



Priesthood of All Believers in Action Today: Confrontation, Conviction, Contrition ...vs Condemnation...and Salt

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We are really in unprecedented times. Other seasons have certainly been bleak in various places at various times, but I don't think that we have seen this massive degree of crookedness on a worldwide scale...or at the very least it has not been this openly displayed. If we ever wondered what it would be like when black is called white, and white is called black, I think we are experiencing it now.

Really, how do we know for certain what is going on in the Ukraine? One day we hear that Putin is waging war against the civilians, and the next that Russian troops are bringing in humanitarian aid. In Wisconsin, as in other states, we have evidence of wrong doing in our election process, yet that evidence hasn't yet seemed to result in any correction and accountability. We hear of the proposals to legitimize LGBTQ and transgendering, even of small children, while as Believers, we believe in honoring the life and gender YHWH gave us and we are penalized for it. One day we hear that masking, vaxing and social distancing are essential for our health and the next we see those in authority who do not observe these things, or that it has been proven that masks don't work. Perhaps the largest such issue now is that so many medical professionals have promoted the vaccinations and refused to do early treatment and that millions of people have trusted them even while many have died. Now, more and more evidence surfaces that there is potential for fatal consequences to millions and millions of people around the world.

The Word carries a severe warning to those who feed this confusion.

*Woe to those who call evil good and good evil,
who put darkness for light and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!*

*²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
and shrewd in their own sight!*

Isaiah 5: 20-21 ESV

Though we can say that we know judgement begins in the House of God we also really don't like to face that on a personal level in our own assemblies! Part of the problem comes back to roost in churches and church leaders who have soft pedaled the Word to make it more palatable to the seekers. Some would say it also has to do with the "political licensure" of being a registered non profit that dictates what is taught more than His set apart (Holy) Word. *It seems so harsh to call evil for what it is!*

I have seen a recent book from Barna Research Group that is addressing the problem of many pastors today who realize they suffer from a lack of credibility. I have just recently spoken with a group of people who specifically said that if they hear that someone believes they have been called by God to minister, they are immediately suspicious and fearful of abuse of authority. I do recognize that there are people who abuse such a thing and misrepresent themselves and that many have suffered spiritual abuse at their hands. Abuse of this authority would seem to disqualify such a shepherd to me. I do think caution is wise, but to first suspect someone shows how far we have fallen. They were unable to clearly define how they would practice discernment and recognize someone who really HAD been called to minister. Though I haven't read Barna's book, I **suspect** it may have to do with this concept, of having moved away from the hard Truths of the Word in order to persuade people to remain, and lacking strength of conviction in shepherds and sheep of what it looks like to honor God. It may also be that the people really don't want to hear truth, but want their ears tickled, and so a leader who teaches truth will lack credibility. Are we there yet?

*For the time is coming when **people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,***

2 Timothy 4:3 ESV

If we are unable to look at sin and call it out, not meaning in an abusive or unkind way, but in an exhortation as a mature believer or a good shepherd, how can anyone know they have sinned and need to repent? How could we mentor or disciple anyone effectively if we simply overlook what our Elohim calls sin, and pass it off in some lesser way? We will grow weak and weary as He will not be able to strengthen those who do not repent! And if we do not genuinely repent, we face His **condemnation**; a permanent separation from our Loving Father. I think He grieves over every lost one! So do His Shepherds. Genuine repentance requires first **conviction** of having done something wrong, to be followed by **contrition**. Our Elohim dwells not only in the High Holy Place, but also within those who are contrite, a word we don't hear much today.

For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name *is* Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy *place*, With him *who* has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to **revive the heart of the contrite ones.** Isaiah 57:15 NKJV

So as we look at our role as believers, from a Hebraic perspective, we look for the continuity in what was taught as a physical picture of spiritual truth in the Levitical Priesthood that we can apply as part of the Priesthood of all Believers. It was among the roles of the Priesthood to teach discernment to the people, as we are to do today. If we don't, who will? Those pastors who realize they lack credibility....for the wrong reasons?

Moreover, they [Priesthood] shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the profane and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. And in controversy, they shall stand in judgement and they shall judge it according to my judgements; and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies, and they shall hallow my sabbaths. . Ezekiel 44:23-24

*As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, **to be a holy priesthood**, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4-5*

"The contrite one" phrase comes from the Hebrew root word 'daka.' It also implies "to crush" or even to pulverize. It can be said that the contrite are crushed or pulverized. This is really a positive thing, as it is their pride that gets irreversibly crushed. However, the crushing events of life do not automatically make us contrite. It is possible for the result to be either of two extremes—bitterness or genuine contrition. That is the critical point.

Consider David and the many psalms written when he had to face the consequences of his sin, especially Psalm 51. He made no attempt to excuse his sin; he made no effort to defend his conduct; he did not complain about the righteousness of God's law for condemning him. He felt "guilty"—because he was guilty and he faced it directly.

When a person sins, his only hope when crushed with the consciousness of sin is the mercy of God; and that mercy will be earnestly pleaded for deeply and sincerely. And then, our Father will be there to revive us. This was the emotion flowing from David as he realized his sin.

*Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones
which You have broken[crushed] may rejoice. Psalm 51: 8*

I really wondered about this rejoicing with broken bones image until I understood that it reflects the crushing of our self sufficiency, our prideful conviction that WE know best. Now I understand that confrontation of sin, leads to conviction of having done wrong, which hopefully leads to contrition/being crushed, and repentance in humility, which allows our Father to strengthen us in Him. This strengthening process permits us to stand in the light of the battles we face in a world where black is now white, and white is now black; where evil is called good, and good called evil.

And one final thought for today; in part quoted from my article on **What Shepherds Need to Know about Salt**, at our website.

***You are the salt of the earth:** but if the salt has lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?
It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out,
and to be trodden under foot of men. Matthew 5:13 KJV*

Zodhiates Hebrew Dictionary defines salt, from melah, Strong's #4417 as "powder, salt as easily pulverized and dissolved." It is from a root word, #4415, which means "to eat salt, have maintenance" and is related to #4414, its primitive root which means: to rub to pieces or pulverize; to disappear as dust; to salt whether internally or externally; salt, season, temper together, vanish away."

Salt is a useful substance in so many ways: flavor, preservation, even fertilization. It is a metaphor for who we are as Believers, dare I say for who we are as part of the Priesthood of all Believers? You may know that salt was required with every sacrifice in a covenantal plan. When used correctly, it preserves and protects and increases enjoyment.

But salt is not really useful until it is pulverized or crushed.

It may seem to vanish away in water, yet we know it remains in suspension in fluid. If overdone (abused?) salt will render land infertile.

If we are to be the salt of the earth, and part of the Priesthood of all Believers, we must expect to be crushed, pulverized and brought to contrition and genuine repentance as often as our Abba sees we need it. We may play a very visible role and we may be in an invisible one. This process renders us fit for Him to use among other believers and in the world so desperately in need of people who are crushed and contrite. Thus empowered and strengthened by our God, we can mentor, disciple and do battle with the forces of wickedness in His Name.

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