

THE DAILY EXCHANGE:

BEAUTY FOR ASHES, JOY FOR MOURNING, PRAISE FOR GLOOM



***So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away,
our inner self is being renewed day by day.***

2 Corinthians 4:16

A problem that almost every one of us has is that grasping spiritual truth with our heads is far beyond what we have turned into substance in our lives.

We grasp the theology. We understand marvelous truths.... but we're not living them.

We can talk about the joy of the Lord, we can write books about it, read books about it, create art about it, and even taste it from time to time when the assembly gathers.

But it's quite another thing to have the joy of the Lord as a constant burning flame in our hearts....

- when we get up for another rainy day,
- when our spouse has disappointed us again,
- when our best friend keeps letting us down,
- when our house is broken into,
- when we have to work at a job where there's corruption on every side of us,

- and in the midst of these to still have the joy of the Lord burning in our hearts.

There were a lot of people in the apostle Paul's day who had just as much insight as Paul did and who had a grasp of Scripture which was just as good, if not better, than his. But Paul had one thing which made him effective where many other people failed. Paul translated his insight into actual living.... so that he was the embodiment of everything he taught.

How did he do it? Listen to him....

*So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away,
our inner self is being renewed day by day.*

Paul's body is getting older and he's being hassled on all sides by many problems. He has aches and pains. Yet every day this inner self comes up fresh, new, unsullied, clean and bright, burning with the joy of the Lord in the midst of chaos. Paul can't be sunk.

His outer self is looked upon as an imposter, *his inner self is true.*

His outer self is unknown by the world, *his inner self is well-known by God.*

His outer self is dying, *his inner self is always alive.*

His outer self is being punished, *his inner self cannot be killed.*

His outer self is sorrowful, *his inner self is always rejoicing.*

His outer self is poor, *his inner self is making many rich.*

His outer self has nothing, *his inner self possesses all things.*



When Paul talks about being renewed, day-by-day, he's talking about his relationship with Jesus. Every day that Paul breaks conformity with this world, he's renewed in the spirit of his mind.

One of the best ways to understand this miracle of daily renewal is to think of it as an *exchange* in which we bring our old self (the old Adam) to Jesus, and lay it at the foot of the cross, and in exchange for it we get a new self.

One of the best descriptions in Scripture of what Jesus will do for each of us is found in Isaiah 61. This passage is usually thought of as a description of our ministry, and it is that. But to minister to other people in this manner, this first must become Jesus' ministry *to us*, daily.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, And the day of vengeance of our God;

To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion,

To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning,

The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;

That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified. And they shall rebuild the old ruins, They shall raise up the former desolations, And they shall repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations. (Isaiah 61 (NKJV))

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Jesus...

- to give *us* good news,
- to bind up *our* wounds,
- to preach deliverance to *us*,
- to set *us* free from captivity,
- to comfort *us* in *our* mourning.

When He begins to do this, the exchange takes place:

- He exchanges beauty for ashes,
- He exchanges the oil of joy for mourning,
- He exchanges the garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness,

.... So that we might be trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord,

.... So that we might be able to go forth and build the old ruins, and raise up the former desolations, and repair the wasted cities, the desolations of many generations.

There cannot be a more accurate description of the situation in which every one of us finds himself or herself.

Ruined cities, devastated families, wasted nations are the result of the desolation of generations of evil that are now beginning to bear fruit. If we are going to live in the midst of this death and survive, (spiritually as well as physically) and bring it some healing and do some building.... we ourselves will have to be renewed every day by God.

There will have to be an exchange in which we bring the old self, all the evil that is in us, and in its place receive something fresh from God every day

To console those that mourn

How can we look out over this world, and observe what is really taking place in human hearts, and not mourn?

How can we look into our own hearts and face the truth about the ugly, evil, twisted, warped, weird thoughts that go through our heads, and not mourn?

When we begin to see, with the eyes that God gives us, we no longer go around criticizing, we find ourselves unable to do anything but mourn.

We begin to weep.



It is with this frame of mind that we have to approach the Throne of our God every single day.

To give them beauty for ashes....

We bring....

the ashes of our self-lust,

the ashes of our self-righteousness,

the ashes of our good intentions which so seldom materialize,

the ashes of our own bigotry, our deceitfulness, our bitterness, our compromise,

and we lay these ashes at His feet.



Only when we are willing to lay our ashes at His feet, instead of what we think to be our own righteousness, is He able then to give us beauty....to exchange our ashes for *His beauty*, the beauty of *His presence*, of *His holiness* which is clean and pure and unsullied and unailing.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

Psalm 27:4

If we don't see the beauty of the Lord every single day in His temple, our vision is warped. Pretty soon all we see is ugliness everywhere we look, and we're overwhelmed by that ugliness.

