

Finishing Well

Lesson #4

Spiritual Dung

Jan. 25, 2023

The key to this gate is repentance [I John 1:9]. If our valley experiences do not lead us to repentance, they are wasted on us and we are not cleansed.

Come before the Lord with a sincere heart. Confess and repent. We need to be cleansed, emptied and prepared for God's power before we move to the Fountain Gate.

Daily use of the Dung Gate forces me to cast aside the weights and sin that so easily trip me up in my service to the Lord, my spiritual growth and from being molded into His image.

Spiritual Dung will prevent me from absolute surrender, humility and knowing Jesus.

A. The Glory Of The Old Life

The Apostle Paul had a rich, religious heritage and illustrious ancestry.

What did Paul "count as dung, rubbish"?

Phil. 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Phil. 3:4-6 If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Philippians 3:7-10 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency 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, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

- Willing to lose his religion & reputation for what he gained in Christ.
- All the good things kept him away from God.
- He had to lose his religion to find Jesus.

Phil. 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

Paul's confession: I want to KNOW Christ and the power of His resurrection, participate in His sufferings, become like Him in His death. I do ONE thing and I press toward the mark. As God's new creation, we count the glory of the old life as "dung" compared to knowing and experiencing the glory of Christ.

B. Throw Out Seeking Glory of Myself

We Must Glorify Him Completely - Matt. 20:17-34

For the third time, Jesus announced His arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection to His disciples. Now He clearly mentions the cross, but the message did not penetrate the disciples' hearts. In contrast to this announcement of suffering and death, there is a request of James and John and their mother, Salome.

➤ Jesus just spoke about a cross, but they were interested in a crown.

They wanted reserved seats on special thrones! Salome was interested in promoting her sons.

Things wrong with their request:

1. It was born in ignorance. "Ye know not what ye ask," Jesus replied. [request of flesh]

Little did Salome realize that the path to the throne is a difficult one. James was the first of the disciples to be martyred, and John had to endure hard days on the Isle of Patmos. These three believers wanted their will, not God's will, and they wanted it their way.

2. Their lack of heavenly direction - They were thinking like the world:

James and John wanted to "lord it over" the other disciples the way the unsaved Gentile rulers lorded it over their subjects. Their request was fleshly (sensual), because they were selfishly asking for glory for themselves, not for the Lord.

3. The request was not only of the world and the flesh, but it was of the devil.

It was motivated by pride. Satan sought a throne [Isa. 14:12-15] and had been cast down.

Satan had offered Jesus a throne and had been refused [Matt. 4:8-11].

➤ Satan magnifies the end (a throne) but not the means to that end.

Jesus warned Salome and her sons that the special thrones were available to those who were worthy of them. There are no shortcuts in the kingdom of God.

The key to greatness is not found in position or power, but in character.

We must identify with Jesus Christ in His service and suffering.

C. Throw Out Strange gods & Idolatry

An idol is anything which takes the place and preeminence of God.

In II Kings 23:4-7, Josiah and his priests focused on cleansing the Temple of all the idolatry symbols and pagan staff members that had crept into its system over time.

II Kings 23:6 And he (Josiah) brought out the wooden image from the house of the LORD, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground it to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people.

II Kings 23:8-14 King Josiah takes his priests on a systematic and thorough cleansing in Judah of every known place of idol worship, as well as removing priests who had been corrupted by paganism. [Seeking the Lord will drive you to action to clean God's dwelling place.]

II Kings 23:15 Furthermore, the altar that was at Bethel and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who misled Israel into sin, had made, even that altar and the high place he tore down. Then he burned the high place, ground the remains to dust, and burned the Asherah.

II Kings 23:24-25 Furthermore, Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household of gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem. This he did to fulfill the requirements of the law...Neither before or after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did...with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the law of Moses.

