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The Development of Spiritual Balance - No. 1

Readings:

Revelation Ch. 2:1-4; 18-19; 3:14-15

Introduction

- 1) For many, the Song of Solomon is a neglected book, a matter which is very sad since it illustrates three principles which do not wax or wane. They are:
 - a) The unceasing yearning of the Lord for fellowship with His own (whither it is the individual Jew, Christian, the Nation of Israel, the local or corporate church).
 - b) The waywardness of the human heart, nationally and individually, and at times indifference to God and the Lord.
 - c) The joy of restored fellowship due to God's yearnings of love.
- 2) It is the first and second of these truths that one of the lessons from letters to the seven churches in Asia is concerned with (Rev. 2:1-3:22).

Basic Observations

- 1) God is a jealous God, a matter which some find hard to understand, for in our thinking jealousy indicates discontentment with what we have and the yearning for that which another has. This is **not the meaning when** used of God. When God is spoken of as "a jealous God" (Ex. 20:5; 34:14), it means that He longs to have all of one's hearts affection. This is not for personal egotism, but rather, the more the individual loves Him the more His love for them can be comprehended by them. God loves us with a singular, wholehearted love and yearns that the individual will be totally devoted to Him. God is jealous of our love, therefore, He will teach us to, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Matt. 22:37). Peter was not asked "How well can you preach", or "How great is your knowledge and understanding of divine truths?" Rather it was, "Lovest thou me?" (Jn. 21:15-17).
 - a) The Song of Solomon and the letters to the churches in Asia have at least one thing in common, the yearnings of the heart of the Lord for the unreserved love of the one they love.
- 2) Often when the seven letters to the churches in Asia (Rev. chs. 2-3) are considered, it is in a prophetic way, and the matter is left there. However, there are other avenues of truth in which they can be enriching, such as:
 - a) Historically, considering why these seven literal churches were chosen and what they reveal about the early churches.
 - b) Characteristically from three avenues:
 - i) As they relate to any church today, and how the local church fluctuates in its spirituality depending on the response to the message from the Lord.
 - ii) As they relate to the individual believer in the onward path of spirituality.
 - iii) As they relate to Israel in which we see that the same wayward features of Israel are seen in the church today.
 - c) Prophetically of the church age, whither they indicate successive periods or the major characteristics of the church throughout its duration. This is not our consideration here.
- 3) In considering the three churches, Ephesus, Thyatira and Laodicea, it is observed that each had its own characteristics.
 - a) The main characteristic of Ephesus was the hating of evil but the leaving of its first love (Rev. 2:4). It means that the major characteristic of the majority of the saints was that of cold legalism without love. Despite the oft-times teaching that "first love" is the first zeal and fervor after being saved, it is rather the love for the Lord. He is to be the first love. The Lord Himself said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37). Sadly, when that love for the Lord is left, then regulations take over and man made legalism rules the church. The church at Ephesus was so intent on holding the truth, they

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made that an end in itself. They had a restricted fellowship which was biblical and no doubt held to apostolic principles, but it was all dead formality. It may have been kept to stay in line with some of the other churches, but they were not listening to 1 Cor. 13:1-3, busy with dead formality and functioning resulting in zero spiritual development, all because they had left their first love. Some would have called this a “good church standing for the truth,” but God saw it otherwise.

- b) The main characteristic of Thyatira was a church where there was love and two truths were evident. They were the only church who were commended for their love (Rev. 2:19) but they failed to hate that which was contrary to the Lord. Many would have condemned them and written them off as a local church, but God did not, and there is no talk of the candlestick being removed as there was to Ephesus (Rev. 2:5). They were spiritual schizophrenics. This is a characteristic of, dare I say, “us all”. We profess to love the Lord and at times in all sincerity we do, yet we hold and allow attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, which God hates, dominate us.
 - c) The major characteristic of Laodicea was a church which neither loved nor hated, it was “neither cold nor hot” (Rev. 3:15, 16). Today we would possibly call them a balanced church, tolerating some things but not others, inconsistency and seeing themselves to be rich spiritually, and having the attitude, “We are the last bastion of assembly truth”. Yet, God looks and says, “you are blind, etc”. They were so intent on their imagined spiritually, despite the fact they were seeing nothing done spiritually in salvation or spiritual development, functioning, but the Lord outside. Putting it simply, they had no center point, and no boundaries.
- 4) The question each church ought to have asked was, and by association us today, “How can the spiritual level of the church I am in be lifted?” My evaluation is of no consequence, only the evaluation of the Lord. As I see things, there are three attitudes which need to be changed:
- a) The willingness to take a hard look at the almost non-effectiveness of the personal and church’s outreach, the spiritual development of the saints. Why are we not having an impact on a hungry world?
 - b) The personal appreciation of personal responsibility in light of the Judgment Seat.
 - c) The whole hearted individual submitting to God so that we love the Lord and His things and hate that which He hates.
- 5) While many groups called themselves assemblies, families etc., and loudly proclaim to love each other, yet another question to be faced is, “What is love and do we really love the two principles spoken of in Romans 12:9, 10? Love is to be without dissimulation, that is, hypocrisy, and this is presented on two fronts:
- a) Love regarding principles (Rom. 12:9)
 - b) Love in regards to persons (Rom. 12:10).

It does not say, “like without dissimulation, or like principles or persons,” but love. The question then is, what is the difference between “love” and “like”? I have a very nice car, I like it, enjoy it, and am very happy with it but I do not love it. Like is the pleasure one perhaps gets in dancing, a sports game, the company of a friend, but love is a deep passion one has for another. “Like” is a preference but “love” is an automatic response to another. It is unconditional whereas “like” is conditional.

The love that God desires between His people is not a “because love” as the Psalmist said (Psa. 116:1) and John expressed (1 Jn. 4:19). To love the Lord is to be passionately desirous of being with him and seeing Him. It is the deep yearning to spend time with Him, soaking up every iota of truth about Him. When this is true of an individual and a group of saints, there will be no correction needed by the Lord, for they will be in total harmony with Him.

. . . . Rowan Jennings

