



Devotional Thoughts :: Wanted: Tender Hearts

Wanted: Tender Hearts - posted by roadsign (), on: 2017/8/28 7:18

Recently, I did something unusual. I wrote to a media commentator appealing for mercifulness in his rhetorical style. I offered this reason: Our adversarial world desperately needs moral exemplars — those who consistently exemplify the tender qualities of mercy. This person, I felt, could rise to the challenge. I believe that such an appeal also needs to be made to professing Christians. Tender-heartedness is, after all, the fruit of spiritual maturity.

Ephesians 4:32 — Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. (NRSV)

We need tender hearts in a world dominated by the abrasive qualities of hardened hearts. A tender heart is soft and sweet, like ripe fruit, which leaves a pleasant taste in the mouth. In truth, wherever there are Christians, there's always plenty of fruit, but it's unripe, not yet tender. We bite into the fruit and discover it to be hard, bitter, and unappealing. These Christians may be good people, devoted and respectful. They may even preach eloquently; their prayers may be intelligent. Yet, they lack the mellow quality of tenderness.

A tender heart is acutely sensitized to God. It breathes in the passionate love of God and emanates His all-subduing, all-melting grace. It knows the heart-wrenching sorrow of the dying Jesus. A tender heart gushes with the groans and tears of compassion. It burns with consuming love. It throbs with empathetic mercy and forgiveness.

A tender heart doesn't wound another through insensitive comments or argumentative subjects. It isn't quarrelsome. It can't even be that way, because that is outside its nature. It has lost the power to dominate, scold, or threaten. Yet, the tender heart is possessed with mighty power. It can convey a point by seemingly permitting its opponent to win.

These portrayals of the tender heart are not my own. They are drawn from various sources. I could not have come up with this! But I can now see how deeply I fall short. I realize that tender-heartedness is an outgrowth of trials and testings. It is the handiwork of God's Spirit in our hearts.

We will often find ourselves tasting the bitter fruit of hardened hearts. Yet tender fruit is around, too. A sensitized palate will catch its subtle qualities in another. When you do encounter it, be sure to pick, taste, and enjoy! Let it nourish your own soul. After all, it is meant to be shared.

Philippians 2:1-2 — Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. (NIV 2011)

Prayer: Dearest Lord, develop in us a palate for the sweet taste of tender-heartedness, and fan its lush qualities within our own hearts. Amen.