

The Refiners Fire Lesson 6 4Q 2007

Struggling with All Energy

SABBATH

What do you think of the title? What do we struggle with? To struggle with does that mean against or on the same team against a common foe? As sinful humans, what do we struggle against?

Do we struggle against principalities and powers of darkness? What is that struggle about? Is it a physical struggle or a mental struggle? Is it over the truth about God and His character and methods? And in that struggle what weapons do we use?

Do we struggle against our own inclinations to evil? Our own unhealthy desires? And what weapons do we have in this fight?

Do we ever struggle against other people? Political forces? Family members? What weapons do we use?

Do we struggle against physical illness?

Do we struggle against God? How? If we find ourselves struggling against God are we ever going the right way?

Are there other types of struggles? In all our struggles who is there struggling with us for our victory? God, do we ever “feel” like God is not on our side? What difference does it make if we draw such a conclusion? How can we avoid such a conclusion?

Read first two paragraphs Sabbath’s lesson – thoughts?

What is forgiveness? What would prevent someone from forgiving another in this situation? What would enable someone to forgive?

If the person who forgave was the governor or president does that mean that the person would/should be pardoned and set free? Why or why not?

If we forgive someone does that mean what they did was okay? If we forgive someone does that act change the perpetrator or the one offended? If the governor forgave the man who murdered his daughter and wanted to set him free from prison what would be the only way this could be done “safely?”

The only way to “safely” allow someone back into society is if the man is no longer a murderer in heart – if he had been transformed or changed – Does this apply to our experience with God?

Does God forgive us? Does His forgiveness equal salvation? Why or why not?

What impact does this have on how we forgive others?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph – thoughts? I have patients constantly in my office telling me they pray all the time to God to change their lives but their lives never change. Why might this be? What about the smoker who prays not to smoke but keeps on buying them. And when asked why do you keep on buying them, well if I didn’t I couldn’t smoke.

Read third paragraph “While the Holy Spirit...” Thoughts?

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our salvation and what is our role?

Your energies are required to co-operate with God. Without this, if it were possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influences of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject

for heaven. The stronghold of Satan would not be broken. There must be the willing and the doing on the part of the receiver. There must be an action, represented as coming out from the world and being separate. There must be a doing of the words of Christ. The soul must be emptied of self, that Christ may pour his Spirit into the vacuum. Christ must be chosen as the heavenly guest. The will must be placed on the side of God's will. Then there is a new heart, and new, holy resolves. It is Jesus enthroned in the soul that makes every action easy in his service.-- S. of T., 1891, No. 8. {Healthful Living 304.5}

Thoughts? What is the balance between our work and God's? Are there theologies that undermines this balance? What? In the model outlined by EGW above there is an actual regenerating, transforming process involved, in some models the issue is one of getting debts paid, punishments borne by someone else, wrath appeased but not hearts transformed.

In the paragraph from the quarterly it states, "If God did compel us in even the slightest way, we would lose our free will, and Satan would accuse God of manipulating our minds and hearts and thus be able to accuse God of cheating in the great controversy." Thoughts?

It is so true that compelling power would take away our free will and thereby destroy love, no question about it. But what about the other reason, is this why God doesn't do it, so He can't be accused of cheating? Has God been doing what He does so that Satan can't accuse Him? If God were the kind of being who based His decisions on fear of allegations, could He not have merely wiped out Lucifer and then the memory of him from the universe?

Why does God act the way He does? Not to keep Satan from making the allegations – (are we saying that if Satan didn't make the allegations then would God control us – so the only reason we have freedom is because Satan is there to keep God honest? Is Satan like the free press ready to pounce on the

abuse of governmental power so God has to remain “honest” to keep Satan from making allegations?) No the reason God does what He does, is because God IS love – it is His nature and character to be that way. God would never force us because to do so would destroy love. And the fact is Satan has already made this allegation against God anyway.

TQ 67 asks, “When can we rely on our feelings to make decisions? What criteria do we have to judge the reliability of our emotions and desires?” – thoughts?

