

Personality and Piety (2/3)

One-Sided Spirituality

(2Tim. 3:1-9; Ex. 7:1-13; Mat. 5:21-24)

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Personality

Last week we talked about four essential preferences that shape the way we relate to and process the data we receive from the world around us. They include:

- How we focus on the world outside of the self
- How we process data or receive information
- How we make decisions
- How we handle the flow of life

There is a link in my manuscripts from last week and this week that takes you to a website where you can take a survey that helps you to identify your personality preferences. There is also a lot of information there, that explains the personality traits and preferences. (4)

More than just knowing these preferences and personality traits, it is important to learn to work outside the box that contains our personal preferences. We need to learn to love and work with people who have preferences and personality traits that are unlike our own.

Without this understanding, we run into a big problem, personality conflict.

Power

There are a lot of passages that talk about dealing with difficulties in life. Paul, in his letter to the young preacher Timothy, talks about the root of what it is that makes things go wrong in life.

2 Timothy 3:1-9 (NASB)

"Difficult Times Will Come"

[1] But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

[2] For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

[3] unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

[4] treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than *lovers of God*,

[5] holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

[6] For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,

[7] always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

[8] Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the

truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith.

[9] But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also.

Look at verse 5 again.

2 Timothy 3:5 (NASB)

[5] holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power...

Verse 5 entices us to ask a couple of important questions. First, what is the power they deny? Looking at the context, we discover that it is the Holy Spirit of God.

If the Holy Spirit of God is the power denied, it entices us to ask a second question. What, or who is the Holy Spirit?

Even a casual reading of the Scriptures reveals to the reader that the Holy Spirit is God's lifeline in the plan of salvation.

Last week we heard Paul compare the church to a unified and healthy body.

The Holy Spirit of God is the blood coursing through the veins of that body giving life to every member and cell in that body.

God's plan for the health and vigor of that body is His plan of salvation, which has four elements:

1. Preventive Grace - In this first element, God speaks to sinners and bids them to come to Him. It is the ultimate act of love, mercy, and forgiveness.
As His enemies flee from Him in rebellion, God loves them, by asking them to turn around and come to Him.
2. Salvation - In the second element, God's extravagant love is revealed. God becomes a human and dies to deliver His enemies from their own personal rebellion.
This love does not come with some kind of superficial release from punishment alone. His love goes to the root of the sin problem to release mankind from the guilt and power of sin.
3. Sanctification - In the third element, God expresses His love in the form of companionship with the indwelling presence of His Spirit.

Not a passive companionship that waits for the moment we may need Him to free us from the wrath of God.

His companionship expresses itself in a moment-by-moment relationship of guidance and power that can help the surrendered

follower of Christ to overcome temptation and the power of sin.

4. Glorification - In element four, God finishes or finalizes His relational work with mankind.

Not that He is finished with mankind, but that He finally surrenders to a man's final act of free will choice.

Those who chose to follow Him are never enticed to rebel against Him ever again.

Those who chose to live apart from Him, in their own selfishness, are left alone, never to be enticed to come into the Kingdom of God again.

Heaven and hell are not places God sends people. Heaven and hell are places that each individual choose for themselves for all of eternity.

It is important to notice that every element of God's plan of salvation is an act of love. The simple statement; *"Smile, God loves you,"* is one of the most profound statements ever uttered.

It is interesting that Paul uses the word *lovers* four times in these nine verses.

1. Lovers of self
2. Lovers of money
3. Lovers of pleasure
4. Lovers of God

Paul is trying to get across to his readers and listeners what it looks like to have a form of godliness yet deny, and therefore be without, it's power.

To say that someone loves self rather than God, is to say that they place themselves in a more prominent place in controlling the moment by moment actions of daily living, instead of allowing God to be in control.

To say that someone loves money rather than God is to say that they place the gratification of self, over the request of God to give Him a tithe of all that they have.

To say that someone loves pleasure rather than God, is to say that they seek to please themselves above all else. Self-gratification of the lusts of the soul, mind, and body are their only priority in life.

Paul even uses some shocking adjectives to describe where we end up when we refuse to be a lover of God.

Things may not look this shocking at first, but this is where we end in our quest for self-gratification.

- Boastful
- Arrogant
- Revilers
- Disobedient to parents

- Ungrateful
- Unholy
- Unloving
- Irreconcilable
- Malicious gossips
- Without self control
- Brutal
- Haters of good
- Treacherous
- Reckless
- Conceited

Lovers of God - that's the bottom line. I must always be asking myself the question; am I a lover of God, or do I love money, pleasure, and myself more than I love God.

When I examine the actions of my moment-by-moment living, who is the lover in my life, God or myself?

Do I hold to a form of godliness, and at the same time deny it's power by rejecting the love of God shown to me in His plan of salvation?

Preference

In this portion of Paul's letter to Timothy, he gives us a graphic picture from the Old Testament. It is a picture, which contrasts lovers of self with lovers of God.

In 2Tim. 3:8 & 9 Paul mentions Jannes and Jambres. You will not find their names in the Old Testament, but extra Biblical records reveal that they were two of the magicians that Pharaoh called in when Moses and Aaron came before Pharaoh to ask him to free Israel from slavery. (2)

Exodus 7:1-13 (NASB)

"I Will Lay My Hand On Egypt"

[1] Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet.

[2] "You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land.

