

Introduction

by Scott Grant

God has something to say to us

I was pacing the streets, trying to come to grips with the ugliness that I was seeing. I was deeply troubled by the sights, for they were observable in a most disturbing place - in me. I saw, more vividly than ever before, my own wretchedness. Perhaps worse than my feelings of wretchedness were my feelings of helplessness. I knew I couldn't change myself.

I squeezed out a barely audible cry of anguish to God: "What do I do?" Immediately I sensed God's response. I heard no words, but I had a strong impression of God's meeting my frantic question in a calm, matter-of-fact manner: "Well, Scott, you have my word." Yes, I had God's word. And though I had been studying and teaching it for years, I knew I needed to turn to the word of God in fresh way. If I felt helpless to change, and the Holy Spirit was supposed to change me, I figured he was what I needed to find. I began reading the New Testament on a painstaking mission to find the Spirit of God.

I found him everywhere, and I found him doing something quite different than what I had expected. I assumed that the Spirit was concerned with the same thing I was: performance. The Spirit was supposed to change my wretchedness and make me a better person, I thought. He was supposed to enable me to live well. He was supposed to give me the power to obey God. But as I crawled through the New Testament, my view of the Holy Spirit began to change, and by the time I reached the fourth chapter of the book of Galatians I was ready for this: "And because you are sons, God has sent for the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"

I was stunned. How many times had I read that verse before, even examining it for subtle nuances? A hundred? Yet I had missed it. I had missed what it was saying. I had missed what the scriptures were saying. I got up from my desk and proclaimed to myself, "That's what the Spirit's about!"

The Spirit is about relationship, about showing us the truth of who God is, in all his majesty and all his love, and bringing us closer to him. As we understand at deeper levels who he is, and as we become more intimate with him, we are changed. We can't help but be changed. I wanted the change without the relationship, because, as I came to discover as I continued to read, I was afraid of the relationship.

That was three years ago. My fresh look at the New Testament was the foundation for spiritual reformation in my own life. It also was the foundation for this study, which represents an examination of five basic theological concepts as they intersect with the life of faith: justification, sanctification, spiritual warfare, the church and glorification. This study is particularly designed for people, like me, who struggle with the nagging feeling that whatever we do isn't quite good enough. God in his word has something to say to us.

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