Acts 19 Ephesus was a center for the occult. God had enabled Paul to perform many miracles and demonstrate God's power in Satan's territory. However, Satan always sends a counterfeit to oppose the work. He knows many cannot tell the difference. After Paul, seven Jewish priests tried to cast out demons. Since they had no personal relationship with Christ, they invoked the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches. Their scheme did not work.

The demon said, "Jesus I recognize, and Paul I am acquainted with; but who are you?"

The demonized man attacked the 7 priests and drove them from the house.

If this exorcism had succeeded, it would have discredited the name of Jesus Christ.

God used this scheme to defeat Satan and bring conviction to the believers who were still involved in magical arts. Instead of disgracing the name of Jesus, the event magnified His name and caused the Word of God to spread more rapidly.

Acts 19:18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

The tense of the verb indicates that the people kept coming...kept confessing...kept showing."

The believers apparently had not made a clean break with sin and were still practicing their magic, but the Lord dealt with them.

Acts 19:19-20 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. [This was equivalent to the total salaries of 150 men working for an entire year.] These people did not count the cost but repented and turned from their sins.

Result: The word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Question: What would I be willing to cast on the dung pile no matter the cost?

Consider: The root of all idolatry is SELF.

Altar of materialism > Desire for more & better stuff

Altar of Pride & Ego > Increase my self-esteem; feel more important & successful

D. Legalism > Man's attempt to sanctify himself by trying to carry out self-imposed rules. Those who live by legalistic rules often place their unreachable standards on others, which can lead to judgmental attitudes. "Legalism stinks of pride and self-inflicted rules." Legalism and our flesh bring us into bondage.

II Cor. 3:17 Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Live in the liberty of Christ & rely on His Holy Spirit to empower us to obey God's Word.

Gal. 5:1 It was for this freedom that Christ set us free [completely liberating us]; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery [which you once removed].

Phil. 2:13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Truth: I must throw out all legality from my heart; Legality can't live with freedom in Christ.
Throw out the legal spirit; take it to the Dung Gate; Dump it.

E. Throw out Being Judgmental

Matt. 7:1-5 Judge not, that you be not judged. [The tense signifies a once-for-all final judgment.] For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

If I judge myself first, I am preparing for that final judgment when I face Jesus Christ.

³ Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and look, the log is in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye!

- It is easy to judge the mistakes of others. It is difficult to realize your own mistakes.

The Pharisees "played God" as they condemned other people.

- The Pharisees judged and criticized others to make themselves look good.
- They never considered that God would one day judge them.
- The Pharisees saw the sins of others but did not see their own sins.

Consider: Purpose of self-judgment is to prepare us to serve others.

We are obligated to help others grow in grace. If I do not face up to my own sins and confess them, I blind myself to myself. I cannot see clearly enough to help others.

Spiritual Outlook Matt. 6:22-23 "The lamp of the body is the eye.

If therefore your eye is clear [healthy], your whole body will be full of light.

²³ But if your eye is bad [evil], your whole body will be full of darkness.

If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

Thoughts: Eye represents the attitude of my mind.

If my eye (mind) is focused on serving and glorifying God, there will be light within.

If my eye (mind) is focused on self and things of the flesh, there will be darkness within.

Consider: I can examine others' actions & attitudes, but I must not pass judgment on their motives. It is possible for a person to do a good work with a bad motive.

It is possible to fail in a task and be very sincerely motivated.

Consider: When we stand before Christ at the Judgment Seat, He will examine the secrets of the heart and reward us accordingly.

Col. 3:22-25 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. ²³ And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong shall receive for the wrong which he has done: and there is no respect of persons. [no partiality]

F. Throw Out Wrong Motives for Serving Him

We Must Obey Him Unreservedly - Matthew 19:27—20:16

Peter was quick to see the contrast between the wealthy ruler and poor disciples.

- "We have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?"

Jesus gave them a marvelous promise of eternal rewards.

