

Let's Fall in Love with God

Chapter 5: Setting the Record Straight

(John Henry Alan, edited by Bob Clarkson)

{ Breathe it in! }

Ashamed of Jesus?

"For whoever will save his life, shall lose it, but who ever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it. And what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whoever, therefore shall be ashamed of Me, and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the son of man be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the Holy angels." Mark 8:35-38.

Although, some like David, Job and Joseph did draw near to God in friendship and trust, they never felt the presence of the Spirit of God. They never had an opportunity to *be in a personal relationship* with God. And just like them, we have in a very short time, almost forgotten all God has done for us! We continue, as they did, to live by the habits formed before God appeared to us.

The Fire of Desire

Just as in the times before Christ appeared there was a distinctly widespread indifference to God, so it is with the vast majority of Christians. But what happened to the fire of desire that came upon us when we offered our lives to God? What happened to the euphoric

honeymoon love of those first days? Rather than nurturing the love affair, we are content to read books about God (including the Bible) or to talk about Him as a distant object or to beg His gifts in prayer. Even our stories of God's miracles in our own lives soon become almost commonplace for us. We settle into a rhythm of chants and prayers and songs and meetings and readings and story telling. But few remain in *hot pursuit* of Jesus as they would for an earthly significant other.

Internal Affairs

Love affairs have very little to do with things which are external to the spirit of the lovers. Everything around them pales into insignificance while they are *in the moment* with each other. Even in the face of clarions of God's dissatisfaction with distant and hollow relationships, we trudge on down the road as though we had never met Him. I fear that most of us are, at times, guilty of denying Jesus as glibly and vehemently as Peter did the night before the crucifixion. Most Christians say quite often, "I love God!" emphatically. But their lifestyles and selfish pursuits betray them. Intimacy with Christ is something far deeper than the average Christian today experiences. Yet being abandoned to intimacy with God should be the norm.

Revival Is Simply A By-product

What I am talking about here is not going to lead to a treatise about revival. That, too, is so *not* relational, that we might as well *deep six* (bury) the entire concept.

Revivals do not spawn or nurture love affairs, or any other kind of relationship. Revivals are simply the cacophony (random inspired hearts energizing raised voices with great resonance but no semblance of harmony) of the mass of individual voices worshipping God passionately. So, let us leave revivals to their rightful place (the increase of volume of the accumulation of the individual praises of passionate lovers of God).

Not A Corporate Event

One problem with praying for, and hoping to create, a revival is that unless we personally respond to the moving of God's Holy Spirit the instant He pricks our hearts, nothing happens. If the first step is not taken, neither are all the rest. The substitution of forms and traditions for genuine affection is the culprit. Mostly our gatherings with their rigid formats have replaced the personal exchanges of hearts and minds that occur nearly everywhere else but the religious meeting place.

We meet, greet, bump, ignore each other while the ceremony cruises the aisles, bump, bid farewell and scatter to the winds. So what was that all about? Certainly there is very little pleasure in that for me any more. I long for the small gathering around my dinner table with my dearest family and friends where we simply live out our relationships with one another!

God in a Box

So long as you are satisfied with the whirring machinery of the religious system of your particular choosing, you will not find God. He has no interest in the token worship of such an infinitesimally small portion of our lives. He is just as disinterested in the early morning, quiet times of most believers. Few are loving on Him. Mostly we are reading the Bible, praying (selfishly I might add), and maybe singing a song or two, attempting to muster up the strength to face the lions of our day.

Yet, putting God in a box, either the Sunday morning box or the daily closet (some call a war room), is not really possible. God refuses to be boxed in, except in the Holy of Holies. And there have only ever been two places God has called the Holy of Holies. With Israel it was in the center of the worship center where only the high priest was allowed to go. With us, however and praise God, the center of our person (heart) where only we individually can go.

Soil Samples

You have likely read the story of the sower and the four different soils. Maybe you have read it many times and even taught lessons about it. However, you may not have imagined this. The soils may not be people or people groups. The soils may be the condition of your heart which changes frequently, maybe even many times in a single day. When I applied this imagination to the soils of my life, I began to realize that when I am the **hard soil**

by the side of the road, *new revelations are quickly snatched away* by the birds (words of others) *and are not even remembered*.

When I am the **stony soil**, my *ecstatic revelations from God soon wither away*, like the flowers wither for lack of water and nutritious soil. When I am the **thorny soil**, *new revelations are quickly choked out by the weeds of my own distractions* and the fruit of the seeds does me little good. But when I am the fertile, **rich soil**, *I embrace all new revelations, learning from them and producing their fruit*. I watch them grow and eat them when they are harvested. So my measure of apathy or intimacy coincides with my attitudes toward God, the soil of my soul as it were.

