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (v. 14).

A. W. Tozer

I talk back to the devil

AWT Dark, Dark Night - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/10 15:29

Dark, Dark Night of the Soul!

A. W. Tozer

From: I talk back to the devil

"Remember how they nailed Jesus to a cross. Remember the darkness, the hiding of the Father's face. This was the path Jesus took to immortal triumph. As He is, so are we in this world!"

I AM CONVINCED that in New Testament Christianity the object of the Holy Spirit is twofold. First, He wants to convince Christians that it is actually possible for us to know the beauty and perfection of Jesus Christ in our daily lives. Second, it is His desire to lead us forward into victory and blessing even as Joshua once led Israel into the promised land.

The first is not too difficult. Most Christians will honestly confess that there are still spiritual frontiers before them which

They have not been willing to explore. There is still ground to be taken if our object is to know Christ, to win Christ, to know the power of His resurrection, to be conformed to His death. If our object is to experience within our beings all of those things that we have in Christ judicially, we must come to the place of counting all things loss for the excellency of this knowledge.

We know our lack, but we are very slow in allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us into deeper Christian life and experience, to that place where the intent of our heart is so cleansed that we may perfectly love God and worthily praise Him. In spite of our hesitation and delay and holding back God does not give up, because the Holy Spirit is faithful and kind and patient and ever seeks to lead us forward into the life of the special kind of Christian.

I well remember the caution of one of the old saints I have read who pointed out that "a persuaded mind and even a well-intentioned heart may be far from exact and faithful practice" and "nothing has been more common than to meet souls who are perfect and saintly in speculation."

Jesus did not say, "You will be my disciples by speculation." He did say that by your fruit and by your behavior you will be known. This is one rule that is never deceiving, and it is by this that we should judge ourselves.

God will sift out those who only speculate about the claims of Christ and He will lead forward those who by His grace see Him in His beauty and seek Him in His love.

Illustration of Gideon

The story of Gideon is an illustration of how God seeks His qualities within us and is not concerned with us just as numbers or statistics. Gideon was about to face the enemy and he had an army of 32,000 soldiers. But the Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many—let all who are afraid go back." So Gideon gave the word to the troops, and 22,000 of those men turned back. Then the Lord said to Gideon again, "There are still too many. I can see those among you who are not prepared for what we are going to do. You will never be able to make Israelite soldiers of them."

I presume that there are few preachers among us on the top side of this terrestrial ball who would have turned down those 22,000, but God was putting the emphasis on quality, on those who would cooperate in the performance of the will of God.

Then Gideon took the 10,000 men to the river and tested them as God had directed and when this sifting was all done, Gideon had an army of 300 men. God seeks out those who are willing that their lives should be fashioned according to His own grace and love. He sifts out those who cannot see God's purpose and design for our blessing.

Some of you know something of that which has been called "the dark night of the soul." Some of you have spiritual desire and deep longing for victory but it seems to you that your efforts to go on with God have only brought you more bumps and more testings and more discouragement. You are tempted to ask, "How long can this go on?"

Let me remind you of the journey of Jesus Christ to immortal triumph. Remember the garden where He sweat blood. Remember Pilate's hall where they put on Him the purple robe and smote Him. Remember His experience with His closest disciples as they all forsook Him and fled. Remember the journey up the hill to Calvary. Remember how they nailed Him to a cross, those six awful hours, the hiding of the Father's face. Remember the darkness and remember the surrender of His spirit in death.

This was the path that Jesus took to immortal triumph and everlasting glory, and as He is, so are we in this world!

Few enter into the light

Yes, there is a dark night of the soul. There are few Christians willing to go into this dark night and that is why there are so few who enter into the light. It is impossible for them ever to know the morning because they will not endure the night. In The Cloud of Unknowing, we have been told: "This work asketh no long time before it be truly done, as some men think, for it is the shortest work of all that men may imagine. It is neither longer nor shorter, but even according to the stirring that is within thee, even thy will."

The stirring within us often is not enough. There are too many other factors—there is not yet a vacuum within, a prepared place into which the Holy Spirit may come and be at home.

I think the more we learn of God and His ways and of man and his nature we are bound to reach the conclusion that we are all just about as holy as we want to be. We are all just about as full of the Spirit as we want to be. Thus when we tell ourselves that we want to be more holy but we are really as holy as we care to be, it is small wonder that the dark night of the soul takes so long!

