

# Finishing Well

Lesson #3

Healing My Stagnant & Barren Life

Jan. 20, 2021

Jesus Christ did a twofold work for us and in us. Technically, these are called justification and sanctification.

- God justifies us as Christ was crucified and risen outside us.
  - We have justification as we are seen in Him.
- God sanctifies us as Christ was crucified and risen within us.
  - We have sanctification as He is seen in us.

The victorious, Christian life is an exchanged life. Is His life a reality in me?

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 is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

➤ A living faith breathes 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."

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.

Jesus Christ did a twofold work for us and in us. Technically, these are called justification and sanctification.

Rom. 6:4 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.*

## Elisha: Man of Spiritual Power

II Kings 2:19 And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught [bad], and the ground barren [unfruitful].

<sup>20</sup> And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him.

<sup>21</sup> And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.

<sup>22</sup> So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

➤ The city is Jericho [2:18-19] which had been cursed.

Josh. 6:26a Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho:

➤ The bad water caused the land to be unfruitful [2:19].

Note: At this time, Jericho was controlled by Israel. Had a small school of prophets there.

II Kings 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.

➤ Literally the Hebrew says "the land causes barrenness." Things grew, but before they produced fruit, the fruit would drop off or the plants would wither.

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

The ground was barren. causing to miscarry

It doesn't mean nothing grew; otherwise, the place would not have looked so charming.

In early spring, you would have noticed the evidence 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 something as heavy as lead, deep down in their hearts, kept saying,

"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.

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.

If you struggle trying to live the Christian life, it may be because you thought that the Christian life was something you were supposed to do. You didn't see that it is Christ from beginning to end; you are to live it by faith. Ex.: How do you produce love, joy, peace and long-suffering? By saying, "I am going to try really hard to love that guy; try to work up joy; try to be peaceful." No. When we try to imitate Him and produce His life, it is like a monkey trying to be a human being. God says, "Why not let the only One who is life be your life?"

Victory is not something that you try or struggle for- it is a gift.

I Cor. 15:57 says, "Thanks be to God that giveth 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. 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 that 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."

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 by whose presence 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!

Unbelief of the children of Israel cheated them of that for which they had been brought out of Egypt [Promised Land - God will dwell among them].

Ex. 19:4-6a Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. <sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:  
<sup>6</sup> And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

➤ They lived only to discredit the good name of the ONE who had redeemed them.

Likewise, there is nothing quite so pathetic as a Christian who has been vested with "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" in Jesus Christ, and to whom has been made available all the illimitable resources of heaven, yet who in ignorance or defiance, scratches out a mere existence in the meager resources which he brings with him - the resources of self, his flesh. He has no sense of direction or purpose; he will not take what God has already given!

It took 40 weary years before God was able, through Joshua, to teach His people: to "get in Canaan" takes precisely the same kind of faith that it takes to "get out of Egypt" - Deut. 1:8 Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them. Did He promise them victory over their enemies?  
The faith that trusts God. When they finally stood by faith with their feet in the waters of Jordan, the God who divided the Red Sea divided the Jordan also and brought them through on dry land to possess at last their possessions.

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. Much of believer burnout stems from a lack of personal intimacy with God and developing a powerful and meaningful prayer life. God is holy and expects all who claim to be His to be holy. True holiness requires character that can only be achieved through an intimate relationship with Christ as the Holy Spirit molds us into His image. We need to pursue and seek Him in our prayer closet. A powerful prayer life must have a solid foundation.

Foundation for a Powerful Prayer Life: You must view your daily prayer time as a relationship with God and not a legalistic duty or discipline.

➤ Pharisees spent much time in regular prayer and fasting, yet they had NO personal relationship with God.

Our prayer time with God is the expression of what He desires most from us - a personal relationship of love, surrender and trust.

John 17:3 This is life eternal, that they might KNOW Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. [Know through personal experience; intimacy]

Many of us put more emphasis on serving and working for God when above all He wants our heartfelt personal love. In I Cor. 13:1-3, Paul states that sacrifice and service are meaningless if they do not proceed from a genuine love relationship.

Relationship is spelled TIME. Our actions speak much louder than mere words.

Luke 10:38-43 Martha was busy doing all kinds of tasks FOR Jesus but had no time to just fellowship with Him. Mary's 1<sup>st</sup> priority was to sit quietly in His presence and listen.

Truth: We need MUCH time with God BEFORE we attempt work FOR God.

We are so busy for God that we spend very little time with Him.

John 15:5 Jesus states that we can do NOTHING unless we maintain a very close relationship with Him -Spending much time in prayer and fellowship.

Point to Ponder: God first wants you and only then does He want your service.

May I never get so busy "for" You that I neglect time "with" You.

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 cruse [jar, earthen vessel], 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.

Salt At The Source: Salt speaks of the risen life of the glorified Savior, imparted by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to the redeemed sinner. It is the SALT for barrenness!

➤ We are to be continually sanctified by His life producing fruit in us.

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.

➤ God can and will ACCEPT NOTHING LESS.

### Covenant Of Salt

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

you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain 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 And thou shalt offer them before the LORD, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up for a burnt offering unto the LORD.

➤ It was the SALT that made the offering acceptable.

Luke 14:33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. The Lord Jesus tells us the minimum demands that He requires for true discipleship.

- Forsake all that you have - yourself and all that you possess - you cannot be my disciple.
- A true disciple must recognize his total bankruptcy so that his sole wealth is vested in the One whom God has given to him in the person and fullness of Jesus Christ and by the presence of His divine Spirit.

Luke 14:34-35 "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?

<sup>35</sup> It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, *but* men throw it out.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Salt Is Good:	Flavor Foods	Preserve Fish
	Drain Blood From Meat	Treat tooth decay & toothaches
	Infants Were Rubbed With Salt To Prevent Infections	
	Ingredient In Sacred Anointing Oil	Used In Sacrifices
	Absolutely necessary for life	

Polluted Salt Is Useless: Substitute salt has lost its savor.

It was good for nothing, not even for the soil as fertilizer or for the manure pile.

As long as our lives are filled with and adulterated by the substitutes of the world [like the love of money or possessions) we are useless to the Lord as disciples or as vessels of the Lord [cf. Luke 14:33 in its context].

Application: There are "good works" that look good for immediate consumption.

It impresses everyone. However, it will always leave a stink behind if it stems from the flesh.

It is from self-activity! It will always produce the kind of fruit that drops, both premature and immature - to rot and never reproduce. God will NOT accept it.

The Work of God: That you BELIEVE and MAINTAIN unrelenting, total dependence upon the One whom God has sent to fill you with Himself.

He is the true SALT through whom you are made the salt of the earth.

The Effects of Salt-Filled Jars *Calling All Clay Pots*

II Cor. 4:6-7 Believers are portrayed as mere earthen vessels [jars or pots of clay] containing the treasure of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ so that that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

As God's instruments: Live with God's purposes always in mind and as the goal of our lives.

Phil 1:27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

Phil. 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

The salt speaks of the person and work of Jesus Christ poured out for us who then, as the resurrected Lord, provides the ministry of the Holy Spirit, springs of living water:

John 7:38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart (innermost being) will flow rivers of living water. (not stagnant)

So no sacrifice we make counts unless it is a product of Jesus Christ in us and the control of the Spirit and His love at work in our lives [I Cor. 3:13]. Salt must be at the source!

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 was intentional: Seek the mind of God in the Word of God

Do the will of God

Teach the ways of God

He was one 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 that 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!

No matter how sincerely brought

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

God will accept NOTHING that is not seasoned with salt! I MUST have unlimited quantities.

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.

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, and hear Him say,

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