

# Seeking My King & His Kingdom

## Lesson #4 Cure For Barrenness

The victorious, Christian life is an Exchanged Life.

Gal. 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is No Longer I Who Live, but CHRIST LIVES IN ME; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

His exchanged life gives you "spiritual backbone." Without living the exchanged life, you will be like "Evan-jellyfish" - believers with no spiritual vertebrae, whose faith does not behave.

James 2:26 For as the body without the spirit [breath] is dead, so faith without works is dead. A living faith breathes with divine action; it breathes with the activity of Jesus Christ.

The work of God is your living faith in the adequacy of the One who is in you and releases His divine action through you. These are the "good works" as opposed to "dead works."

Consider: Good works are the fruit of my salvation; NOT the root of my salvation.

Rom. 12:1-2 "Good works" are those works that have their origin in Jesus Christ - whose activity is released through your body, presented to Him as a living sacrifice by a faith that expresses total dependence on Him, as opposed to the Adamic independence.

We have been raised to walk in newness of life - out of our self-will and independence into dependence on Him and the obedience of faith.

We must begin to grow with the new life we have in Christ. It is a tragedy to stop here.

Carnality: The Israelites, a picture of carnal Christians in the wilderness, spent 40 years in self-imposed spiritual poverty! Every day they spent in the desert was a day they could have spent in Canaan - for God had given them the land! They would NOT believe that the God who brought them out was the God who could bring them in!

### Carnal Christians

1. Have been redeemed by faith in Christ through His reconciling death
2. They have received the Holy Spirit and Christ lives in them.
3. BUT they live in self-imposed poverty under the subtle influences of a defeated foe, the flesh, which Christ took with Him into the grave.
4. They, like the children of Israel, are neither enjoying the fleshpots of Egypt nor the golden corn of Canaan - they are dumped in the desert!

### Stuck In Carnality And Wandering In The Wilderness!

II Kings 2:19 Then the men of the city said to Elisha, "Please notice, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the ground barren (unfruitful)."

1. The city is Jericho (2:18-19) which had been cursed [Josh 6:26].
2. The bad water caused the land to be unfruitful [II Kings 2:19].

In 2:19, the men of the city of Jericho reported, "the situation in the city is pleasant." At first glance things looked prosperous and attractive on the surface. Beneath the charming exterior, there was a sickening burden for those who lived there. The inner secret: "The water was naught (stale and stagnant producing sterility), and the ground was barren (causing to miscarry)." Literally the Hebrew says "the land causes barrenness." It doesn't mean nothing grew; otherwise, the place would not have looked so charming. Things grew, but before they produced fruit, the fruit would drop off or the plants would wither. In early spring, you would have noticed all the evidences of coming harvest: tiny, tender shoots bursting through the soil; leaves beginning to pop out of the buds on the trees and bushes. It seemed they had much to look forward to. The tragedy! There lurked in the hearts of the inhabitants the feeble hope that this year would be different - that maybe they had turned the corner and everything would be all right - yet a heaviness deep in their hearts, gnawed at them: "No, it will always be just the same! You know exactly what is going to happen." As always, the fruit, just about to ripen, ready to be plucked, fell suddenly to the ground - premature and immature - to rot and never to reproduce. Hence, the heartbreak of this city. So deceptive! So impressive to everyone except those who lived there.

This is a picture of a carnal Christian! Sunday School teachers, pastors, missionaries, ordinary, average and earnest Christians - They earnestly talk all the language of salvation. They are tired - desperately tired and burned out. They are overwhelmed inwardly with a sense of frustration, defeat, futility and barrenness. When you meet them - they smile, and say "God bless you." Their inward secret - They have labored in vain! The fruit that has appeared to others has fallen to the ground - premature, immature- only to rot and never to reproduce. There are many stories of Christians who bravely go on, but deep down in their hearts they are tired, weary and defeated. Many cry out to God, "You know how barren I feel. You know how empty I feel. You know how stale I am." They cannot find the answer.

### Fired Up or Burning Out?

Thousands of spiritual leaders are barely hanging on. 80% of pastors and 84% of spouses are discouraged and/or dealing with depression. 40% of pastors and 47% of spouses are suffering from burnout, frantic schedules and unrealistic expectations.

Estimates: 1500 pastors leave their position each MONTH due to moral failure, spiritual burnout or contention in the church.

If you struggle trying to live the Christian life, it may be because you thought the Christian life was something you were supposed to do.

Chambers: God does not expect us to imitate Jesus Christ.

He expects us to ALLOW the life of Jesus to be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Ex.: How do you produce love, joy, peace and long-suffering? By saying, "I am going to try real hard to love that guy; try real hard to work up joy; try real hard to be peaceful."

No. It is a manifestation of Jesus' life through you.

Alistair Begg: Jesus gave His life for me, to take my life from me, to live His life through me.

God says, "Why not let the only One who is life be your life? Let Him defeat sin; be your victory." Victory is not something that you try or struggle for-it is a gift.

