

THE “DESENSITIZING” OF THE BODY OF CHRIST ~ A STRATEGY OF THE ENEMY

A few weeks ago, I was sitting in my garage trying to keep cool as a faint breeze was passing through. I say that because, just as many others in our region of Southwest Florida, we were recuperating from Hurricane Irma. We, like many others did not have electricity for many days. We were blessed that we

were only without power for 12 days. I would also like to say that we were very, very blessed in so many ways. Trish and I made it through safely. Our home suffered some damage but nothing major. We did have a generator so we were able to plug in a fan and sleep with it on during the night and most importantly, charge our mobile devices. We did not run the generator all day because that would get expensive after a while. We lost all our food that was in the fridge and the freezer so there was no need to keep them going. We did have canned goods and dry foods. We cooked on our propane powered burner and on our propane powered gas grill. We kept telling ourselves that it was like being on a long camping trip. Instead of being in some campground in a tent, we were simply “camping out” at our house. We wouldn’t call it a vacation but rather we referred to it as a “staycation.” The mind makes you think of many things to help you get through. Of course, the most important help in getting us through was the Holy Spirit. I admit there were a few times when I had a “little melt down” but with the Lord’s encouragement they were few and went by quickly.

Now, today as I write this, I think of so many people throughout the world that have been through tremendous suffering, pain and anguish that compared to them my little ordeal was really nothing but a minor inconvenience. There were many, many people who lost everything here in southwest Florida and other areas of the state. We think back and remember the flooding and damage that Hurricane Harvey did in Texas. We are well aware of what Puerto Rico went through and is still dealing with in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. We know of the terrible affects and destruction of the earthquake in Mexico. The wildfires in California continue to bring devastation to that area as well as the loss of many lives. And, of course, the horrendous shooting that took place in Las Vegas where so many people were senselessly killed by a gunman. We are also, all well aware of our fellow brothers and sisters being martyred for their faith by radical religious fanatics. These are, to name a few, some of the many tragic events that have happened and continue to happen throughout the world.

We hear of these events that take place. We watch and see the effects first hand through every media outlet. Each of us, along with countless others, see the devastation and feel so bad for all of those affected by these tragedies. However, there is a problem that I am beginning to sense and feel. It is not necessarily a new problem. What I am beginning to sense is actually a continual process of “desensitization” of people, including many in the Body of Christ, when we hear and see these kinds of events take place. The definition of the term “desensitize” is as follows: to make (someone) less likely to feel shock or distress at scenes of cruelty, violence, or suffering by **overexposure** to such images. (*ref.* dictionary.com) I have to admit, I think, unfortunately, that I am becoming susceptible to this desensitization and may be slipping into this very slippery slope, as well.

The question I ask myself when I think of this “problem” is, “What do the scriptures tell us concerning how we should respond when we hear of such things taking place?” One scripture that comes to mind is found in Romans 12:15, “*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and **weep with them that weep.***” Another scripture concerning this same thought is found in 1Corinthians 12:26, “*And whether **one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.***”

Unfortunately, we as members of the Body of Christ sometimes forget these scriptures and the principles they teach. I know it is difficult to actually go and do something tangible when horrible situations arise

throughout the world and far from where you may be. Many times we lend assistance through giving financially when we are able to. Sometimes, there are those that are able to physically help in a tangible way by going to these places of tragedy and bringing the love of our God to those who are hurting so very deeply. Many of us keep them in our prayers which we should and which is just as vital as any other type of assistance. The above mentioned ways of being the hands, feet and mouth of Jesus are all tremendous tools in bringing the love of our Savior to those in need, to which I applaud and bless those that bring forth such actions of compassion.

However, the scriptures I mentioned tell us to “...weep with them that weep” and to remember that when “one suffers we all suffer...” Now I know that some may say that these scriptures refer only to believers towards other believers. Even though that may be correct, I do not look at it in such a legalistic manner and I do not believe the Lord looks at it in such a legalistic way, as well. It is the “spirit” in which Paul was writing in which he was saying that the heart of a believer is to be the same heart as Jesus has. He cares and is always concerned when it comes to the needs of others. Jesus was our example as He role modeled compassion to and for all of God’s most precious creation – no matter their race, creed or color. So what are these scriptures telling us as believers and how are we to apply them within our lives when horrific things occur in places and to others who are not nearby our sphere of influence?

