

## *Understanding Spirituality - Some Issues!*

1. Basic to all spiritual reality for us, as believers, is the fact of our identification with the cross work of Christ.

Summary of what Rom. 6 teaches:

- the fact of the believer's death to the sin (nature), **6:2**
- the fact of our baptism-identity with the death-burial and resurrection of Christ (this by the baptism of the Holy Spirit), **6:3**
- the fact that the "old man," all that we were in Adam, that is unregenerate, stands crucified, **6:6**
- the fact that this identification liberates us from the sin (nature), **6:7**
- the fact that we were raised with Him so that we could walk in newness of life. **6:4**
- the fact that the believer is to count as true that he died to the sin nature, **6:11**

This identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection is the basis of all victory over sin and the sin nature, hence, basic to true spirituality.

The cross is ever the focal point of victory: The Holy Spirit will see to it that that critical fact does not escape the person rightly related to Him.

2. The emphasis of the Holy Spirit in this age, according to what Christ Himself said, is ever on the glories and work of the Savior:

- John 16:13 "He (the Spirit) shall not speak on His own initiative." ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ, kjv of himself
- John 16:14 "He (the Spirit) shall glorify Me (the Christ)."

Therefore we should expect true spirituality to express itself in a very similar emphasis. [glorifying Christ]

3. Spirituality is best understood as a right relationship with the Spirit of Christ, the very Holy Spirit of God.

This relationship includes not grieving and not quenching the Spirit and leads to increased appreciation of Christ, His work at Calvary, and all the things of God.

If spirituality is defined as "a right relationship to the Spirit," one can well ask, "Does that relationship admit to degrees or is it absolute?"

We dare not relativise "rightness" in relation to God. The unbeliever is absolutely unrighteous before God; the believer is absolutely righteous before God because he/she is in Christ.

In the same way, the believer is either absolutely in fellowship with the Spirit of God, hence rightly related, or absolutely out of fellowship (wrongly related), no gray areas.

4. Spirituality in this perspective is then an "**either/or**" proposition: The believer at any given moment in his human experience is either spiritual (in right relation with the Holy Spirit) or fleshly (carnal).

Nowhere are we as believers ever commanded to become "more spiritual" than he is at the moment.

We are commanded to grow in grace and knowledge, but not in spirituality. 2 Pet. 3:8 commands all believers to grow, surely some addressed were considered "spiritual" - they too were to grow!

Spirituality is absolute: Growth or maturation is relative.

5. Confusion about spirituality often results from a failure to make a distinction between spirituality and maturation: The first does not admit to degrees, the second does; the first is absolute, the second is relative.

A new Christian can be spiritual, that is, rightly related in an absolute sense with the Holy Spirit, but a new Christian cannot be mature because maturity involves time plus knowledge of truth and application of truth (m = t + kot + aot).

Advice: We must keep Christian maturity and spirituality distinct.

6. Spirituality then is a means to maturation: It is that condition of spiritual relationship with God that makes possible our progress toward the standard and stature of the Son of God. Eph 4:13

Conformed to the image of Christ. Revealed through the Word.

7. Spirituality is maintained by "walking by the Spirit" as opposed to walking by the "flesh," which is the same as being filled by the Spirit. [if your one, you're the other]

Involved is a responsiveness to the Spirit's prompting through the Word and confession of known sin as it is revealed (1 John 1:9).

The Spirit of righteousness will faithfully convict the believer of sin through the function of the conscience; confession is the appropriate response.

The believer is not to quench or grieve the Spirit.

8. No discussion of spirituality is complete without a thorough consideration of the truths of Rom. 6 (referred to in point #1), but since this is merely a summary, I will simply address myself to the meaning of the believer "yielding unto God" (Rom. 6:13, 16, 19; 12:1).

Believe the following points clarify the issue:

- "Yielding" as taught by many takes on a wholly negative emphasis, whereas the scriptural concept is **very positive**.

Yielding is often equated with "giving up" a sin or plucking up one at a time, various things that displease God in one's life. Such a view obviously concludes that spirituality is never complete, never absolute, since there is always some new sin that needs to be plucked up.

- "Yielding" is better translated "**present**" as in Rom. 12:1. The verb is *paristemi*, *παρίστημι* meaning "to place beside, to stand by, to present."

The concept of this verb is very positive, similar to a military person presenting himself to his commanding officer for positive service. Volunteering for duty!

- "Presentation" is the attitude that the believer, once the sin nature's servant, is now God's servant, Rom. 6:13, 17, 18. Note the absolute dichotomy of service, either to the sin nature or to God:

It is one or the other, not a little of each, thus reaffirming the absoluteness of spirituality.

- Rom. 6:13 commands the believer to "present" (yield) himself to God as alive from the dead:

One does not make himself more alive to God by presenting himself, he is alive because he is "in Christ."

Presentation means we give constant recognition of the fact to God in our mentality and as a result in our actions.

- "Presentation" (yieldedness) means that one's attitude toward life is compatible with one's position in Christ.
- "Presentation" (yielding) is first a mental response to God on the basis of knowing certain Biblical truth: the identification truths of Rom. 6:1-10.

Involved is a very positive and conscious concept of being alive unto God, hence ready and available for service to Him, to His plan, to reflect His character, His righteousness.

9. Paul intended each believer to know if he/she is or is not spiritual (Gal. 6:1).

#### Summary Conclusions and Applications:

1. God desires believers to be spiritual, e.g., rightly related to His Spirit.
2. Only spiritual believers can be used maximally of God.
3. Spiritual believers can honestly know they are rightly related to God's Spirit, hence, "spiritual."
4. Spiritual believers do not brag about nor call attention to their spirituality nor do they feel they have reached a point of spiritual-growth and maturation beyond which is no growth.
5. Spiritual believers enjoy the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) produced in their mentality, their thinking as they learn and apply Bible doctrine, and the repeated demonstrations of the effectiveness of the life of Christ in them as they face and deal with the issues of life.