

#6 THE DREAM AND A SPOKEN WORD.....

I find myself hanging on a cross. I am dying and feel the blood and life leaving my body. I see in front of me a beautiful purple-red flower that is budding and opening up before my eyes.

Before I awake I hear these words gently whispered to me, "As you die to yourself, my life shall come forth."

Pondering this dream, I became aware of how much of me was still alive and wanted to live its own way and be in control of my life. The degree of our spirituality is not measured in itself by our biblical knowledge, by how many Scriptures we can quote, or by how much we serve and work for the Lord. It is more readily gauged by how much we are dead to our own wills and how much of our lives are controlled by Christ. It is measured by His Spirit's control over us, and not by our natural and fleshly labors for Him. God demands our faith and yielding above all else. That's very important in this spiritual walk.

We will find, if we look around, a multitude of Christians who are well versed in Scripture and busy in all sort of works for the Lord, but who never seem to go deeper with God. Most of their service and worship is just the natural man trying to please God. Great knowledge of God's Word and great emotional experiences are no signs of spirituality. They are and should be mere channels for God to use when needed, but in themselves are no measure of spiritual growth.

It is better to know less and to submit, than to know much and not obey. Knowledge does puff up the human ego and that, my friends, is not good. Usually before God can trust us with more we must be humbled and brought low so it does not go to our heads. To those whom God may gift more in certain ministries, you can be sure that they have or will have been humbled and dealt with by the Lord. Why, the apostle Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was given for that very reason.

My hanging on the cross speaks of our taking up our cross daily and following Him. We are not told to crucify ourselves! We can only yield by taking the cross to the place of death. The Lord Himself will crucify our flesh in a practical way.

The flower in the dream is of two colors---purple for suffering and red for our earthly human nature. Thus the budding blossom symbolizes life coming forth from suffering and dying to our fleshly nature. The seed of the flower must be buried and experience death in order to be changed. The cross-life for us is not the personality being destroyed. It is Christ taking over our lives by union with our spirits, our spirits being quickened and made alive toward God. The flower begins as a closed bud, then slowly opens. Though we are born again by the Holy Spirit, this work of change continues on throughout our earthly life. The flower opens because life is in it and because the sunlight gives it energy and growth. So it is with us as believers. The Holy Spirit living in us produces spiritual life, and Christ as our light changes us as we behold His presence and dwell in His glory.

In closing, let us remember this: we can only put on the new man in Christ to the degree we put off the old man who is not at peace with God. Often our yielding will determine the growth rate at which we proceed. Let us look at the cross-life not with death as its final end, but as a means to new spiritual life and growth.