

7. Living Holy Lives (3Q 2012—1 and 2 Thessalonians)

Biblical material: 1 Thess. 4:1–12; Matt. 25:34–46; Gen. 39:9; John 13:34, 35.

Quotes

- Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter. *Martin Luther King, Jr.*
- Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men. *John F. Kennedy*
- Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them. *Henry David Thoreau*
- The purpose of our lives is to be happy. *Dalai Lama*
- Beliefs have the power to create and the power to destroy. Human beings have the awesome ability to take any experience of their lives and create a meaning that disempowers them or one that can literally save their lives. *Tony Robbins*
- It is not what we get, but who we become, what we contribute... that gives meaning to our lives. *Tony Robbins*

Questions

Why is a holy life so important? How would we define a “holy life”? In what way does this play into our relationships with one another? Why does the way we treat each other affect the way we relate to God? Why is pleasing God important as an element in the great controversy? Is it just a question of blind obedience?

Bible summary

The theme of 1 Thess. 4:1–12 is one of pleasing God. Paul recognizes that the Thessalonians are already living this way, but encourages them to do this even more. Being like God is really what holiness means, and this is the emphasis here. Paul spells this out here, particularly in the area of our relationships. The dangers of sexual sins are that they fracture the most intimate of relationships. Paul also emphasizes the importance of love as a principle of life. He ends this section with the value of living quiet lives, ones that others who are not Christians will respect.

The practical results of true Christianity are spelled out by Jesus in Matt. 25:34–46. In the way we relate to one another, in the practical help we give, we show our true character and motivation.

We’re also given the example of Joseph, who refused to compromise his beliefs and his respect for his employer by giving in to Potiphar’s wife’s immoral suggestions (see Gen. 39:9).

Jesus, in his final instructions to his disciples, tells them to love one another. This is the way that others will be able to identify his disciples (John 13:34, 35).

Comment

It’s all about being faithful—faithful to your spouse, to your fellow believers, and to God. Jesus was faithful. Joseph was faithful. Paul is encouraging the Thessalonians to be faithful.

So what does it mean to be faithful? Really faith has to do with trust, so faithful means trustworthy. The real question then becomes, “am I trustworthy?” In marriage, at

work, in our relationships with each other, are we trustworthy? For that is what God is looking for—trustworthy friends!

For us to trust someone we have to know them well. Before we lend someone money we like to know that we'll get our money back! We want to know something about that person so that we can have confidence in them. And how do we develop that trust? By getting to know them, spending time with them, watching how they behave. And that is what we have to do with God. He wants to win back our trust, and so the Bible is a record of how he acts and behaves, giving details of the reasons why we can confidently trust him. Above all else, Jesus, the God who came to us, is the demonstration that we can have complete and total trust in him. By his life and death he lays bare the Devil's lie; and shows us that the God of the still small voice *is* right, and we can believe *in* him.

Like Peter. His problem was that he didn't really know Jesus. He had not understood what God was truly like. He was ready for the fight, for the armed conflict in the Garden of Gethsemane. But he wasn't ready for God to be so kind and loving to die for him. He wanted God to be the wind, earthquake and fire God, not the God of the still small voice that Elijah discovered. So his trust failed. He disowned his Lord, as we do so often. And it took some time before he finally understood, and was willing to trust God completely, and to follow God's way rather than his own.

Faith is a risk. This is what trusting means. We have evidence enough to convince us that we can truly trust God, but we must exercise our trust. It is not enough just to believe. We have to trust God, and let him do his work in us. Otherwise we do not trust, we do not let go, and God cannot help us. When the crisis of trust comes, listen to the gentle whisper, the still small voice, and do as he says. Only then will we truly trust God, and only then will we have the victory, God and us.

Ellen White Comments

O that our hearts may be deeply impressed with the importance of living holy lives, that the world may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus, and have learned of him. Christian worth does not depend upon brilliant talents, lofty birth, wonderful powers, but on a clean heart,—a heart which, purified and refined, reflects the image of divinity. It is the presence of him who gave his life for us that makes the soul beautiful. It is not eloquent speakers that are needed so much as humble, earnest workers,—men and women who have a childlike trust in God. {RH, November 24, 1904}

Christ alone was able to represent the Deity. He who had been in the presence of the Father from the beginning, He who was the express image of the invisible God, was alone sufficient to accomplish this work. No verbal description could reveal God to the world. Through a life of purity, a life of perfect trust and submission to the will of God, a life of humiliation such as even the highest seraph in heaven would have shrunk from, God Himself must be revealed to humanity. In order to do this, our Saviour clothed His divinity with humanity. He employed the human faculties, for only by adopting these could He be comprehended by humanity. Only humanity could reach humanity. He lived out the character of God through the human body which God had prepared for Him. He blessed the world by living out in human flesh the life of God, thus showing that He had the power to unite humanity to divinity. {ISM 264}