

The Sign of a Ripening Saint

by John Hames

A growing saint is characterized by being dissolved in divine love, taking Romans 8:28 to mean exactly what the inspired Word says, making a clear distinction between true and false religion, and having a well-rounded Christian character.

Scripture: Romans 8:28, Philippians 2:5, Hebrews 5:14, 1 John 4:16

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Maturity"

Description

John Hames preaches about the spiritual progress of a growing saint, likening it to a vessel navigating the deep sea, depending less on emotions and more on the inward hidden life as faith matures. He discusses the three stages in a believer's life: new birth, purification from sin, and maturity rooted in love and spiritual fruits. Hames highlights the marks of a growing soul, including being dissolved in divine love, trusting in God's providence, and discerning true from false religion.

Transcript

Whenever a vessel puts out to sea the pilot judges his speed and directions mostly by buoys, lighthouses, and the shore lights, but when he gets out into the deep all of these things are left behind, and he has to depend on the stars, his compass, and log for his course. There is a similarity to be noted in this and the spiritual progress of a growing saint. In the early stages the young Christian lives a great deal on his emotions. He judges his spiritual progress by his feelings, but when he launches out into the ocean of God's love and into a life of unlimited faith, he depends less on his human feelings and more on the inward hidden life.

There are three stages in the believer's life. The first stage is the new birth. It is then that the soul is quickened into a new life, new affections, new emotions, and love. In the second stage is when the heart is purified from indwelling sin, and the Holy Ghost sheds abroad the love of God in the purified soul. The third stage pertains to maturity, where the soul becomes rooted and grounded in love, and all the graces and fruits of the Spirit ripen for the celestial world.

We want to notice some marks of a growing soul:

I. The soul reaches a state in the heavenly life to where it is dissolved in divine love. The old writers of the early Holiness Movement had much to say about being "lost in God," "sunk in a sea of divine peace," and "dissolved in love," and they uniformly spoke of this as being the place where the soul entered after its first

fervors of sanctification, and after the faith had undergone many trials.

What is meant by being dissolved in love? "When the tried soul is dissolved in love the mental faculties are turned into a gentle, loving action so that judgments, opinions, and decisions are formed slowly, discreetly, with instructive kindness. It is one thing to have a clean heart, and a very different thing to have all the faculties so subdued and pervaded with divine; love as to have them act as if by instinct from the heart of Christ." Furthermore, to be dissolved in love is to have everything hard, harsh, and flinty melted out of the heart and to have the Holy Ghost flood the affections and all the inner faculties like a warm gulf stream. Let us not forget that divine love is the sum and substance and the very heart and marrow of the Christ-like life. Without this all of our religious activities count for nothing.

II. Another sign of a ripening saint is to reach a state in divine things to where the soul can take Romans 8:28 to mean exactly what the inspired Word says: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." If God's people everywhere would only believe this without any mental reservation, it would work miracles in their lives. But please notice that no one in the universe of God can lay claim to this passage except on the condition of heart holiness. "When these celestial conditions are fully met and maintained then nothing can ever occur in the universe that will not be for our good and advancement. Every disappointment will cause us to lean harder on the everlasting arm; every shock will make us sink deeper into the unshakable rock; every conflict with temptation will make us hate sin more deeply; every unkind blow from our fellowmen will render us more lowly and intent on doing the world good; every dollar we lose will spur us to lay up treasures in heaven; every criticism of our spirit or conduct will drive us to scrutinize our inner being before God to see if we are indeed washed in the blood of the Lamb. Abuse only humbles us, and flattery and praise sink us to still deeper self-abasement; and death of our loved ones only trims our lamps for the coming of the Bridegroom, and every teardrop adds lens to the telescope of heavenly vision. If we are holy all things are ours."

III. Another evidence of a growing saint is the ability to make a clear distinction between true and false religion. This was St. Paul's great argument for Christian perfection in his letter to the Hebrews. He pointed out the difference between the baby state and the fully illuminated believer was the ability to distinguish between poison and soul food. He states in Heb. 5:14 that solid food is for those who are perfect, and who, by use of their inner senses can make a clear distinction between the false and the true, or good and evil. Just as a new-born baby does not know how to use its natural senses, so an imperfect believer does not know how to make a clear distinction in spiritual things. "When the spiritual senses are purified and strengthened, the soul is able to discriminate the difference in the moral realm corresponding to the physical senses discriminating the sights and sounds, the color and magnitudes, the bitter and sweet of the physical word."

