

Feelings

by Harmon A. Baldwin

A holy person is more sensitive to insults and opposition, but does not yield to anger or resentment, and instead feels grief, pity, or humiliation.

Scripture: Proverbs 15:1, Matthew 5:44, Ephesians 4:26, Colossians 3:12, 1 Peter 5:6

Topics: "Holy Living", "Spiritual Discernment"

Description

Harmon A. Baldwin discusses the misconception that holiness leads to stoical insensibility when insulted, emphasizing that a holy soul actually feels insults more keenly but responds with love and forgiveness, as exemplified by Jesus Christ. He delves into the distinction between righteous indignation and sinful anger, cautioning against the dangers of anger disguised as zeal. Baldwin highlights the importance of spiritual discernment in recognizing slights and the need for humility to maintain peace and quietness of heart amidst challenges.

Transcript

Again, we are informed that when a holy man is insulted his feelings are not stirred, and, the inference is, that holiness will leave the soul in a condition of almost stoical insensibility. On the contrary, we claim that the more holy the soul the more keenly an insult will be felt, and the more quickly a slight will be discerned. The very purity and innocence of the character of Jesus Christ caused the affronts and abuse of the rabble to be all the more keenly felt, until His great heart melted, and He cried, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

While it is true that a holy person will feel a slight or an insult, yet it is also true that he will not under such circumstances yield to anger or even have the uprisings of impatience in his soul. Some persons thus yield and call it righteous indignation. Concerning anger Wesley says:

The same effect may be produced by giving place to anger, whatever the provocation or occasion may be; yea, though it be colored over with the name of zeal for the truth, or for the glory of God. Indeed, all zeal which is any other than the flame of love, is earthly, animal, and devilish. It is the flame of wrath. It is flat, sinful anger, neither better nor worse. And nothing is a greater enemy to the mild, gentle love of God than this. They never did, they never can, subsist together in the same breast.

While these words of Wesley are sharp and to the point, and while they properly cover all the cases to which he refers, yet they do not cover all the question, as we have seen in a former article there is such a

thing as righteous indignation, and this indignation is a holy principle and existed in the spirit of the lowly Jesus; the only question is to know where to draw the line, unless you have the experience of holiness, and then you will learn for yourself. To quote from Fletcher:

But if David only had an angry thought, he had still been a murderer in the sight of God. Not so; for there is a righteous anger, which is a virtue and not a sin; or else how could Christ have looked round about on the Pharisees with anger, and continued sinless?

We note again that the sensibilities of a holy soul are keenly alive to discern a slight from some person; we do not refer to carnal touchiness or unholy sensitiveness, but to a matter of spiritual discernment and the "feeling" which must of necessity accompany this knowledge. Madam Guyon declares she reached a place where one sort of food was as pleasing as another. This is easily explained by the fact that she had so stultified her physical senses by Catholic austerities that she had either killed the natural taste, or was so hungry that anything tasted good. Our Protestant teachers are only one step behind her when they declare that all unpleasant spiritual sensations are killed.

Andrew Murray says:

Humility is perfect quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble. It is never to be fretted, or vexed, or irritated, or sore, or disappointed. It is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me.

Let us be honest now! Every one who has, beyond a conscientious hesitation, such an experience as that, please let it be known. Many will not take such a stand, and it is well they do not, for nearly every word is unscriptural, and contrary to regenerated and sanctified human experience. You may have the victory amid such circumstances, but Jesus Christ Himself was grieved when He came to His own, and His own received Him not. Pascal, that holy, keenly intelligent man of the times of the reformation, says:

The mind of this sovereign of the world is not so independent as not to be discomposed by the first tintamarre that may be made around him. It does not need the roar of artillery to hinder him from thinking; the creaking of a vane or a pulley will answer the purpose. Be not surprised that he reasons ill just now; a fly is buzzing in his ears, -- it is amply sufficient to render him incapable of sound deliberation. If you wish him to discover truth, be pleased to chase away that insect who holds his reason in check, and troubles that mighty intellect which governs cities and kingdoms!

These stirrings of the human sensibilities by outward circumstances or the temptations of the devil, may be, at times, difficult to distinguish from the former stirrings of carnality. But a careful and prayerful analysis of internal conditions will reveal the truth.

When a person whose heart is still carnal is opposed or insulted a "feeling" of resentment, retaliation or even a desire for revenge may be present. Under the same circumstances a holy heart will feel none of these things. The "feelings" of a holy soul (and we use the word "feelings" for want of a better) under such circumstances will be better expressed as grief, pity (not self-pity,) humiliation (and this, at times, to a painful degree,) and burden of soul. This sounds easy, but is not always so easy in practical experience. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as chastened, and not killed; as cast down, and not destroyed.

Again, certain persons are naturally so highly "sensitized" that the very spirit of even secret opposition has a tendency to depress. Such persons must be careful or they will confuse the suggestions of the devil, or

imaginary occurrences as the opposition of those who are really their friends. This condition is often found in persons of an extremely nervous temperament, and we have known of some who suffered untold agonies, not because of touchiness or carnal sensitiveness, but because they feared they had done something unwittingly that offended a brother. You say, "Go and have a face to face talk with the brother." That sounds good, but we have also known of this being done and the one approached to steadfastly deny any knowledge of offense and then pass on to the next neighbor and repeat the same charge. This is hypocrisy, you say. Indeed, but only in the second party and not in the one of whom we are speaking.

If we might, we would add in a stage whisper, How much of this sort of hypocrisy can be found among professed holiness people? If it were not for concealing the truth we would fear to tell such things in Gath or to publish them in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the adversary would say, "I told you so." To be sure these persons are not holy, but sometimes they stand high in the councils of the holy! Oh, that God would deliver us from this worse than human element!

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