I think that these scriptures imply and infer that we, as believers, are to share in and identify with, the deep grief that those who are in the midst of and experiencing such devastating loss are dealing with. Let’s be clear, a person can experience grief in situations other than the death of a loved one. Everyone’s threshold of grief is different from another’s. We, as believers, must grasp this truth. We are called to share in and be moved within our heart with the same compassionate heart, soul and mind that Jesus walked in towards those who were hurting. Jesus identified with their loss. Many times He was moved to action to ease a person’s grief. There were other times when He simply explained a truth that would bring forth comfort to those who were hurting.

Again, I believe, the key to many of the problems that the Body of Christ is beginning to experience and which I also believe is a tool of the enemy, stems from that nasty word I brought up previously – “desensitization.” In many ways the Body of Christ has become desensitized to the works of the enemy. Remember, the term desensitized means to make (someone) less likely to feel shock or distress at scenes of cruelty, violence, or suffering by **overexposure** to such images. As mentioned previously, we as believers can become desensitized and become hardened by the overexposure of horrible tragedies. We must resist this tendency that would creep into our heart.

We, as believers, sometimes fall into a trap of not identifying with those that are hurting because we see it so many times that it becomes just another news item. Again, not everyone falls into this trap. However, it is becoming ever so increasing in the lives of many believers. I believe that this is a strategy of the enemy to cause the Body of Christ to not be as effective as it should be in these times that we are living in. We have become “me” and “self” oriented which is very much a by-product of the strategy of desensitization. We see this happening in the Body of Christ. Many times, a church will not help someone unless they start coming to their church. Again, I say that we must resist this strategy of the enemy that would lead the believers into a lack of action in being God’s representatives in the midst of these kinds of very difficult situations.

Another form and by-product of this “desensitization” to the hurts and grief of others can manifest itself in another incorrect attitude of heart. Sometimes an “elitist mentality” is found within the Body of Christ which, I believe, is wrapped up in this same strategy of the enemy. Let me explain what I mean.

We have heard many accounts of God's divine protection and mercy in keeping people safe and their property safe from harm during the tragic events mentioned previously. Many have told how they prayed and believed God that no harm would "*come nigh their dwelling place*" and there was no harm or damage. However, we have also heard how many people prayed the same prayers for themselves and their loved ones but yet they suffered major damage and major flooding to their homes and property. The questions that arise from this are many. Some of which may be as follows: "Is God a respecter of persons?" "Does God hear the prayers of some more than the prayers of others?" Did people pray incorrectly or did they not use the correct "format" of prayer for such situations?" "Did some people have more faith than others;" - etc, etc, etc. The answers will vary depending on what "camp" you find yourself situated in.

I am not going to sit here and tell you that I have all the answers to those questions because I do not. I do not believe that anyone here on this earth has all the answers. No one!!! No matter what they may think they know. Yes, it is wonderful to give glory to God. However, unfortunately, many times the glory is not given to God but rather it is given to self and how good "I" prayed and how correct "I" prayed and what great faith "I" had. It all points to the "I" and self and not to God. It exposes an "it's all about me" attitude of heart.

This "elitist mentality" may be rooted down deep within a person and they most likely are not even aware of it. Many times it is sublimely taught through some of the "hyper" teachings that have been established. It breeds a self righteous, arrogant and prideful attitude of heart in those who think they have it all together because it worked out well for them and not so well for others. However, this elitist mentality, this pride and boasting on self can be used as tool of the enemy to bring guilt and condemnation, as well as resentment and bitterness to those who suffered. This again points to the fact that many in the Body of Christ have become desensitized to the hurts and pain of others and have become all too self centered.

In the same way, the enemy has also caused the Body of Christ to become desensitized to another devastating tragedy – sin. We see sin happening all around us. We are being **overexposed** to sin from within our culture every day. It is being forced upon us through every media outlet and social media venue. What was considered sinful or taboo, even by the world's standards 50 years ago, is not considered sinful or taboo today. The Body of Christ seems to always be just a little behind in this trend but, unfortunately, the pattern always seems that, eventually, we catch up to the culture and begin to accept and even justify sin and sinful behavior. Why is that?