I Cor. 15:57 says, "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ."

He is our victory. When the law of sin comes against me, say, "Jesus, you answer the door."

When temptation comes, immediately turn your attention to Jesus and He will be your victory.

It is His life within us that is the power to overcome temptation, the power of the devil, and to conquer the circumstances that come against us. It is His resurrected life that resides within us by faith. He is our power source and through Him we have victory.

Example: Imagine a cup of hot water and a tea bag. Set the tea bag up and say, "Water, be like tea." However, the water can't be like tea so you put the tea bag into the water.

The strength of the tea bag goes into the water and then it is tea.

But really, the tea is still in the tea bag.

It is the same with us. It is the strength of Jesus and His life that goes into us.

He is still God and we are still us, but it is His strength and life that comes up through us.

Hudson Taylor I prayed, agonized, fasted, strove, made resolutions, read the Word more diligently, sought more time for meditation -- but all without avail. Each day brought its register of sin and failure, of lack of power. To will was indeed "present with me," but how to perform I found not. When my agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and the Spirit of God revealed to me the truth of our oneness with Jesus as I had never known it before.

"Ah, *there is rest!*" I thought. "I have striven in vain to rest in Him. I'll strive no more.

For has not He promised to abide with *me* -- never to leave me, never to fail me?"

So, if God should place me in serious perplexity, must He not give me much guidance;

in positions of great difficulty, much grace; in circumstances of great pressure and trials, much strength? No fear: His resources will prove unequal to the emergency!

And His resources are mine, for He is mine, and is with me and dwells in me.

Hudson Taylor "The Lord Jesus received is holiness begun; the Lord Jesus cherished is holiness advancing; the Lord Jesus counted upon as never absent would be holiness complete. "I used to ask God to help me. Then I asked if I might help Him.

I ended up asking Him to do His work through me."

Carnal Christian: Received the Holy Spirit and all the fullness of Christ, yet IGNORES

His presence and struggles to live the Christian life as though Christ were not there. He

constantly begs and pleads for all that God has already given him but which he WILL NOT take.

He will not step out by faith upon the fact that Christ is his life and his victory.

## Carnality: Be Gone & Pass the Salt - II Kings 2:20-22

The burden became intolerable. The men of the city came to the man of God and they poured out the whole story. He said, "Bring me a new jar, and put salt in it." So they brought *it* to him.<sup>21</sup> Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, "Thus says the LORD: 'I have healed (purified) this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness (unfruitfulness).'"<sup>22</sup> So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke.

Placed Salt At The Source of the sterile water to cure barrenness.

Salt Speaks Of The Risen Life Of The Glorified Savior. This LIFE is imparted by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to the redeemed sinner. It is the SALT for barrenness!

I Thess. 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification

It is ONLY the life of the Lord Jesus - His activity, clothed with your humanity and displayed through you, that ultimately will find the approval of God.

1. As a forgiven sinner, you are a member of "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." [I Pet. 2:5]

2. It is the Lord Jesus Christ ALONE who makes your sacrifices acceptable to God.

Only what He does in you and through you merits His approval. Accepts NOTHING LESS!

Lev. 2:13 And every offering of your meat offering you shall season with salt;

you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your meat offering.

With all your offerings you shall offer salt.

Under NO circumstances, God said in His law given to Moses, were ANY offerings to be brought to Him, or sacrifices made, that were not seasoned with SALT.

Without the salt, they would not be acceptable:

- No matter how sincerely brought
- No matter at how great a cost
- No matter how lofty the motive
- No matter how noble the ideal

Ezekiel 43:24 When you offer them before the LORD, the priests shall throw salt on them, and they will offer them up *as* a burnt offering to the LORD.

It was the SALT that made the offering acceptable.

Ezra 7:6 this Ezra came up from Babylon; and he *was* a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given. The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Ezra intentionally said, "I am going to seek the mind of God in the Word of God, do the will of God, and teach the ways of God." For this reason, he was among those whom God raised up to rebuild, cleanse and fill the temple with the worship of God.

Ezra 7:21 And I, *even I*, Artaxerxes the king, issue a decree to all the treasurers who *are in the region* beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require of you, let it be done diligently,

What did Ezra ask for so pure worship might be re-established in the cleansed House of God?

Ezra 7:22 up to one hundred talents of silver, one hundred measures of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil, and Salt Without Prescribed Limit.

King, I must have unlimited quantities of salt! I must never run out of salt - because no matter how costly, no matter how sacrificial, no matter how sincere, God will accept NOTHING that is not seasoned with salt! I MUST have unlimited quantities of salt.

God has given you and me UNLIMITED quantities of salt - the fullness of Jesus Christ to live His life in and through us.

II Cor. 9:8 And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work.

Is this the SALT you need?

Prepare your heart with Ezra of old, "to seek the Word of the Lord and to do it."

KNOW that Jesus Himself is ALL you need, in death and resurrection, to cleanse and fill you.

II Kings 2:21b Thus says the LORD: 'I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.'