

Preface

I am writing to my brothers and sisters dotted throughout the body of Christ who are rummaging through all the material they can find to see how to connect more deeply with the Lord. They know in their hearts it is the point and the foundation for everything else, and despite the confusing things they hear, the frequent discouragements and regular assaults, they keep seeking. I'm writing especially to those who in reading this initial statement know exactly what I mean, but I am writing also to everyone who is pondering how to have the Lord present and active in all aspects of life.

Generally the problem is framed in terms of how to get the Lord to respond and so that is the solution pursued. But that is *not* the problem. The problem is how to clear the debris that prevents you from being *aware* of His response. There is much to say about the nature of the debris that separates and how it is cleared. The Lord says it is a blessed condition to have it cleared because we can then see Him.

Mt. 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart,

For they shall see God.

Pure means cleared and cleansed. That is the key to connection with the Lord, to “seeing” God—clearing, cleansing, preparing our heart for union and life with the King. It is the nature of the church and the kingdom: to be in union with and responsive to the King, the blessedness of the Creator once again directing His creation.

How extensive is the debris? It is more extensive than we realize. It is long-standing, exceedingly subtle, and largely hidden. That is why it is so difficult to clear. You will see what I mean as we continue. If you have been waiting for a swift or instantaneous freedom to fall, the means we would all prefer, you might want to do the best you can to lay down that expectation. If that approach has not gotten you through, it may be because it simply doesn't work that way, and what does one do with what does not work? The disciples are our best examples: they lived with Jesus continually for three years, had their hearts perpetually uncovered and reshaped, and the reshaping by His Spirit continued after His physical departure. It's a way of life, a way of constant illumination, moving ever deeper into the heart of God. Here at the outset, I present that perspective as a bridge and a kindness.

The Great Separators: An Overview

Believers who desire a closer relationship with the Lord read and study in some way, anticipating that a closer connection will result. People have been taught that if they read their Bible and pray, it will produce a deeper awareness of God. That *may* happen, but reading the Bible and praying does not guarantee it, as many children of God have discovered.

When connection is not the outcome, a couple of conclusions often occur which tend to worsen the situation. Namely, "I must not be doing it right" or "God does not *want* to connect with *me*." Both conclusions are vastly inaccurate, very painful, and quite undermining in their influence. This happens because we do not have clarity on the nature of the separators or on the means for clearing them.

Two large areas make up the great separators. The first area consists of the elements put in place by the fall of man in the garden, i.e., our sin nature which causes us to miss God in more ways than we can track. The second area exists because of those elements of sin—the wounding in life which is now inevitable. Employing the ways in which we operate due to the fall of man, and peering through our life experiences, we come to conclusions which impact how we see life, God, and each other. The elements of our sin nature, coupled with our life experiences, entangle together in complex ways which often obscure or utterly block our awareness of God. They will have to be unraveled and cleared, as we cannot see Him through them.

Scripture continually depicts and refers to the heart condition I am describing. I marvel at how clearly the record of the fall of man identifies the dynamics currently in operation in our lives. The specific faces and combinations are as different as there are people in life, but the underlying elements that separate us from the Lord are common to man.

Elements of Our Sin Nature

The Elements of our sin nature, as I see it, are the glaring differences in the way Adam and Eve were relating to God following the serpent's deceit. They are:

- **Doubting God**
- **Knowing By Our Own Faculties Rather Than Knowing *With* God**
- **Authority and Approval Resting on Someone Other Than God**
- **Hiding for Security**
- **Denying Personal Responsibility**

These five elements operate in the lives of everyone and produce varying degrees of **Wounding in Life**, the second large area which greatly impacts separation and the difficulty of reconnecting. What follows is an overview of the elements of our sin nature, and the way wounding in life contributes to our separation from God.

