

Awareness Yields Beautiful Growth

By Kelly T. Dixon

Scripture: Psalm 139:23-24

I don't know of many people who have the patience to sit and watch a flower grow. I think about the Easter Lily and how it represents new life. It began with a bulb that was nurtured to grow into a stem then into a bud that would break way eventually into a beautiful blossom for all to enjoy. Watching this process moment by moment to many of us would seem almost painful from the boredom of it all. However, I would venture to say the beauty that is enjoyed at the end would be worth it.

This is how God must feel as He painfully watches us grow and He nurtures us through our walk with Him. Looking at our growth process today surely reminds Him of the Israelites when He first gave them the procedures for sin offerings in Leviticus 4. The theme of the book of Leviticus shows how God provided a way for sins of the people to be "paid for" by sacrificing the blood of animals. This whole system was pointing toward the shedding of Christ's blood as the one great sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Looking at chapter four of Leviticus (which I encourage you to do), you will see how each time it says when they became aware of their sins they must bring the offering. This includes even sins done unintentionally. We can ask for forgiveness of unintentional sins, but the growth does not begin until we are aware of the sin.

This really makes sense for us New Testament believers on this side of the cross because Jesus died for all our sins - past, present and future. Therefore, after receiving salvation a believer has been forgiven for all their sins. One may ask then, why do we ask God to forgive us for sins we commit if we are saved? The answer is awareness and growth.

After receiving salvation we come to the Father for forgiveness of our sins as a growth process in growing closer to Him. If we are unaware of the particular sin we have committed, then how are we going to know not to commit it again. We must be aware of our sin so we will know we have sinned against our Father, ask for forgiveness and move closer to Him. This process is how we realize the weaknesses of our sinful nature and that we must submit more to the Holy Spirit to draw strength from Him not to commit the sin again.

A blanket prayer of "God forgive me for all the sins I've committed even the ones I am not aware of" is not a prayer of growth. It is a prayer of "give me." You are basically asking, "Father give me forgiveness, but I don't want to know what the sin is because I don't want to change." If we want to grow in Him, then our prayer should be,

"Father, I know of the following sins I committed (list sins - if you have sinned). I ask for forgiveness of those sins and thank you for Jesus who has already paid the price. Give me strength from Your Holy Spirit to not commit this sin against you. If there are sins I have committed that I am unaware of Lord, convict me of those sins so I will be aware of them. Search my heart and point out anything that offends you. Lead me along the path of everlasting life so I may bring glory to Your name."

David displayed this type of prayer in Psalm 139:23-24, where he says,

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." Psalm 139:23-24 (NLT)

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Becoming aware of our sins allows God to nurture us into becoming the beautiful flower He wants us to be. It is this transformation that Paul talks about in Romans.

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect His will really is.” Romans 12:2 (NLT)

It is this transformation process that the Lord patiently nurtures us through. I praise His Holy Name that He doesn’t get bored with us. Even though it is painful for Him to watch us go through this process, He still patiently waits. He convicts us of our sins so that He can nurture us through them. He waits patiently while we become aware of the sins we commit. And most importantly He loves us so much that He gives us abundant strength through the Holy Spirit to overcome those sins.

God is blooming each of us. He is patiently awaiting for us to draw more and more from His strength. Drawing from the strength of the Holy Spirit is the only way we can break way into a beautiful flower for the Lord that everyone can enjoy. I encourage you to continue growing into the new person God wants you to be - draw your strength more and more from the Holy Spirit - ask Him to make you aware!! ✠