

Hello Orange Cove Church Family & Friends of Orange Cove,

Pastor's Weekly Letter: January 8, 2016 – "Dying Daily"

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Happy Friday, January 8, 2016. It's already the 8th day of the new year. Are you and I going to allow day after day to go by without an intimate, personal relationship with God, or are we going to make every single day count for God in 2016?

This Week's Devotional – "Dying Daily"

If you were asked if you'd like to speak to God face-to-face, what would you say? I'd say 'yes, please.' Before man fell into sin, God used to talk with him face-to-face. Not just once or twice a month, or once a twice a week, but every single day. So, is it still possible to speak to God everyday? Before we answer that question, we know that the moment man fell into sin, God immediately put a plan in place that would allow man to, once again, be able to communicate with Him. That plan was the plan of Salvation, where Jesus would take on man's fallen sinful nature, come and live among sinful men, live a sinless life through total dependence on His Father and take the sin of the world onto His shoulders and pay the price for it.

When the plan of salvation was put in place, God invited man to reconnect with Him again. All man had to do, was to be willing to allow God to disable the sinful nature he had acquired after the fall. Man's sinful nature prevents him from intimacy with God because man's sinful nature craves everything that is opposite to God. As a matter of fact, man's sinful nature blinds him from even realizing that his sinful nature is a problem. Man's conscience draws him to attend church and pay attention to religious matters, but it makes sure that it is still in control.

Man's sinful nature wants to be in control, is critical of others, tries to do good in it's own strength and refuses to surrender control to God. Nevertheless, it wants to parade itself in front of others as being 'righteous,' and upstanding. Man's sinful nature is so sinister and subtle and the man (or woman) who are controlled by their sinful nature are totally unaware that their sinful natures are actually in control. Jesus exposed this hypocritical trait of man's sinful nature in Matthew 13:14-15: *"And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive;'¹⁵ For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them."*

This passage describes what our sinful natures are like. We listen when and where it suits us, but when God's Word cuts across an area of our lives that we cherish, we seem to be stone deaf. We are very verbal about the areas where we are obedient, and we criticize and ridicule others who aren't obedient in that specific area, but in the area where we are being disobedient, we are strangely silent, right? That's how the sinful nature operates, and that's why God, through His Word, counsels us to kill our sinful natures and have our spiritual natures revived. Romans 8:13 says, "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." In 1 Corinthians 15:32, the apostle Paul says, "I die daily."

God's Word tells us that if our sinful natures are still in control, even though we do many good things, attend church and even perform many miraculous deeds, we will be lost. What Matthew 7:21-23 states is very sobering: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"*

Our sinful natures must die. How do they die? They die when we surrender them to God and ask for His Spirit to dwell in us. When we realize how impossible it is to be intimate with God, while our sinful natures are in control, we will fall at the foot of God's throne and plead for Him to remove it from us and give us the full infilling of His Spirit. When His Spirit dwells in us, our sinful natures die. *"When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God."* {E.G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 173}

Therefore, dying daily to self is an act of our will. God graciously, mercifully and tenderly reveals to each one of us how destructive our sinful natures are to our eternal life. God graciously, mercifully and tenderly allows the consequences of sin to surface in our lives, and even cause us pain, to where we choose to crucify our sinful natures and not rest until they are completely dead. Once this has taken place in our lives, the new spiritual lives God has intended for each of us, can be born. Again, God's Word reiterates this theme: *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*⁷ *Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'*⁸ *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."* John 3:6-8.

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