

“Thirsting For God”
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Kindle Notes by Dave Kraft

The focus on our ultimate salvation rather than persistent growth has been a convenient but spiritually depleting lapse.

Does our relative indifference to spiritual disciplines and spiritual growth honor the gift of this grace, or is it rather an indication that we are taking God’s mercy for granted?

Devotion, leading to spontaneous service—that’s something I can understand, measure, and strive for.

Sin is powerfully deceptive, so we should formulate our goals in community, not in isolation.

The Christian classics teach us that spiritual growth doesn’t happen by accident. It is a result of an intentional pursuit, a cooperation with God. He is the active agent, moving us forward in spite of our weaknesses and failures, but we must cooperate.

Have I cooperated with God’s sanctifying work in my life? Or have I relied on spiritual osmosis—hanging around spiritual people in hopes some of it will rub off?”

I learned from that encounter that sin’s power needs more than an “I’m sorry” to be defeated. It often needs a plan. I know this sounds awful. It sounds like a lot of work, but growth takes work. Salvation is free, but maturity comes with a price.

We know we can’t succeed in school, business, marriage, parenting, sports, or most other endeavors without purposefully applying ourselves to moving forward, yet many of us fail to realize the same is true of spiritual growth.

James Houston has said that most damnation comes not through ignorance, but in keeping things in our heads instead of our hearts.

I read systematic theology to find out how to think correctly, but I read the classics to measure the temperature of my heart.

Just as a natural athlete can be defeated by a less gifted athlete who trains harder and smarter, so more naturally virtuous people can be surpassed by others who apply themselves more seriously to growth.

Have we ever considered how our sleep schedule might affect our spiritual training in general and personal devotion in particular?

A disciplined schedule can actually reduce the opportunity to sin and thereby help break sinful habits in our hearts and lives.

Legalism on the one hand and complacency on the other are twin enemies to true Christian spirituality.

Responsibility and grace are the twin pillars that support the foundation of the Christian life.

Never enjoying ourselves is often the road to spiritual breakdown, not maturity.

In the words of Francis de Sales, I had to learn that “obedience must rather be loved than disobedience feared.”

Say to this devil...Away! Away! Shall I be seduced by you to grieve the God of all my joy, to displease the God of all my comfort, to vex the God of all my contentment, to do evil against a good God, by whom I live, move, and have my being? Oh no!

The spiritual fathers taught that true holiness has at its root an overwhelming passion for the one true and holy God, not for rules, principles, or standards.

We cease from sin not simply because we are disciplined, but because we have found something better.

Focusing on sin, either by committing it or by being consumed with fighting it, keeps us from practicing God's presence.

Living by grace does not mean living by spiritual laziness.

It is far more important, in order to become a true Christian, to change the within rather than the without.

True holiness is humble holiness.

God intends for us to fight sin as an army, not as a soldier.

The real test of true faith is not how successful I am, but how surrendered I am.

A submissive spirit leads us to accept whatever God brings our way, even if it's far more humble work.

The best way of showing a true zeal is to make little things the occasions of great piety.

Obedience and disobedience are both habitual.

Nothing could be more wretched than to be intolerably depressed as soon as one is reduced to introspection with no means of diversion.

We might believe in the gospel intellectually but be unwilling to bet our emotional fulfillment on it.

I have learned the necessity of guarding my heart (Proverbs 4:23) because my heart does not have an infinite capacity to rejoice or be alarmed.

When we become preoccupied with passing things, we exhaust our hearts' ability to care about the things that really do matter.

Curiosity can defile stillness as nothing else can."

Augustine realized what all the saints have understood: Humility and honesty are essential ingredients of an authentic and mature Christian life.

Fénelon wrote, "All the saints are convinced that sincere humility is the foundation of all virtues. This is because humility is the daughter of pure charity, and humility is nothing else but truth. There are only two truths in the world, that God is all, and the creature is nothing."

Humility undercuts virtually every temptation. To grow in humility is to pull up sin by its roots.

Proud women and men relate everything back to themselves. They are all but incapable of seeing any situation except for how it affects them. Empathy is something they may read about but will never truly experience.

We would rather appear righteous than truly become righteous. Such an attitude kills any future growth.

It comes down to this: Do we truly want to be humble? Or do we just want to be known as humble?

The goal is for humility to become such a growing part of who we are that we don't even recognize it in ourselves.

We'll waste energy and time putting on spiritual makeup instead of truly being transformed from glory to glory.

Humility embraces two truths—the lowliness of humanity and the greatness of God.

The way we treat others is a better test of our humility than the way we speak about ourselves.

People who can't admit their strengths are also unlikely to admit their weaknesses.

An arrogant man or woman runs toward applause as surely as water runs downhill.

Wise shoppers clip coupons. Wise Christians clip obituaries.

May we all live in such a way that our passing evokes a standing ovation,

Our anger may be deeply buried, but healing will begin only when we're willing to accept that life is difficult.

Through Paul, God teaches us that a Christian is never dominated by sin, but a Christian is often assaulted by sin.

We need difficulty because without it we become proud, self-centered, and uncaring monsters who are full of ourselves.

Let's not force every other Christian into our own custom-made box.

Your greatest temptation now probably won't be your greatest temptation ten years from now.

Yet another blessing of having a spiritual director is the death of secrets. Secrets are spiritual cancers.

Secrets allow Satan to blackmail us.

The best spiritual direction spends more time building up a life of prayer than it does dealing with the consequences of sin.

In fact, I think Dietrich Bonhoeffer's lament applies to many in our day: "The word of cheap grace has been the ruin of more Christians than any commandment of works."

With the best of intentions, these pastors uphold the finished, completed work of Christ for our justification, to which we can add nothing. Bravo for that. But the notion that subsequent effort, on its own, discounts this or somehow even undercuts it, is a modern one. It is diabolically clever, and it has kept many believers in a state of immaturity and ineffectiveness. We fear the very thing that would usher in a greater maturity.

To say that there is no labor or effort on the human side once redemption recaptures our souls is to distort a precious truth into an absurdity that plays right into Satan's hands.

Tozer brilliantly defined this dualistic work, in which God, the active agent, empowers us, but His work increases rather than diminishes our effort or "receptivity." I venture to suggest that the one vital quality which [the great saints] had in common was spiritual receptivity. Something in them was open to heaven...They had spiritual awareness and they went on to cultivate it until it became the biggest thing in

their lives. They differed from the average person in that when they felt the inward longing they did something about it. They acquired the lifelong habit of spiritual response.

Let's end this chapter with a stirring call from one of my favorites, Henry Drummond: "No man who feels the worth and solemnity of what is at stake will be careless as to his progress...A religion of effortless adoration may be a religion for an angel, but never for a man."

Johannes Tauler warns, "We observe such a great difference between those who live the Scriptures and those who merely study them."

Paraphrasing Thomas à Kempis, he writes, "I had rather exercise faith than know the definition thereof."

It comes down to this. Today's Christian values his salvation. Yesterday's Christian valued his holiness, and that makes all the difference. Drummond was clear on this.

"Christian practice is much more to be preferred as evidence of salvation than sudden conversion, mystical enlightenment, or the mere experience of emotional comfort that begins and ends with contemplation." The Bottom Line: Remarkable Change

I've come to believe that the ability to love people of all kinds, and to love them well, is the true definition of spiritual maturity.

Sometimes we express love through what we withhold rather than through what we give. We must love people more than we love being considered compassionate, particularly if our misguided compassion would lead someone toward unhealthy dependence.