But that's not necessary, there's no reason why we shouldn't have the beauty of the Lord refreshing our vision every single day.

Don't be content until, in your prayer life, (and you won't survive without a prayer life), you are bringing those ashes and laying them down at the feet of the Lord every day and exchanging those ashes for the beauty of His presence.

And you may not be dancing for joy at first, but at least you will know now that you are exchanging those ashes for the beauty of the Lord coming into your heart.

The oil of joy for mourning....

**Don't be afraid to mourn before the Lord.
Don't be afraid to bring your weeping to Him.**



We've done most of our crying and weeping in total secret. Nobody has any idea how much mourning has been going on in your heart while your face has been smiling.

But now we bring this to the Lord and He transforms our mourning of self-pity into the mourning of repentance.

Now I begin to weep; not because everybody has let me down, but seeing now with the eyes God has given me, I start to weep because *I have let others down* — I have especially disappointed my Heavenly Father.

I begin to weep because I see that *I am part of the desolation of generations.*

***O God, I'm a man of unclean lips,
and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.***

Isaiah 6

And as we bring our mourning to Him, He takes our weeping of repentance into His heart and it's gone. And in exchange, He puts His joy into our hearts, He anoints us with the oil of joy.

There's no reason why this cannot be our portion every day. The only reason we don't experience this anointing of joy every single day is because of our inconsistency, our lethargy, our unbelief, our lukewarmness.

We don't have to settle for this. We don't have to walk day after day under a cloud of gloom.

If we will bring our weeping to Him. He'll transform it into joy. If we will go to Him in the morning and say,

"Lord, I will not be able to get through this day and do one constructive thing unless my heart is filled with your joy instead of my tears,"

He'll do it. He absolutely will do it. He's only waiting for us to ask Him

The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness....

We are not being told that we are to pretend to praise God when our hearts are heavy, as so many people today are telling us to do. As if we are supposed to go through the motions of praise while our hearts are breaking. That's not what we're being told to do here.

What we are being told to do is to bring our spirit of heaviness to Him, to admit that it's there. Don't pretend anything, don't be jumping for joy saying, "Praise the Lord", trying to work yourself up into something.

Bring to Him what's really in your heart. If it's the spirit of heaviness, that's what you bring Him.



**And when you bring the spirit of heaviness before Him,
Jesus reaches down with His own hand and clothes you in the garment of praise.**

Why should I be walking around pretending to be full of praise while my heart is heavy as lead, when I can have the real thing?

I can bring to Him my heavy heart and my gloomy spirit and have it replaced by His own hand, with a garment of praise.

How important it is for us to be honest with Him! Don't be satisfied with that spirit of heaviness!

Take it to Him, and soon He will have you, with all the company of heaven lauding, praising, magnifying His glorious name. Then you're ready to go out and minister.

That they may be called trees of righteousness....

That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified. And they shall rebuild the old ruins, They shall raise up the former desolations, And they shall repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations.

And oh, how this world is in need of people who can heal, and who can build. Nobody is going to rebuild the ruined cities and raise up the former desolations who has not first learned daily to be renewed by God. And those who try without getting that daily renewal are sure to succumb to despair or to be sidetracked with temptation of one kind or another.

If we come to Him, every day, He will give us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness.

Should there be someone reading this who has never actually experienced these things, it's not too much to promise you, in the name of the Lord, that you can taste them now,

- Bring to Him your ashes as you go to prayer, and He will give you His beauty.
- Bring Him your weeping and your mourning and the anguish of your heart, and He will fill you with His joy.
- Bring Him that heaviness, that gloom, that is weighed down upon your spirit and He will clothe you and send you forth wrapped in the garment of praise...



**He will make you trees of righteousness...
equipping you to raise up former desolations and rebuild ruins.**

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Featured Artist: Graciousness and courtesy of Jane Spencer at the [Secret Place on Facebook](#)

Prayer-Dear, sweet Lord, Oh how we need this daily exchange, Oh how we need you to transform our ashes, our shame, our guilt, our mourning, our faintness, and our gloom into beauty, joy, and praise. Keep us from losing heart in the midst of the ruins, the waste, the desolation, and the evil that is bearing much fruit at these times. Without your help, without your mercy, without your Spirit we cannot face it, let alone battle and conquer it. We come before you, we lay ourselves at your feet, letting go of our own sense of righteousness, baring our brokenness, and admitting our weaknesses asking that you exchange them for your presence, your beauty, your holiness. Give us your good news, speak to us, bind up our wounds, deliver us, free us from our captivity, and bring us your comfort. And Lord, may we arise from our daily exchange with you, with such joy burning in our hearts that we can do the same thing and can raise up the desolations, transform the waste, and rebuild the ruins. Amen.

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