

Devotional Thoughts :: Of Prime Importance - Basilea Schlink

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Of Prime Importance

Supremely important today, as possibly never before, is "first love" for Jesus. Only when we have this love will we be able to bear the hard times that lie ahead, hard times such as the world has not yet known. More Christians have been martyred in the last one hundred years than in the previous centuries put together. We live in an age of great apostasy and widespread deception. Whose faith is strong enough to stand up under intense trial? Who can endure? Only those who have this "first love" (Revelation 2:4 NKJV), the hallmark of the early Christians. Reports tell of the passionate love for Jesus with which they faced martyrdom; it was, in fact, their first love for Him that compelled them to embrace suffering for His sake.

As we will see, first love is a force to be reckoned with. Its power is greater than the power of suffering, which can have a debilitating and depressing effect on us, making us cowardly and despairing, rendering us ineffective. We need first love in order to persevere. Only one power is stronger than the power of suffering: the divine life contained in love. God is Love. Whenever He pours out His divine life into human hearts, people begin to love Him intimately and fervently. And nothing in this world - not even the greatest sufferings or horrors, not even martyrdom itself can quench this divine life which is immortal, beyond the power of death.

First love - a most precious gift. First love - the one thing that is needed. First love - for which we should pray more than anything else. From Scripture we may infer another name for first love and that is "bridal love". We read for example of Jesus alluding to Himself as the Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15). Then, too, Scripture refers to the marriage supper of the Lamb and to the bride of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). Since the chosen ones of the Lord are collectively called the bride, it follows that individually each possesses bridal love.

From what the Bible says, it is evident that the love between a bridegroom and a bride in a human relationship is but a shadow of the love between the heavenly Bridegroom and His bride. All human love pales in comparison with this first love, this strong, exclusive love for Jesus. Yet there is a similarity. Bridal love for Jesus is undivided like the love of a bride who has given her heart to her bridegroom and has eyes only for him. In the same way we are to love our heavenly Bridegroom with an undivided heart.

Above all, first love or bridal love is of prime importance today in view of Jesus' Second Coming when Jesus returns. It will be both as King and as Bridegroom. As Bridegroom He will be coming only for those aflame with bridal love for Him. Those whose very love has led them to prepare for their Bridegroom and for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Bridal love, which we so much need, is not an impossible goal. Jesus, who first loved us, has planted the seed of this love within our hearts. "We love, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). A gift from Him, it is a reflection of His own love and His innermost being. So strong, so pure, so fervent is this love that its potential is unlimited. This love can achieve far more than all natural abilities and strengths, for it is the greatest force in heaven and on earth, possessing the greatest authority because it comes from the heart of Jesus. It was Jesus' love that constrained Him to suffer for the redemption of the world. Bridal love, that reflection of His own love, now gives us the grace to suffer and to sacrifice. Bridal love can impart such strength to us, because it makes us one with the Lord of heaven and earth, the Almighty.

One day, in eternity, we will discover - if we have not already done so - nothing is to be so desired in our life of faith as first love, bridal love for Jesus. It was for this love that we were created and redeemed. This love alone can make us genuinely happy, bringing lasting joy. It is the key to true discipleship. Jesus is waiting for us to love Him with first love, bridal love - for He Himself is the Bridegroom.

-Daniel