

Spring Clean My Heart

By Kelly T. Dixon

Scripture: Matthew 16:24

Spring - what a wonderful time of the year. When I experience this time of the year, I think of "Spring Cleaning" - a tradition that many families have forgotten about - out with the old and in with the new (or refresh the old). I think of how Spring cleaning makes me feel after it is all done. I feel revived, renewed, ready to take on the summer. And in our relationship with Christ we need this same "cleaning" - this revival and renewal that prepares us for the hot days of our lives. But just like Spring cleaning, action is a must to begin the process.

Action is the part of Christianity that many of us miss. The action to begin cleansing of our hearts is the action of taking up our cross daily. Jesus tells us in Matthew 16:24, "*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*" Looking in more detail at this Scripture we see that Jesus was preparing His disciples for His death on the cross and in doing so He is telling them how He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things even to be killed. The glorious news is that He would rise from the dead on the third day. Even though Jesus expresses that He would rise from the dead, Peter is distraught at the thought of His Lord going through suffering and says, "*Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee.*" Jesus' response to Peter is, "*Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offense unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of man.*" Many times when I have read this Scripture I have thought of how crushed Peter must have been to hear His Lord call him Satan. But what really is the Lord trying to tell Peter and us today. He is saying, "Peter, I must go through this suffering for it is the Father's will. I must go to the cross so you can be made one with My Father and live in eternal peace with Him."

Reality is - the reason why Spring cleaning has become a tradition that many have forgotten is because we really don't like the process of doing the cleaning. We savor the revived and renewed feeling afterwards, but the process to get to that point is not one we want to endure. For the Lord to use us to do His will we must go through the "cleaning" process. Jesus continues to express to His disciples that not only does He have to go to the cross and bear the suffering of all sins, but they must take up their own crosses also. This is the action that He requires of us to begin the renewal of our hearts.

So what does it mean to "take up your cross?" It begins with a daily evaluation of self at the foot of the cross. We must submit ourselves to the Father through prayer and reading of His Word daily. And through that submission we must recognize the truths He reveals. Take action to turn towards Him and change from the dirty creature that approached His throne to a cleansed and renewed creature. Realize that through this process we will have to "take up our cross" and in doing so there will be suffering while the Father scrubs us clean. But the glorious news is that through this process the Lord is making us into a new creature.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

Focus upon the beauty of the cross not the suffering. Renew yourself in the power of the One who is able to make you into a new creature. Don't be like Peter focusing on the suffering. Realize that it is the Father's will that we are to follow. And His will is to make you into a new creature. He doesn't enjoy the fact that you will have to suffer to get there, but the end result is what He delights in most.

Whatever the cross is that you have to bear - take it up and follow Jesus. Always remember that Jesus died for our sins so we can die to our sins. Begin the Spring cleaning of your heart - focusing not on the suffering but the new creature He is creating you to be. †