Let us cite a few examples. There is a difference between cheerfulness and frivolity. Cheerfulness may be a fruit of the Spirit and is to be encouraged and cultivated, but frivolity and foolish jesting are evil and hurt the soul when too freely indulged in. There is a difference between being sober-minded and self-denying, and being of a sour, caustic, severe sort of religion. "The work of holiness has been greatly damaged in many places by its teachers insisting upon a rigid, severe, butcher-knife type of religion, not knowing the difference between severity and Christian soberness."

We should be able to make a clear-cut distinction between impulses and being led by the Spirit. Failing to make this distinction is the sandbar on which many a soul has run aground. One of the tricks of the devil is to get sanctified people to where they are led by impressions. You can always tell these impressions are

from the wrong source by the wildness which is about them. "God the Holy Ghost, in all His leadings, never leads people in an abnormal way. God does not strain you; He does not put the thumbscrew on you and strain your muscles until they crack and snap; but the devil does. When we are led by the Holy Spirit, there will be a subdued tranquil, and well-regulated state of natural sensibilities." He who is led by the Spirit of God will experience a sense of inward rest. When all the leprosy of inbred sin is burned out, and all the soul faculties are harmonized, what hinders us from having rest?

One more evidence of being led by the Spirit is a well-rounded Christian character. Ever since the fall of man humanity has been more or less lopsided. We see this not only in the business world, but in the religious world as well. Mr. Wesley stated: "Some may say that you are sanctified but I do not if you are lacking in gentleness, goodness, meekness, longsuffering and patience." Our holy religion is a thing of tempers, dispositions and Christlikeness. It is all right to be uncompromising on every line, but it is wrong to become intolerant. Some stress the doctrine of self-denial beyond scriptural teaching and become ascetics and monks. "Avoiding lightness and frivolity they land in the middle of an Egyptian gloom of spirit and darkness of countenance."

Dr. B. Carradine so beautifully brings out this thought on the well-balanced life in his book, "Beulah Land," that we quote from his pen: "A fourth meaning buried in the words is the evenly and properly balanced life, suggested in the verbal combination 'corn and wine.' It is most blessed and profitable to have both in the soul and in the life.

"Some Christians have strength and force as typified in the first word, but lack what is breathed in the second. They have character, but no glow; principle but no warmth. Truth and uprightness are seen in every line of their existence, but their faces never light up, their lips never respond to burning gospel messages, they never seem to realize or exhibit a rush of feeling from heaven to the soul, or from the soul to the eye and the tongue. They somehow chill you with all their strength and steadfastness. They have corn, but no wine. And one could but wish that a dash of the heavenly intoxication would come upon them at least once in awhile.

"There are other Christians who seem to have the wine, but not the corn. They overflow and bubble and laugh and shout at a moment's warning, but they also lack in the strength, power, steadiness and endurance which belong to the Christian character. They have an abundance of feeling, but often lack principle. They get happy, but cannot bear contradiction and persecution. They have ecstasies but also bear grudges. They shout, but also scold. They see visions, but likewise behold moths, beams, rafters, scantlings and whole sides of houses in their brothers' eyes. They abound in the wine of jubilation, but are woefully lacking in the corn, or strength, faithfulness and steadfastness of the Christian life.

"Blessed is the man who possesses the corn and wine combination; who has character and emotion, principle and feeling, can pray and pay, glow and grow, shout as loud as God wants him, and yet live a life fully and truly up to the measure of his loudest shout."

God wants to plant within us every grace and fruit that flourished in the bosom of Jesus. "When Jesus beheld our hearts in their natural state, they were like stony, sterile, frozen fields of the frigid zone; but when they have been broken by repentance, thawed by regeneration, and every stump removed by sanctifying power; when they have been planted with the seed of His word, enriched and watered with the crystal streams of His Spirit, cultured by His hand, and ripened in the summer of His love, every inch of the soul waves the golden fruit of righteousness."

Finally a growing soul should be making steady advancement on all spiritual lines. He should have a deeper faith to where he will laugh at impossibilities and cries that it shall be done. There should be an increasing sweetness of spirit so that the soul draws honey out of the rock and sweetness from every trial. There should be a deeper joy and a well-spring of gladness to where the heart can rejoice in the Lord always. This kind of joy holds good at a funeral or a wedding. There should be greater victories. We should not only take Jericho, but we should possess the whole land of Canaan. We should scale the mountains of joy, penetrate its valleys of rest, drink of its rivers of pleasure and possess the land to the going down of the sun. May God help us not to rest satisfied with present attainments but to go on to perfection until we possess all the mind which was in Christ Jesus and the golden graces of the sanctified life.

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