Never, feelings are never the be the BASIS of our decisions, but that doesn’t mean we ignore our feelings. Our feelings are information and are to be understood via our reasoning and conscience in light of truth and evidence and then a decision is made, based on the truth and evidence not feelings.

MONDAY

Read Colossians 1:28,29

COL 1:28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

Thoughts about this text? What do you think it means “perfect in Christ”?

Do you think it means – legally counted or recognized as sinless by the Father when we claim the blood payment and victory that Christ has achieved in our behalf?

Or do you think it means, “mature” “being in like mind as Christ having been won back to unity and trust in God by the truth Christ brought and thus opened the heart and been restored in the inner man to live in God’s ways, practicing His methods where we love others more than self.”?

Which do you think is meant here? Transformation and regeneration to be in actual unity and oneness with Christ and God or legal pardon so we are accounted as “sinless” or “perfect” by the Father because of what Christ has done?

Read last paragraph – “This is important...” thoughts? How has the idea of wanting more with less affected Christianity? More of God’s miracle working power with less involvement from us? What about the idea “all I need to do is accept the blood payment of Jesus on my behalf and then I am saved” idea?

JFK said, “ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country,” should we be saying “ask not what God can do for you but what you can do for God?” Jesus said He did not come to be served but to serve and that the least will be the greatest and the servant the master. Why? Because it is the process of giving of ourselves to benefit other that we experience transformation.

TQ 69 states, “This week’s lesson deals with four key words: struggle, the will, perseverance, and energy. All these words sound very much like works of merit rather than links in the unfolding of the grace of God in a person’s life. It is very important to make the distinction in the presentation of the lesson.”

What is the balance between our work and God’s work? Why is this so hotly debated? Has Christ worked out a remedy to our terminal condition? Can any human work out a remedy other than the one Christ achieved? Does Christ victory in procuring this remedy heal you or me without our participation and willing cooperation with the Heavenly Physician? So, is it true that we cannot “work” out own remedy and heal/save ourselves? Is it also true that Christ’s victory does not heal or save anyone without their cooperative effort?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph – any thoughts about this? Any Bible texts?

James 1:13-15, we are tempted by our own evil feelings or desires –

Has anyone ever experienced the reality that their feelings can lie? That their feelings can lead them astray?

What weapons do we have to combat those feelings? Do we ignore our feelings or do we examine them in light of truth and evidence and make decisions based on the evidence in spite of the feelings?

Is it possible to have feelings that are accurate and actually truthful, yet still unhealthy to follow? Any examples?

How about a mother whose baby cries at night and the mother feels very tired and sleepy and doesn't feel like getting out of bed? Are her feelings of fatigue and sleepiness lying to her? No, are they sinful feelings? No, but is it healthy to allow her feelings to determine her actions?

When we choose to follow God's will for our lives what typically happens, at some point, to our feelings?

1PE 4:1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. ² As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.

What does this text mean? NIV says "body" KJV states "flesh" is it that we are tempted by our "carnal" or "fleshly" nature and that when we choose to say no to that we suffer in our "flesh", not necessarily physical body, but in our earthly desires, for awhile, until victory and then we are free?

Consider a smoker who is quitting, when he chooses not to smoke is there a period of “suffering in the flesh” that finally results in victory and no longer living “for evil human desire”?

WEDNESDAY

Radical commitment –

When you think of Jesus do you think He was radical? If so how so? Any examples?

Our GNT picture is raising quite a debate as people contemplate the idea of Jesus washing the feet of world leaders and even Osama Ben Laden, some find this way to radical – what about you?

What about loving one’s enemies, doing good to those who use you, praying for those who abuse you?

Are these radical teachings?

TQ 73 states, “Free will implies the need for the judgment because there always will be those who choose the wrong side.” – thoughts?

What is the judgment? Why is there a need? Does a judgment mean time where God sits in heaven and “judges” or “determines” our destiny? Or is it a time when we judge God?

What evidence for these ideas? If God were the one deciding our destinies in a “judgment” then are we actually free or is it up to Him?

THURSDAY

The need for perseverance – why is this important?

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph – thoughts?

Read questions 2,3,4 and discuss