I think it begins with that very well orchestrated strategy designed by the enemy to "desensitize" believers to what has always been considered, expressed and revealed throughout the scriptures as sin – those things that are opposite to the character and nature of God. If we look closely, this trend, or we can say this strategy, can be found throughout the history of the Body of Christ. We see its beginnings even within the early New Testament Church. The problem is addressed in letters written by Paul, James, Peter, John, etc. In their letters they are constantly bringing correction to both Jewish believers and Gentile believers to refrain from allowing the influences of their culture from creeping into the Body of Christ.

There were strong influences from the "Gentile culture" to allow sexual immorality, impurity, fornication, and other things that were permitted and acceptable within their culture and that they wanted to bring in and allow these practices to be permitted within the Body of Christ. Their reasoning was that they were now "free in Jesus." Sound familiar? To that the writers declared – "God forbid!!!" There were also influences from the Jewish culture and Judaism such as circumcision and ritualism trying to be brought back into the Body of Christ by some Jewish believers and Judaizers. If not confronted and if allowed to enter into the Body, it would eventually undermine the true message of Christ and faith in Christ alone for salvation. Again, to that, the writers also declared – "God forbid!!!"

The scriptures teach us that the Holy Spirit is grieved when we sin. (Ephesians 4:30) We are exhorted and encouraged to be separate and refrain from those behavior patterns, ways and lifestyle of sin that are in total opposition to the lifestyle role modeled by Jesus. This “grieves” the heart of God. Have we become so desensitized that we do not grieve along with the Holy Spirit over the things that grieve Him? Do we weep/grieve when God weeps/grieves? We are taught through the scriptures of how we can overcome the tendencies of sin within our lives. Psalm 119:11 tells us, *“Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”* Our desire should be that we want to bless the heart of God, not cause Him to grieve.

Ever since the “birth of the Church” we have seen through the scriptures and throughout the past 2000 years of its history that one of the most dangerous weapons in the enemy’s arsenal is one that is so subtle that it will literally infect the Body of Christ with a type of “spiritual elixir” that would cause the Body of Christ to become numb to the pain and anguish of others. It is an “elixir” that leads to a mindset that thinks “it is all about me.” It is a “potion” that is filled with the “wisdom of this world” in which scripture calls that type of wisdom total *“foolishness to God.”*(1Corinthians 3:19) It is a seductive mixture of lies and culture that looks as if it is permissible to now partake of, allow and accept into the Body of Christ but yet it leads to destruction. (Proverbs 5:3-5) It even allows for the opportunity for the deceiver to come and *“if possible to deceive the very elect.”* (Matthew 24:24) We must resist and put away this strategy of the enemy that would want believers to become desensitized to the things that are totally opposite of God’s heart, character and nature.

It is time for the “desensitized” and “slumbering” church to awake and arise. Resistance to this strategy of the enemy is not futile. It is not hopeless nor is it too late to resist this ever so subtle weapon of the enemy that would try to bring the Body of Christ to its lowest point of effectiveness within the world. It is time for the Body of Christ to repent from our lethargy. It is time to repent from our arrogance, pride and elitist attitudes. It is time for the Body of Christ to stop drinking the intoxicating strategies of the enemy that will cause us to become desensitized to those things that are opposite of and are offensive to our God. It is time *“to weep with those who weep.”* It is time to walk and live as Jesus did and identify and grieve with those who are lost and those who are hurting and experiencing deep, deep grief in times of horrible situations that they are experiencing – whether they are in the Body or not. No matter who they are, they are still loved by God.

It is time that the Body of Christ repents and turns from the “wisdom and culture of this world” and its approval and acceptance to what the scriptures call out and out sinfulness and unrighteousness. It is time to turn from those things that would *“so easily beset us.”* It is time to turn away from those things that are opposite to God’s ways and thoughts. It is time to turn towards the wisdom and righteousness of God. It is time to truly live up to the task that has been given to us as disciples of Jesus. It is time for us to be the ambassadors for Christ that we have been called to be to those who are hurting and lost in this world. It is time for us to stand strong and firm as His true disciples and be the *“light of the world and the salt of the earth.”* It is time for the Body of Christ to be different and to be the “difference makers” in and to this world. That is what Jesus has called His disciples to be.

Let us no longer be a people that are “desensitized” but rather let us be sensitive to the needs and hurts of others as well as being sensitive to those things that hurt and grieve the heart of our Heavenly Father. May we all truly desire to walk in a lifestyle that truly desires to simply delight and bless the heart of our King.