Receptivity

I found it quite fascinating as I crafted the inspirations of God into this volume that the only hindrance to my abandon to intimacy with God was myself and the condition of my heart. The more my heart was receptive to God's overtures of love, the more my love for Him increased. And vice versa. The other factor for me was that, in the moment of new revelation about my lover, my desire was like a super hot fire. But it cooled down way too fast to provide lasting warmth for my romance with God.

Hot Pursuers of God

Brother Lawrence, a little known crippled man, not considered a prophet, found a passionate relationship with God in the 17th century. His experiences of elation with God and his total surrender to God are written about in *The Practice of the Presence of God*. In the same time period, both Madame Jean Guyon and Francis Fenelon were mystics who wrote about *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ* and *The Seeking Heart*, respectively.

In more recent times, such clarions of intimacy with God were Oswald Chambers and Frank Laubach. Their books, *My Utmost for His Highest* and *Practicing His Presence* respectively, have been enormously effective in helping many to become Abandoned to Intimacy with God. Another great read is *Abandoned to God*, the biography of Oswald Chambers. These men and women avidly sought a life that was real. God has always had some men and women in every generation who have earnestly desired that they might become intimate lovers of God. For Israelite, Roman Catholic or Protestant alike, the drift away from God has been the same for centuries.

New Contract

There are those who want nothing apart from the New Testament. This is not a viable position to hold. The Old Testament is equally important. Granted, the way of life expressed in the New Testament is full of love and grace. Even Jesus showed mercy, where the Old

Testament Law sentenced death. But the history of the Old Testament (contract) is essential to understanding and appreciating fully what Jesus Christ did. He gave a New Command to His disciples.

Although the summary of the Old Law, which Jesus expressed to the Pharisees, was to "Love the Lord your God with all your *heart*, all your *soul*, all your *mind* and all your *strength* (body) and your neighbor as yourself," it was not Jesus' command. That was God's command. The Law is perfect but it condemns every man. Grace, on the other hand, is the *unmerited* favor of God which can be obtained through faith in Jesus. Jesus' commands are different in every respect. Actually Jesus gave *only one* command.

New Command

The only command of Jesus was given to His disciples at the last supper. It is even more impossible to live up Jesus' command than God's original ten. But that was Jesus' intent. His command can only be realized in a believer through the work of the Holy Spirit. Our natural, carnal, selfish spirit will always serve self. And according to scripture, no one can fulfill God's commands. We may come close, but our motives will betray us time and again.

Jesus also indicated that the testimony of the Christian is not moral purity. Evangelical churches in particular actually drive people away from God by their

Pharisee-like, self-righteous superior attitudes and hypocrisy. Jesus said in John 13:34-35, "A new command, I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By *this* will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."

Do Good, Get Good! — Do Bad, Get Bad!

In the Old Testament, God made it clear to Israel, and all the world by extension, that, "If you do good, you will get the blessing of God. If you do bad, you will get the curse of God." But in the New Testament we hear about the unconditional love of God, revealed in Jesus, whose grace saves us from the ultimate bad end, even though we truly deserve that bad end. Paul said to the Colossians, "As you therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." What this clearly means is that since we receive Jesus by grace through faith, **we are to live** now, as Christians, **by grace through faith**.

Our Own Reflection

The Old Testament provides a mirror of the selfishness of every man. The New Testament provides a comforter, the Holy Spirit, to enable us to Love Like Jesus Loves. Notice it is the Holy Spirit with which our spirit is joined (meshed) that can fulfill Jesus' command.

Old and New Have Value

The entire Word of God, the Holy Bible, is about the love of God dispensed in creation and specifically for and to mankind. This love was rejected by mankind as he walked away from God in rebellion. This rejection of God was recorded for millennia in the atrocities of men against each other. So great is the love of God, that He provided a substitute to take the penalty of all those evil acts of man against man. Everything that was necessary to reestablish the broken relationship with God was contained in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, *the substitute*.

All that was, and still is, required of man in order to return to God is this. 1 - admission of personal guilt; 2 - recognition of Jesus innocence; 3 - agreeing to let Jesus make restitution for your evil. Let Jesus serve your sentence of death to satisfy the justice of God and walk away a free man. It is God Who restores the love of God to the human heart. Scripture declares, "The Law is perfect and will never be done away." The Law reflects to us our guilt of our evil ways and deeds. But once redeemed from death row we have a new life to live. And the story line ends with Jesus "new" command. Jesus said, "Love one another as deeply and unconditionally as I have loved you!"