The reason why many are still troubled, still seeking, still making little forward progress is because they have not yet come to the end of themselves. We are still giving some of the orders, and we are still interfering with God's working within us.

We struggle to keep up a good front, forgetting that God says the most important thing is for us to be humble and meek as Christ gave us example. It seems that Christians are obsessed with keeping up that good front. We say we want to go to heaven when we die to see old Jordan roll, but we spend most of our time and energy down here just putting on that

good front. It seems that many of us say to God, as did King Saul the apostate before us, "Oh God, honor me now before these people!"

Hiding our inner state

We also are guilty of hiding our inner state. The Bible plainly tells us to expose our inner state to God, but we would rather cover it up. God cannot change it if we cover it and hide it.

We disguise the poverty of our spirit. If we should suddenly be revealed to those around us on the outside as Almighty God sees us within our souls, we would become the most embarrassed people in the world. If that should happen, we would be revealed as people barely able to stand, people in rags, some too dirty to be decent, some with great open sores. Some would be revealed in such condition that they would be turned out of Skid Row. Do we think that we are actually keeping our spiritual poverty a secret, that God doesn't know us better than we know ourselves? But we will not tell Him, and we disguise our poverty of spirit and hide our inward state in order to preserve our reputation.

We also want to keep some authority for ourselves. We cannot agree that the last, the final key to our lives should be turned over to Jesus Christ. Brethren, we want to have dual controls—let the Lord run it but keep a hand on the controls just in case the Lord should fail!

We are willing to join heartily in singing, "To God Be the Glory," but we are strangely ingenious in figuring out ways and means by which we keep some of the glory for ourselves. In this matter of perpetually seeking our own interests, we can only say that people who want to live for God often arrange to do very subtly what the worldly souls do crudely and openly.

A man who doesn't have enough imagination to invent anything will still figure out a way of seeking his own interests, and the amazing thing is that he will do it with the help of some pretext which will serve as a screen to keep him from seeing the ugliness of his own behavior.

Yes, we have it among professing Christians—this strange ingenuity to seek our own interest under the guise of seeking the interests of God. I am not afraid to say what I fear—that there are thousands of people who are using the deeper life and Bible prophecy, foreign missions and physical healing for no other purpose than to promote their own private interests secretly. They continue to let their apparent interest in these things to serve as a screen so that they don't have to take a look at how ugly they are on the inside.

So we talk a lot about the deeper life and spiritual victory and becoming dead to ourselves—but we stay very busy rescuing ourselves from the cross. That part of ourselves that we rescue from the cross may be a very little part of us, but it is likely to be the seat of our spiritual troubles and our defeats.

No one wants to die on a cross—until he comes to the place where he is desperate for the highest will of God in serving Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul said, "I want to die on that cross and I want to know what it is to die there, because if I die with Him I will also know Him in a better resurrection: Paul was not just saying, "He will raise me from the dead"—for everyone will be raised from the dead. He said, "I want a superior resurrection, a resurrection like Christ's! Paul was willing to be crucified with Christ, but in our day we want to die a piece at a time, so we can rescue little parts of ourselves from the cross.

There are men and women who beg and plead for God to fill them with Himself for they know it would be for their good, but then they stubbornly resist like our own spoiled children when they are not well and they want us to help them.

You try to take the child's temperature or give him medicine or call for a doctor and he will resist and howl and bawl. In the next breath he will beg for help, "Mama, I'm sick!" But he won't take a thing, he won't let you help. He is stubborn and spoiled.

Let God have His way

People will pray and ask God to be filled—but all the while there is that strange ingenuity, that contradiction within which prevents our wills from stirring to the point of letting God have His way.

It is for this reason that I do not like to ask congregations to sing one of the old songs, "Fill Me Now." I think it is one of the most hopeless songs ever written—gloomy and hopeless. I have yet to find anyone who was ever filled while singing "Fill me now, fill me now, fill me now." It just doesn't work that way—for if you are resisting God, you can sing all four verses and repeat the last one in a mournful melody but God will still have to wait for your decision on that part of yourself that you are saving from the cross.

