

No Condemnation

By Rich Harris

Psalm 34: vs.19 &22

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all; The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.

When a member of the Lord's body experiences affliction a sense of distress sometimes accompanies that feeling - a spirit of condemnation begins to linger in their presence. Although our afflictions are not always connected to this spirit, we find that where immaturity and lack of wisdom exist a door is open to condemnation. As condemnation stealths it's way into our lives it creates a negative mind set that can reap a false guilt. We must realize that there is a difference between false guilt, condemnation, and conviction.

False guilt has it's roots in condemnation regardless of the origin. Many in the Lord's body have been duped by their feelings brought on by seeming accusations - which are often just vain imaginations. Immaturity is the primary cause of our being moved by our feelings and imaginations. One cannot reach full maturity until they have been raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is a great dilemma in the church body today. Current history reveals that with the break down of the family over several past generations - insecurity has set in and immaturity runs rampant in the world and the church.

The spirit of darkness releases a false power to kill, steal and destroy. Condemnation, control, and accusation are all part of satan's kingdom of darkness. When in a state of immaturity we tend to think that the power of our afflictions are greater than God's power to deliver us from them. This is caused by living in the flesh and not in the Spirit. Living in the flesh causes our mind, will and emotions to rule over our spirit who by now should be in submission to the indwelling Holy Spirit.

In defining condemnation we will see the root of this debilitating spirit that often comes out of our speaking. In the old covenant scriptures the Hebrew word is 'asham meaning to offend, to be guilty, to trespass, to be desolate, or to acknowledge offense. In New Covenant Scriptures we find the Greek word Katakrima meaning - damnatory sentence. We must come to a place in our lives where we are responsible for what comes out of our mouths. Jesus said; *"out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"*(see Matt 12:33-37). We must ask ourselves what is hidden in our hearts before we open our mouths.

Why is it then that many Christians today live in a constant state of condemnation? Condemnation feeds on the fruit of an unsubmitted (or non-committed) soul. The Psalmist has said in Ps 34:19 &22 that the Lord delivers the righteous from his afflictions and that He redeems the soul of His servant from condemnation! We are delivered and redeemed! We must come to the reality that this is how the Lord has destined us to live and overcome afflictions - through our redeemer Jesus Christ!

The Stealth of the Soul

Over many years of being a believer and having experienced with many others afflictions, accusations, and vain imaginations, I found these to be a primary cause of condemnation. During that time, I have observed the following paths of enemy stealth tactics. There may be other tactics but these are the ones we can readily recognize and overcome. I must point out that all of these carry a nature of immaturity bred from the works of the flesh.

One significant observation is of those who embrace a critical spirit disguised as the “gift of discernment” or a prophetic gift. First I want to say that there is no “gift of discernment” given by the Holy Spirit - there is a gift of discerning of spirits. Notice spirits is plural meaning that the one so gifted can discern what is in the spiritual realm. That can mean - God’s Spirit, angelic spirits, man’s spirit, and evil spirits.

Often those who embrace a critical spirit are truly gifted individuals but have never received proper discipling or equipping in their gift. Often misunderstood, they have come to believe that God is the only source of what they receive and they must speak only what they “heard” Him say. This has happened much too often to many gifted people in the church over the years. Unfortunately a critical spirit in one of these ill equipped people can unleash a spirit of condemnation even speaking to the recipient such things as “Your afflictions are caused by sin, thus says the Lord!”

Another observation is of those who “speak the truth in love”. When speaking in this way they usually speak without seeking the Lord’s heart as to how and when to deliver such a word. Thus the word of truth loses its power to heal through improper timing and delivery. Unfortunately, the recipients of such a word are often immature individuals who lack confidence in their relationship with God the Father. In like manner those who are speaking have not yet reached a maturity in discerning the Lord’s voice for the timing and delivery. The scriptures are clear that when we speak the truth in love it is so that the recipient, “may grow up in all things into Him who is the head- Christ”. If we speak anxiously out of our own love and zeal we speak from an unsubmitted soulish realm that feeds a spirit of condemnation destroying rather than building one up in Messiah. I have seen this happen with many “mature” leaders who unknowingly just slimed a member of the Lord’s body by “speaking the truth in love”. The Lord once dropped a phrase into my spirit that changed my own speaking too quickly. I heard the voice of the Holy Spirit say, “Maturity is not so anxious to speak until wisdom and love release the word’s of God’s heart”. I knew that was not my own thought - I did not have that kind of wisdom in my own thought process. If we wait on Him with a sense of expectation He will speak His heart to us.

A final significant observation, although not conclusive, comes from those who involve themselves in gossip. Gossip has its roots in insecure, immature people who want recognition without responsibility. Another area of false gifting - “we need to do something about this”! The apostle Paul brings proper perspective to this line of thinking in 1Timothy 5:12,13. He states firstly they are “*having condemnation because they have cast of their*

first faith". This causes them to become idle, "wandering from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not". He then goes into a specific dissertation that the older (more mature) people in the body - manage the house and give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully (see verse 14)!

Maturity

All three of the above observations can open the door for a spirit of condemnation to enter our lives and affect a home or prayer group, local body, or region adversely. What then is the solution to stop this spirit dead in its tracks? Maturity in the Lord is the primary lack in today's church bodies. Ephesians 4:11-16 clearly reveals how maturity is generated in the body. I like David Stern's rendition of verses 12 and 13 of Ephesians chapter 4. Speaking of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, Stern writes; " *Their task is to equip God's people for the work of service that builds the body of Messiah, until we all arrive at the unity implied by trusting and knowing the Son of God, at full manhood, at the standard of maturity set by the Messiah's perfection.*" This is the goal of God in setting those offices in the church! When those in the afore mentioned offices complete their tasks; "we will no longer be infants tossed about....." Infants are immature and easily swayed by all the above mentioned stealthes of our souls. Let us all as members of the Lord's body examine ourselves to see if we are truly in the faith or faithfully going through the emotions thereof.

In conclusion, there is a reality to maturity. It is in fact an apostolic reality in our knowing that, "in Him we live and move and have our being" (see Acts 17:28). We are the offspring of God where the Divine Nature has come by grace and divine appointment to live in us who believe. If then the words of Jesus are both spirit and life then both the Psalmist (Psalm 34:19&22) and the apostle agree that, "There is therefore now no condemnation (damnable sentence) to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1 NKJV emphasis added). How can we, if we walk according to the Spirit be a vessel of condemnation to any other (be they mature or immature), except we in our own lack of wisdom, embrace a brisk walk in the flesh.