

Faltering and Fruitfulness

My friend Kin recently texted me to rejoice in the prosperity of his two children, now faithful husbands and fathers. ‘What if I had believed the lie that had been written over my life. O amazing God, how great are Your wonders...’ Kin referred to how Jesus’ death and resurrection set him free from what seemed like his destiny as a ‘gay man.’ Decades earlier, he faltered while preparing for the pastorate and had a homosexual relationship with a fellow seminarian, a secret kept from his young wife.

The couple’s emergence from faltering to fruitfulness is nothing less than the real power of the Gospel: dying to secrets and lies, taking root in a healing community as a couple, then living in the light of Jesus’ prevailing grace. Struggles sure, but none so great as to break the bond of fidelity that Kin forged with his wife and family. Like most of us, Kin faltered, but he fell forward habitually into the One who transforms our brokenness into something beautiful for Himself.

That is in sharp distinction to last week’s Newsweek’s article—‘Ex-Ex Gay Pride’-that featured John Paulk, ex-spouse of RHN director Anne and a former Exodus leader. The article frames John’s recent public return to homosexual practice (thus breaking his vows to wife and kids) as noble, a prophetic witness of the inevitable. John and others ‘testify’ of ‘living a lie’ by not being true to their real

‘gay selves’; they employ the language of abuse and self-loathing to describe a Christian culture in which they, in Paulk’s words, ‘did not change one iota.’

The only thing that has changed is a spiritual culture that now removes the Cross from the equation of how we become fruitful disciples of Jesus Christ. John Paulk and the like have faltered unto fruitlessness and death—the flat-lining that occurs in those who fail to surrender their brokenness to the broken God who is at the same time the Risen Lord. Persons like Kin who embrace the Cross are transformed at the core of their being. To confess anything less crucifies Him afresh.

Nothing new under the sun. The disciples faltered after Jesus died. Though they had heard accounts of the Resurrection, they still did not get who Jesus actually was. En route to Emmaus, they talked a good game but could not recognize the Risen Christ walking among them. (LK 24: 13-35) Why? They had yet to grasp the mystery of the Cross: His surrender unto death in order to live, their (and our need) to surrender unto His life, whatever the cost, in order to be raised with Him.

Only when the Risen Jesus clarified to the disciples the link between His suffering and His glory ‘did their hearts burn within them’ (v. 32); only when Jesus re-presented His Crucifixion by breaking bread among them were the disciples eyes open to the Risen Christ (vs. 30, 31). Any disciple seeking to be fruitful must face his brokenness before the Crucified, often longer than he might like. We too must go through Calvary in order to discover the new life He offers us.

John Paulk and others preach good news of their own design, a gospel alien to Jesus Christ. May our hearts burn with a deeper passion for the One who transforms our faltering into fruitfulness. May we agree with Kin this Easter, proclaiming joyfully from our depths: 'O God, how great are Your wonders!

'The death of Jesus is nothing if we have not died with Him; the resurrection of our Lord is nothing if have not been raised with Him.' Emil Brunner