Those who live in this state of perpetual contradiction cannot be happy Christians. A man who is always on the cross, just piece after piece, cannot be happy in that process. But when that man takes his place on the cross with Jesus Christ once and for all, and commends his spirit to God, lets go of everything and ceases to defend himself—sure, he has died, but there is a resurrection that follows!

If we are willing to go this route of victory with Jesus Christ, we cannot continue to be mediocre Christians, stopped half

way to the peak. Until we give up our own interests, there will never be enough stirring within our beings to find His highest will.

Why, then, does it take so long? Whose fault is it that we do not have the intents of our heart so cleansed that we may perpetually love Him and worthily serve Him, and that we may be filled with His Spirit and walk in victory?

I hope I have made it plain that it is our fault—and not God's. "This work asketh no long time before it be truly done, as some men think, for it is the shortest work of all that men may imagine, according to the stirring that is within thee, even thy will." If you are one of the fellows who is convinced it has to take a long time, you are wrong. It may be one of the quickest, shortest works that a man may know—just as short or as long as your own will decrees.

Many of us are hanging on to something, something that we hold dear to ourselves, something that comes between us and the Lord.

Some of you as young people may have a tiny baby that has now become your dearest treasure on earth. Perhaps you have heard the still small voice of the Lord saying, "Will you commit that tiny life back to me? Will you take your own hands from the direction of that life and put that direction over into the hands of the Holy Spirit?"

God deals with us all about His highest will for ourselves and for our children. Years ago when our two oldest boys were small I was away from home on a preaching mission. God dealt with me plainly about my possessiveness of the treasure which I had in those two sons. God spoke to me and asked me if I would give them up to Him, and I thought He meant that He wanted them to die. I was prostrate on the floor beside my bed and kicked my toes on the carpet and cried out to God—and I finally gave those two boys back to God. I have been able to see since then in raising those boys and the rest of the children that God doesn't ask for our children for Himself—He just wants to bring us out into a place of surrender so that our children and our earthly possessions do not possess our wills to the point of worship. God puts us through these times because there ought not to be anything in our earthly lives that we would knowingly hold back from God.

I confess that I went through this matter of dying after each child that God gave us. When our little girl came to us, we dedicated her to the Lord in a morning service, but that was nothing. My own personal dedication of that child was a prolonged, terrible, sweaty thing. I finally said to God, "Yes, Lord, you can have her." I knew that God wasn't going to let her die, for I had learned that lesson years before with her two older brothers.

But the thing was this—I didn't know what He wanted, and it was a struggle to give up, to yield.

Later, in giving a testimony in our church, I said, "The dearest thing we have in the world is our little girl, but God knows that He can have her whenever He wants her."

After the service someone came and said, "Mr. Tozer, aren't you afraid to talk like that about your little girl?"

"Afraid?" I said, "Why, I have put her in the hands of perfect love and love cannot wound anyone and love cannot hurt anyone. I am perfectly content that she is shielded in the life of Jesus Christ, His name being love and His hands being strong and His face shining like the beauty of the sun and His heart being the tender heart of God in compassion and lovingkindness."

Treasure possession

We who are Christians go through these times of testing and proving as our Lord seeks to deal with us about our treasures possessing us on this earth. With some it may be the commitment of a favorite boyfriend or girlfriend to God for His highest will. Some people have put life's highest value upon their job and their security in this life. With some it may be a secret ambition, and it is driving a wedge between you and the Lord. Others may be possessed by the amount of your nice little nest egg lying there in the bank, and you just cannot bring yourself to quit calling it yours. You just cannot let go and that is in spite of the fact that you know you can perfectly trust the Lord and the leading of His Spirit.

Do you remember a rather comic character by the name of Sancho Panza in that well-known book, Don Quixote? There is an incident in the book in which Senor Panza clung to a window sill all night, afraid that if he let go he would plunge and die on the ground below. But when the morning light came, red-faced and near exhaustion, he found that his feet were only two inches above the grass. Fear kept him from letting go, but he could have been safe on the ground throughout the long night.

I use that illustration to remind us that there are many professing Christians whose knuckles are white from blindly hanging on to their own window sill. The Lord has been saying, "Look on me and let go!" But they have refused.

Paul said we should be "straining toward what is ahead" (Philippians 3:13b)—but many are afraid. Happy are the men and women who have given God His way—they "press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (v. 14).

END