- They would share thrones when He established His kingdom.
- Good things they had forsaken for His sake would be returned to them a hundredfold.
- They were not making sacrifices—they were making investments.
- Not all of the dividends would be received in this life.

Jesus detected in Peter's question the possibility of a wrong motive for service.

- So He added the warning that some who were first in their own eyes would be last in the judgment, and some who were last would end up first.

This truth was amplified in the parable of the workers in the vineyard.

- This parable has nothing to do with salvation.
- The penny (a day's wages) does not represent salvation > nobody works for his salvation.
- The parable is not talking about rewards; we are not all going to receive the same reward.

I Cor. 3:8 "And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor."

The parable emphasizes a right attitude in our service.

Note: 2 kinds of workers were hired

- Those who insisted on a contract and agreed to work for a penny a day
- Those who had no contract and agreed to take whatever the owner thought was right.

This explains why the householder paid the workers as he did:

- He wanted those who were hired first (who insisted on contract) to see how much he paid the workers who were hired later.
- b. The owner could show those first workers how very generous he was.

Put yourself in the place of those workers who were hired first but paid last.

- They each expected to get a penny, because that was what they agreed to accept.
- Imagine their surprise: the laborers who were hired last each received a penny!
- This meant their own wages should have been twelve pennies each!
- But the three o'clock workers also received a penny—for only three hours of work.
- The men last in line quickly recalculated their wages: four pennies for the day's work.
- When the men hired at noon also were paid a penny, this cut the salary of the contract workers considerably, for now they would earn only two pennies.
- But the owner gave them one penny each. Of course, they complained!

But they had no argument. They had agreed to work for a penny. Received what they ask for.

- Had they trusted the goodness of the owner, they would have received far more. But they insisted on a contract.

The lesson for Christ's disciples is obvious.

- We should not serve Him because we want to receive an expected reward.
- We should not insist on knowing what we will get.
- The highest kind of obedience is not based on a desire for reward or the fear of punishment. It is motivated by love.
- God is infinitely generous and gracious and will always give us better than we deserve.

Now we can understand the perils that were hidden in Peter's question in:

Matthew 19:27 "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore, what shall we have?"

1. We must not "suppose" [Matt. 20:10] that we will get something more if we really do not deserve it.
2. It is possible to do the Father's work and yet not do His will from the heart.
Eph. 6:6 not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,
3. If we serve Him only for the benefits [temporal and eternal], we will miss the best blessings He has for us.
4. We must trust Him unreservedly and believe that He will always give what is best.

DANGER OF PRIDE "What shall we have?" asked Peter.

This parable warned him, "How do you know you will have anything?"

1. BEWARE of overconfidence when it comes to the rewards God will give, for those first in their own eyes [and in the eyes of others] may end up last! Likewise, do not get discouraged, for those who consider themselves "unprofitable servants" may end up first.
2. BEWARE of the danger of watching other workers and measuring yourself by them.

I Cor. 4:5 Paul warns: "Judge nothing before the time."

Note: We see the worker and the work, but God sees the heart.

3. BEWARE of criticizing God and feeling that we have been left out.

Had the early morning workers trusted the generous owner and not asked for an agreement, he would have given them much more. They did not rejoice that others received more; instead, they were jealous and complained.

The goodness of the owner did not lead them to repentance.

Rom. 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

Truth: A complaining servant has not fully yielded to the master's will.

G. Throw Out The Stumbling Block

Isa. 57:14 And one shall say, "Build up! Build up! Prepare the way,

Take the stumbling block (a cause of falling or sinning) out of the way of My people."

Rom. 14:13 Therefore [For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.] let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

I Cor. 8:10-13 For if someone sees you, a person having knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, then if he is weak, will he not be encouraged to eat things sacrificed to idols [and violate his own convictions]? ¹¹ For through your knowledge (spiritual maturity) this weak man is ruined [that is, he suffers in his spiritual life], the brother for whom Christ died. ¹² And when you sin against the brothers and sisters in this way and wound their weak conscience [by confusing them], you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if [my eating a certain] food causes my brother to stumble (sin), I will not eat [such] meat ever again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble. [Amplified Bible]

Note: This is addressed primarily to the stronger Christians

Paul's Concern: Stronger Christians must help the weaker Christians to grow and mature.