The New Norm

We now live by the New Testament (rules), and the Gospel of Jesus, which is the only means of salvation. We must therefore, stop striving to obey the Ten

Commandments, since it is impossible anyway. We must let (*release control to*) the Holy Spirit within us love every person we meet as God loves them. In this way, we will actually fulfill the original Laws of God brought down the mountain by Moses as well as Jesus' only command. Instead of the *old* way, *we get what we deserve*, we live the *new* way, *we get what we do not deserve* (grace). Return the love *of God*. Let Jesus suffer your just penalty because *He* loves *you*. Pass on the great news that the love *of God* is truly **unconditional**! In other words, "*Live loved!*"

Christ Alone

Those who are abandoned to intimacy with God have only one source of riches. All of those riches are in Christ for them. Jesus Christ is more than enough. It is not, Christ plus something else. Jesus Christ is their life, all of it. The love of Jesus is completely satisfying. He is sufficient in every task. Those who seek the deeper Christian life and those who want the riches that are in Christ Jesus the Lord, seek no place, no wealth and no things, only Christ.

Fashionable Religion

Many people use their religion to promote their own wealth, fame or influence. In a very real sense they are *using God's name in vain*! They're using religion as a means to achieve selfish ends. They take advantage of

current trends, riding the wave of popular nuances. They cash in on them. Many Christians are guilty of this very thing. But the intimate Christian, speaks proudly about his lover, Jesus Christ, even if he is rejected for it!

The desire to have a following, to be famous, to have a good reputation is not a consideration at all for those who are abandoned to intimacy with God. Those who walk and live in intimacy with God have no desire for these things and are willing to lose their precious reputations, if they must, in order to love God and others as Jesus did!

God Seekers

Satisfying the natural desires for prosperity, popularity, and power are the very things which prevent any Christian from abandoning themselves to intimacy with God. Intimate believers want to know God and to be where Jesus is. That is all. Paul said, "I count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." Philippians 3:8. The seekers after God are deeply dissatisfied with mere form. They want content, that is, real intimacy with God Himself.

Far Superior to Religious Traditions

It matters not what religion or denomination you identify with. God has people everywhere, who hate mere

form. Even though they may participate in it, there is something within them that is much larger and demands much more than all of that. Brother Lawrence, born Nicholas Herman, written about in *The Practice of the Presence of God*, was in a monastery. He said, "I learned to pray to God all by myself. I just talked to God all the time. Everything I was doing, washing dishes, traveling, whatever I was doing, I was talking to my heavenly Father. I developed such a sense of God's presence around about me that I never lost it for 40 years.

I did not need their forms. They told me to set times to pray. And I did it. I was obedient. I prayed at set times, but it did not mean a thing any more than it did at any other time. I had learned the inner secret of fellowship with God, myself. I'd already found God. And I was in communion with God all the time." Brother Lawrence did what he was told and smiled. But he said it did not mean anything.

Tozer addresses inadequate progress of the average Christian:

Little Progress

The average Christian today does not make much spiritual progress at all. He is converted, joins the church, and five years later, he's right back where he started. Ten years later, he's still where he was or he has even slipped back a little. That is not satisfactory to those who seek and thirst and hunger after God. This is the testimony of a

seeker after God. He's not going to let somebody else's slow snail's progress keep him back.

Not Very Impressed

What have we come to, that the people of God are not shocked enough by Calvary, a man dying on a cross, on a hill outside of Jerusalem? And not just a man, but the God-man, dying for the sins of the world? Why does this leave them dull and unmoved? Some even read with great eagerness the lives of Holy men in the devotional books from centuries past. But where is the doing?

One and Done

Are you satisfied with the once-on-Sunday sort of religion? God has given you the wind, the rain, and a body to contain your wonderful soul. He has given you an amazing mind and many fine abilities. He sustains you, keeps your heart beating and waits to receive you into heaven. But do you toss Him a crumb so God gets what is left behind? Does God get only the tattered bits of your time, yet you say you are a follower of the Lamb? Do not fool yourself. You are not, if you don't go deeper into intimacy with God.

Go Ahead — Revolt

Are you weary of religion and do you long after God? I long after God. The only gratifying thing I have apart from my communion with God is the knowledge that I'm not alone in my journey. God has his people everywhere who are in revolt against pretense, textualism, externalism and tradition. They want to seek God for Himself, as He is in the scriptures, as revealed by the Holy Spirit.

God has his people, but there aren't many of them. **Are you one?**