

Pursuing Spiritual Breakthrough

Be Ye Perfect

Jesus said, in the Sermon on the Mount, “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48) No pressure there! But if we are going to experience spiritual breakthrough, must we really be perfect? Who can do that? And therein lies the problem. We often think that we are being called to “do” something, when in fact we are being called to let God do the doing. Only in Him can we become who and what we were meant to be.

In her autobiography entitled “The Story of a Soul”, St. Thérèse of Lisieux says, “Perfection consists in doing His will, in being that which He wants us to be.” Perfection lies not in what we do so much as why, and how, and for whom we do the tasks before us. It is allowing Him to recreate us in His image, to be “that which He wants us to be.” Regardless of whether it is unstopping a toilet or brain surgery, changing a diaper or preaching the Word, are we doing the task before us for the Lord? St. Paul says, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 10:31) And “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Col. 3:17) One of the founding principles of the Shaker community in the late 18th century, was that you do everything as if you were doing it for God. If you make a chair, build it as if Jesus were to sit in it. Are you making a hat box? Fashion it as if Jesus would store His hat in it. Ann Lee, one of the founders of the Shakers, said, “Put your hands to work and give your hearts to God.”

In His song, “Do Everything”, Stephen Curtis Chapman gives us a nice perspective on this precept. He sings, “...do every little thing that you do to bring a smile to His face...” Is what you are doing something that you can honestly say, I want to do this for Jesus? If not, don't do it! These things we do for Jesus don't have to be monumental tasks, they can be simple daily chores. What is important is our attitude toward them, and toward the Lord Himself. Are we being who Jesus wants us to be? Are we doing what God has created us and called us to do? Will what I do “bring a smile to His face”?

Jesus hasn't taken us out of the world. We are here to be used by Him to transform the world, and we do that best when the things we do are done in Him and for Him. But in order for that to happen there must be a transformation of our minds, our attitudes. St. Paul says, “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Rom. 12:2) But Paul recognized that this transformation is a process, not an instantaneous change. He tells the Church at Philippi, “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” (Phil. 3:12) And so as we strive for breakthrough, we must strive for perfection, becoming who and what we were meant to be, “because Christ Jesus has made me his own”.