The Issue: Stronger Christians are an offense [stumbling block] to the weaker Christians. Christian Liberty is the heart of the issue.

Can a Christian eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols?

Strong Christians: KNOW that a nonexistent god cannot contaminate the meat. OK to eat

Weaker Christians: Offended [this act was a stumbling block to them].

They had been saved out of pagan idolatry. Why are you eating this meat?

- Need the security of laws and rules; afraid to use their liberty in Christ yet.
- Weaker Christians are prone to criticize and judge stronger Christians.
- Weaker Christians are prone to stumble over what the stronger Christians are doing.

Truth: The conscience bears witness to God's moral law. It depends upon knowledge.

As I increase in spiritual knowledge and act on it, my conscience becomes stronger.

Christians with a weak conscience:

- Recently born again - they need to be guarded carefully.
- Those who will not grow. - Ignore their Bible - remain in a state of infancy
- Easily defiled; easily wounded; easily offended
- Those who are afraid of freedom - They are like a child who is old enough to go to school, who is afraid to leave home and must be taken to school each day.

Consider: You cannot always solve a problem with logic. Illus.: A little child who is afraid of the dark will not be assured by arguments, especially if the adult adopts a superior attitude.

Paul's concern: Strong ones were puffing up self instead of building up the weaker ones.

Truths: A know-it-all attitude is evidence of ignorance.

It is one thing to know doctrine; it is quite another thing to know God. It is possible to grow in Bible knowledge and yet not grow in grace or in one's personal relationship with Christ.

Truth: Knowledge can be a weapon to fight with or a tool to build with.

If knowledge "puffs up," it cannot "build up" (edify).

Therefore: Paul's Counsel > Stronger Christians must defer to the weaker Christians and do nothing that would harm them.

- The weaker Christian may imitate the stronger Christian and be led into sin.

Eph. 4:15 Love & Knowledge must go together. Speak the truth in love.

- Knowledge coupled with Love will build up the weak by putting others first. Knowledge without love yields a big head instead of an enlarged heart. "Some Christians grow; others just swell."

Matt. 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan (adversary)!

You are an offense (literal: stumbling block) to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God (What was God's will for His Son), but the things of men."

Peter had said it was not right for Jesus to suffer and die. Thinking like a man

Notice: Satan agreed with Peter's words. He used the same approach to tempt Jesus in the wilderness.

Until Peter was filled with the Spirit, he had a tendency to argue with God's Word.

Point to Ponder: Am I thinking like man? Do I accept by faith that I am to die to self and suffer? Do I listen to Satan's whispers of poison? > Hath God really said? Surely, He didn't exactly mean that?

Do my actions reveal that I am arguing with God about humility and absolute surrender?

What is preventing me from obeying God's will for my life?

Where do I find the mind of God? In His Word

Jesus presented 2 approaches to life.

Deny Yourself	Live for Yourself
Take Up Your Cross	Ignore the Cross
Follow Christ	Follow the World
Lose Your Life for His Sake	Save Your Life for Your Own Sake
Keep Your Soul	Lose Your Soul
Share His Reward and Glory	Lose His Reward & Glory

Deny Yourself: Give yourself wholly to Christ. Share in His shame and death.

Take up your cross: DOES NOT mean to carry burdens or have problems

Take up your cross MEANS: Identify with Christ in His rejection, shame, suffering and death.

Call of the Dung Gate: Enter here for the death of your flesh.

It is time for the garbage in your soul to be removed. God is searching for clean, empty vessels that He can use in His service. Are you willing for absolute surrender?

Suffering always leads to glory! The cross comes before the crown.

Matt. 16:27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.