[3] "But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

[4] "When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments.

[5] "The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."

[6] So Moses and Aaron did it; as the LORD commanded them, thus they did.

[7] Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

[8] Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

[9] “When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, ‘Work a miracle,’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.’”

[10] So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and thus they did just as the LORD had commanded; and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.

[11] Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers, and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts.

[12] For each one threw down his staff and they turned into serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

[13] Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

The statement from God, "I will lay My hand on Egypt," has a counter part to it that we don't often think of.

Just as God would lay His hand on Egypt for their rebellion, God had already laid His hand on Moses and Aaron to empower them to do His will.

Don't ever forget that just as surely as God will one day lay His hand of power and judgment on the rebellious, He does

now, this day, lay His hand on those who follow Him.

He empowers us wherever we are:

- At home, while we struggle together as a family
- At work, often in an environment that is hostile to the follower of Christ
- At school, where peer pressure can overwhelm us
- At church, where we struggle to work together to make a difference in our corner of the world

The list could go on for a long time. The point is that the hand of Almighty God is on the head of every follower of Jesus Christ.

So it is not hard to imagine how difficult a time Moses and Aaron had when they faced this ungodly Pharaoh.

I would imagine that when Aaron threw his staff down and it became a serpent he and Moses must have felt pretty good about this moment of victory.

Probably unconcerned, even bored, because this was nothing new to him, Pharaoh calls in his magicians who do the same thing.

Put yourself in the sandals of Moses and Aaron for a moment. I don't know about you but it seems to me that every_time I

have a spiritual victory in my life, it is not long until it seems to be overcome by the next difficulty.

I would imagine that Moses and Aaron were pretty much like you and me when it came to dealing with temptation and evil in daily life.

I would imagine (**don't think**) that their hearts sank when Jannes and Jambres threw down their staffs, which also became serpents.

As always though, God is never absent for very long. To show His power, the serpent that came from Aaron's staff swallowed up the serpents from the staffs of the magicians.

This same power of God is available to every believer today. That's what Paul is trying to get across to the Young preacher Timothy, and all who would read his letter.

It is this power of God that will keep us from living out one-sided spirituality in our lives.

Reconciliation

One-sided spirituality is coming to believe that our personality preferences and traits are superior to other people's personalities. We tend to think that the

way we worship and do things is the way everyone should do them.

Robert Mulholland says, "Left to ourselves in the development of our spiritual practices, we will generally gravitate to those spiritual activities that nurture our preferred pattern of being and doing." (3)

That causes two problems. First, there is a shortcoming in our spiritual life and relationship with God.

Mulholland gives us an example. "Extraverts will tend to develop a highly social spirituality which involves them in spiritual activities with others, but avoids solitude and reflection" (3)

Introverts, left to themselves, would develop the opposite kind of spiritual life. This is one of the reasons we really do need each other.

Interacting, growing, and working with each other helps us to keep from developing one-sided spirituality.

Obviously, we could take a lot of time to see the dangers in each personality when they ignore those personality traits that are not their preference.

The second problem that comes out of this one-sided spirituality is the feeling of

superiority toward those who do not share our particular preferences and personality traits.

This is often where problems of strife and division come in the church. Last week we talked extensively about that.

A question that arises out of the reality of these kinds of difficulties is trying to figure out how to resolve them.

Now in the Old Testament example we looked at, we saw people who had gone way beyond misunderstandings about personality preferences and traits. Pharaoh thought he was a god.

That is not the problem in the Body of Christ. The problem we face is misunderstandings, and the solution to that problem is reconciliation.

You see, it is inevitable, personalities are going to clash from time to time.

The problem is not that personalities clash from time to time, the problem is, we don't know how, or are not willing, to follow Christ's teaching which tells us how to deal with the problem of personality conflict.

[Matthew 5:21-24 \(NASB\)](#)
Personal Relationships

[21] “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ [22] “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. [23] “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

Communication!
Communication!
Communication!

When we have a problem with someone, we need to talk to them personally. Not through someone else, not by email or text message, not by instant messaging or Facebook, we need to talk to them in person.

Communication is the only resolution to personality conflict. Communication can bring reconciliation.

There are some important factors to remember in communicating for reconciliation.

- It is helpful if you know the unique person that God created in you.

Take a personality survey to see what your personality type is. There is plenty of information that can help you understand why you feel like you do about the issues of life. (4)

- Remember that people with different personalities do not see or feel the same about the issues of life.
- Remember that God created all these different and unique personalities for two reasons

First, because He loves variety, just look at His creation. No galaxy, planet, animal, plant, or human being is the same.

Second, because He needs all of these different and unique personalities to make up a healthy and functional body to accomplish His will.

- Remember that God loves you as much as He loves the one you need to be reconciled to. He is with both of you and wants reconciliation between you.

To be successful, reconciliation requires that all parties involved communicate with each other with a fair and non-confrontational attitude.

Personality conflict is hard, but God can help us to be reconciled and healed, we need only trust and follow His leading.

Prayer

Resources:

1. NASB - New American Standard Bible (NASB). Cedar Rapids: Laridian, 2002.
2. CWS-NT - AMG Complete Word Study Dictionary - New Testament (CWS_NT). Cedar Rapids: Laridian Electronic Publishing, 2007.
3. Mulholland, M. Robert Jr., Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation, Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 1993.
4. www.mypersonality.info/personality-types/

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