Genesis 3:1-13

The record of the fall of man begins with the serpent questioning God's motives and encouraging Adam and Eve to doubt what He says, implying that it is unreasonably restrictive. The initial seed of deceit was then reinforced: His motive for restricting you is purely self-serving and to your detriment. These same stumbling blocks are part of everyone's healing and restoration now. Is it really God speaking, and can I trust His motive or purpose? Is He invested in my good, or is He beating me out of something I can't afford to lose, as the serpent suggested? **Doubting God** is the first element, and it opens the door to all the others.

Then the serpent declared that we can be *like* God, knowing good and evil. The unspoken goal is that we would not have to depend on God; we would use our own faculties and see them as sufficient for determining truth. Nothing short of reversing the created order was the plot. God's order is dependent fellowship with Him, spirit more in authority than mind. One of our greatest hurdles is the gap between what we can perceive with our sight and faculties, and the perspective of God based on His sight and faculties—a gap we cannot discern unless our spirit is revived. We naturally believe our own experience more easily than we believe God because we are trapped in the second element: **Knowing By Our Own Sight And Faculties Rather Than Knowing *With* God.** The problem now is to clear enough barriers to return to knowing with Him.

Judging by her own sight (*So when the woman **saw** that the tree was good for food...*), Eve plunged ahead into the thing that God said was a bad idea. She imparted that to the one near and dear to her—Adam—who in His turn heeded her voice more than God's, and they continued separating

themselves from Him, thinking it was wisdom to do so. They listened to the serpent first, then to each other, thereby birthing the third element: **Authority and Approval Resting on Someone Other than God.**

Having gone their own way, they do not find the "like God" promise fulfilled. Naked and ashamed is the fruit, combined with a loss of connection with God. There is no indication they realized the degree of robbery the serpent accomplished, or just how duped they had been. The Lord called to them in the garden, which uncovered the fourth element of the serpent's coup: hiding from the Lord, **Hiding for Security.** Adam said he was afraid because he was naked, so he hid himself. The word "hid" means "to hide or conceal oneself; generally for the sake of security" (Wilson). Hiding from the presence of the Lord for security—not one of our most discerning choices. How do we sort out things with God when our heart is in hiding? A big question, fraught with implications.

When the Lord asked them if they had eaten of the tree, there was no simple acknowledgement; they both insisted that another party was responsible. We have greatly refined that practice since, but any answer other than, "Yes, I have," scrambles responsibility lines and further complicates our return. The fifth element is **Denying Personal Responsibility.**

These five elements of our sin nature are central areas involved in healing our hearts and restoring us to God. He has Himself atoned for our sin and the work remaining is: believing instead of doubting God; learning to know with Him; resting authority and approval on Him again; confessing our guilt and responsibility for the departure; and coming out of hiding. Everyone trying to get through to God will wrestle with these elements—whatever they are called, they will be functioning and thwarting the journey home.

Wounding in Life

The other large area, which aggravates and complicates these elements of our sin nature, is wounding in life. Wounding is the inevitable result of the elements of sin functioning within and around us. There really is no possibility of getting to adulthood unscathed. There are degrees of wounding, but when the Lord says He came to heal the brokenhearted, He is speaking to EVERYONE!

Wounding in Life contributes countless complications to our separation problem: wounding breaks trust, reinforces doubt structures, produces fear, strengthens the impulse to hide our hearts, and compels us to devise strong protections to avoid being hurt. Wholeness calls for restoration in both of these large areas because we will see how consistently they overlap and complicate each other.

I realize this is not an encouraging scenario. But if we are to get out of the snares and back to connection with God, we will have to deal with what constitutes our prisons. Minimizing them, making the kind of “slight” provision over which the Lord has expressed His displeasure, has not and will not work.

Jer. 6:14 “They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly,

Saying, “Peace, peace!”

When there is no peace.

I bring what I have discovered about the barriers and the work of dismantling them for those who simply cannot do without reconnecting with the Lord and being able to know Him and His heart more fully.