

Why Does The Conflict Seem to Grow?

Bill Loveless

I joined a friend for lunch the other day, and he was sharing with me that since the Lord revealed to him that Christ is his life, there now seems to be a greater spiritual conflict in his life. He knows that Christ has transformed his life in many ways, but he is having trouble understanding why there seems to be more conflict than a year ago even though he is experiencing more of Christ as his life. I would like to share a few thoughts with regard to his concern. The real question is, “Is his experience part of the normal Christian life?”

Paul describes the normal Christian life in Philippians 3:10, “that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” I enjoy knowing Him and experiencing His power, but I struggle with the suffering and being conformed to His death part. However, this is the path of sanctification. Let’s look at it further.

When you and I come into the understanding of Christ as our life, we most likely come into it with a legalistic, performance-based, self-focused grid. Everything about our Christian lives probably revolved around ourselves for many years. In the process of sanctification God takes us from that life to a grace- receiving, Christ-focused life. As we grow deeper in our relationship with Christ, God lovingly and persistently digs deeper into our souls, and roots out and reveals issues and idols that hinder us from experiencing His fullness. As he closes in on the beliefs that “drive” us, it is going to feel as though the conflict is more intense. Why? Even though our spirit is willing, the flesh is weak, and it resists this sanctification process even though it is for our own good and blessing (not to mention bringing glory to God).

Along with the resistance of the flesh, Satan wants to “pile on” things during these times by telling us (in the first person): “I’m not really growing. This is too painful. Something is terribly wrong.” But, all of this is just a normal part of the growth process. As we trustfully relinquish these areas to God, we will be more at rest and will more fully enjoy the experience of expressing His life. We will know with Christ-confidence as Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6 that God began this good work, and He will continue to perfect it in our lives.

At the end of my conversation with my friend, I asked him if he would trade his present conflict for where he was spiritually a year ago. He assured me he wouldn’t because through the conflict of this past year he knows that God has done a wonderful, transforming work in his life. Sometimes we have to look back a year to realize that where we are today (hopefully, walking in more of His abundance) was born out of conflict. The greater conflict that you may now be experiencing is part of the “normal” Christian life. (Sounds like a great title for a book!)

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