

BACKSLIDING IN THE HEART: A DEADLY DISEASE

Preached by Rev. T. G. Oshokoya
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Our prayer this morning is that God will fill us with the beauty of Heaven. The heavenly beauty is not something we buy in the market; it is not what any wise craftsman in the world can produce. It is something that only God can do for us.

In our assembly this morning, people have adorned themselves in various ways. It is possible that some of the adornments may be different from those of our associates elsewhere because our organisation does not emphasise outward adornment. The Word of God says; 'Beauty is vain, favour is deceitful, but it is a woman who fears the Lord that should be praised.' Despite the quality of the material worn, is the fact that people use beautiful clothes to cover up different diseases. It is my prayer that God may heal all our spiritual diseases individually and collectively.

Isaiah chapter 29 verse 13 says;

"Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me."

The disease plaguing us in this assembly is backsliding in the heart. Though we stress the fact that the Gospel is the way to eternal life, yet as individuals we see that our hearts are far from God. In this assembly, we embrace the sound doctrine. We are sure that as many as embrace the Word, they whom the Word cuts, pours in oil and binds, receiving the beauty of holiness from Heaven, surely if they stand firmly in it, with their hearts clinging to the Living God, are sure of eternal life right from this world.

In our assembly, God manifests Himself by His presence among us. He deals with our hearts, draws our hearts closer to Heaven, sets the captives free, opens blind eyes, and performs many signs and miracles, especially preparing souls for Heaven. We know many, who have left this world, and made their Home with God above.

The devil, the flesh, the blood and the world are striving to wrest the Word of God from our grip by trying to draw our hearts away from God. But we thank the Captain of the Host of Israel, Jesus Christ, Who has overcome the devil, sin, the flesh, death and hell, and has declared to us that He is the King of victory. He gives to us the promise of victory. The promised victory was what He was referring to when He told His disciples:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Jesus did not mince words; He made His disciples know what was important for them to strive for, if they were genuinely thirsty for Heaven. Jesus made them understand that it was not by being a churchgoer or being a nominal Christian that qualifies one for Heaven but by doing the will of our Father Who is in Heaven. It is not by bearing Christian names, or by calling the Lord's name repeatedly

or making merchandise of Jesus' name, by using God's promises to claim His blessings for help, peace and health, reciting the Word as incantation that we can make Heaven but by doing the will of the Living God with all our heart, soul, life, time, and all.

"Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that

cometh forth from the LORD,

"And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

"And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not" (Ezekiel 33:30- 32).

God told Ezekiel what would not make his people believe the Word that he spoke to them. As we too may ponder in our heart that under the sound doctrine, what would make a person not believe it? What can make a person under the sound doctrine not to make Heaven? What can make a person under the sound doctrine fail to make the Kingdom of God? God told Ezekiel that they would not hear and obey the Word because their hearts did not agree with the Word of God, but their hearts were after covetousness.

This is a great secret that God has revealed to us. And it will be good for us to spend time to read these verses again and again so that the secrets can be of great benefit to us. You have heard the secret, that it is what your heart yearns for that is against the will of God, that will not let you obey the Word of God. That thing that will not let you do His will, in your heart, will hinder you from making Heaven.

What does God want for us and what is God's will for us? "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8).

"The law of his God is in his heart: none of his steps shall slide" (Psalm 37:31).

We may ponder in our heart what the will of God is. The will of God is His Word. The Word that proceeds from God's mouth is what God wants. What He says is His will. That is His commandment. That is His promise, that is His covenant. He will not turn away from it. The Word that proceeds from God's mouth is His Law.

"BLESSED are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

"Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

"They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways" (Psalm 119:1-3).

These verses declare to us that those whom God honours or respects are those who receive the Word of God into their hearts. They are those who give it room in their heart and walk by it. They make it their support, their healing, their victory, their salvation.

The Psalmist tells us that **"they also do no iniquity,"** because they walk in His ways, for in His way, there is no sin. It is when we draw our hearts back and want to go in our own way that we

commit sin. When we close the door against God in our hearts and minds, then we do what pleases us. That is why John tells us that, **"whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him."** He says, he cannot even commit sin. That is where the unsearchable power of God lies. People ask us, "So you cannot commit sin again, you cannot even make mistakes again?" It is human to commit sin, it is Divine to deliver from sin, and give us 'the power to go and sin no more.' Hence, we must seek God to reign in our heart, the more we endeavour to have God in our heart .day by day, year by year, at all times, the more our victory over sin, the world, and the flesh. That is why we disagree with people who say once a person has been born by God, he will forever continue to be a child of God. The Word of God tells us that if a righteous person departs from his righteousness, and commits sin, he will no longer remain righteous: it is the evil that he does that will be imputed to him. It is possible to be a righteous person when we retain God in our heart, mind and life. The day you push Him out, you will start to commit sin. It is not God committing sin within you, it is because God is not within you that you commit sin. When God is not in the heart, the devil, the enemy of the soul, who re- belled against God, will capture the person. He then enslaves the person. It does not take the devil a minute before he enslaves. It is only God Who can deliver from his captivity.

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10).

This is the mystery of God. He says if we keep His command- ment and obey His precepts, we will abide in His love. We will abide in the depth of the love of the Living God. Those things that the flesh and the wisdom of man cannot accomplish, will be done through us and will flow forth, because we abide in God and God abides in us. The love of God will abound in our lives and over- flow to others; all because we allow the Law of God in our heart.

"If ye keep my commandments"

How can we keep the Law of God? We have to love God. We have to give God room in our heart. We have to give our love to Him. Our fault is the failure to give our will entirely to God and to give God room in our heart and in our life under all conditions. We sometimes forget how He brought us from the world that overtook us. We also do not always remember the time, when problems blinded our eyes, held us by the neck, deafened our ears and there was no peace within. We travelled round the world without deliverance. You were once pressed to the wall. Wisdom had ceased in the home of the wise, possessions had finished in the store of the rich, the world rejected you, and you were left to yourself. It appeared to you as if no one could save you. Then you heard the good news that Jesus could deliver. Trouble, distress and the fear of death, caused you to flee to the Cross of Jesus.

Then you surrendered, saying, "God, You alone can save me." The Creator of Heaven and earth looked down from Heaven, He saw your heart, that you were sincerely seeking help, He came down into your heart, and saved you. He delivered you and set you free. He made your heart His dwelling place. Then your eyes were opened, and you started to see the things of Heaven which you did not see before. At that time, you truly gave your love to God.

But when you began to feel comfortable, you saw what your colleagues were doing, all the so called fine things that surrounded them. Then your heart started to love the world again. God, Whom you had given room before, was driven out from your heart! Immediately you drove Him out, the devil got hold of you. The Law of God died in your heart. The love of God departed from your heart. You lost the salvation of God. Things ceased to go on well with you.

Friend, won't you return your love, your heart and your life to Him saying, "Here is my heart, God, come and reign there?" Won't you say, "This is my life, I surrender it to You?" It is dangerous to withdraw yourself from the Living God. Jesus is coming back. Lest He tells you **'I know ye not, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.'** Come to Jesus this morning. There is opportunity for you to reconcile with Jesus. Don't leave this altar until you settle it with God.