

## **The Wednesday Word, April 5, 2017: Have You Met Brother Earnest Effort?**

Have you ever met Brother Earnest Effort? He's a decent soul, but alas, he has not been established in the Gospel Truth. All he knows to do is 'to do'! He makes his efforts and his heart condition the centre of his Christian life.

Without knowing it, he is brewing a lethal cocktail for himself! After continually taking stock of himself, he sees the ongoing rottenness of his very being. After all, he lives with himself. Everywhere he goes — there he is. He has tried rededicating himself to God so often that his re-dicator has just about worn out.

He still sees his secret thoughts, and they are not good (Romans 7:18). He knows the cesspool of filth that bubbles up at the most inopportune moments (Romans 3:10). He gets deeply troubled by the continual plague of lusts and wicked thoughts that bombard him, but instead of looking to Christ for deliverance he looks for comfort and aid everywhere else.

He tries more discipline and gets up earlier to have his quiet time. He volunteers to help with the feeding program for the homeless. But still, everywhere he goes, there he is!

And Brother Earnest Effort is a member of a church. He sometimes hands out the bulletins and is on the greeting committee. His church is full of nice decent people who talk about the Christian life, but it's a dangerous church..... in fact, it's lethal...it does not have the Gospel on centre stage.

Brother E. Effort takes his seat each Sunday and week after week Pastor Practical Preacher gets up and teaches the folks how they can have a better life. He shares how they can be debt free; how to succeed in life; how to have a better marriage; why they should not gossip; five steps to victory, how to overcome a bad temper and the like. But Brother Earnest Effort, while he appreciates all the new information he gets each week, remains deeply anguished, troubled and untouched.

Brother Effort agrees with Pastor Preacher. He looks again at his heart and is overcome with guilt. He says to himself, "Pastor Preacher is quite right, I shouldn't gossip and judge; I shouldn't get annoyed and angry with people the way I do, but after all this time I still keep falling into these things. There's only one thing that must be the matter, I must not be saved!"

After several years of this, Brother Earnest Effort feels so condemned that he eventually drops out of Church life, separates himself from the church assembly and joins the ranks of the casualties and spiritual cripples! One of the ironies of the whole thing is, after wounding him with legalistic subjectivism, the church then condemns him because he dropped out. Pastor Preacher then says with pious voice, "He went out from us, but he was not of us; if he had been of us he would surely have remained with us." Thus Brother E. Effort is discarded and left to wonder why it is that the Church is the only army on earth that buries their wounded!

What Brother Effort was not taught, however, was that actual guilt free victorious living can only be realized through continual exposure to the Gospel. That's one of the reasons why the Gospel is the essential message for believers. But Brother Earnest Effort never really got to hear the

Gospel because Pastor Practical Preacher pandered to the subjective cravings of his congregation.

Brother Effort, therefore, never grasped the good news that the big issue wasn't him, but rather the Lamb!

Is the Lamb, a suitable sacrifice, —that's the issue!

Was Jesus qualified to die?

Was He sinlessly perfect?

In the Old Testament, the High Priest examined the lamb. If the sacrificial lamb was found to be without blemish or impediment, it was reckoned as a fitting sacrifice, and the guilty party went free. The priest examined the Lamb, not the one who brought the lamb. If the lamb was accepted, then the one who brought the lamb was accepted and reckoned as innocent in virtue of the fact that the lamb would die as his substitute.

So it is with us today. Our Lamb, The Lord Jesus, has been slain and because of His shed blood, all charges against us have been dropped. The Father has examined His Son and is satisfied. His sacrifice has been accepted, and as proof of this, Christ has been raised from the dead. This is the basis of the guilt-free life! God sees your lamb, the Lord Jesus, without flaw, spot or imperfection and that, therefore, is the way He sees you. Your sins have been utterly purged by the perfect blood of your perfect High Priest and by that same perfect offering you have been perfected and sanctified.

And that's the Gospel Truth!