



OUR SPIRITUAL HOUSE

Let us liken our human spirit to a large run-down house. At conversion we let the Lord into the hallway. The Holy Spirit joins us, but the house is a series of floors with many rooms, basement, grounds and even an occupied roof void. The first problem with our house is that every room is locked, so access to any room from the hallway and corridors needs a key.

But the problems worsen. Every window in the house is open and all of the rooms are full of both useful items and useless trash and junk. We even have some exquisite pieces of furniture in some of these rooms, but inevitably much of the contents have been spoiled over the years by intruders coming in at will through the windows, vandalizing the rooms. Some of these intruders are dark and bent on trashing our beautiful house. We have been unable to stop this happening, because we need to get in to the rooms to close the windows.

Our Lord and the Holy Spirit need our co-operation to open all the doors, clean out the rooms and close all the windows. This will stop the evil and vandalism. Then we can redecorate together.

This process is more complicated than it appears, because we no longer have all the keys to all the rooms. They have been lost or thrown away long ago. So we need the Lord's help in finding the keys to open the doors, and to then close the windows and clean out the rooms.

The final problem is that the rooms have a number of adjoining internal doors, so it is possible for damage to seep from one room to another. This means the vandals are able to move freely through many of the rooms undetected, without even going into the corridors.

How Has This State of Affairs Ever Happened?

At our conversion the Lord possesses the hallway of our house. What follows in our subsequent walk with the Lord is a journey through the house entering every room and closing the windows, then cleaning up and redecorating the room, for us and the Lord to occupy and use.

Viewed a different way, we are all on a life journey toward increasing sanctification or maturing wholeness into greater holiness. We do this by seeking to occupy more and more of the person we are created to be. On this journey toward greater maturity whole new areas of our lives (e.g. rooms) are brought under the possession of Christ and ourselves.

Each room will have a name or word over the door, like womanhood/manhood, gifting or childhood abuse. Sometimes the room is about a teacher from school, a car accident or bereavement, or a moment of our own failure. Perhaps the name is an emotion, like revenge, self-hate or shame. Some people will have heavy things to deal with while others not so much. In cleaning the room, we keep what we want of its contents, taking these into our future, while throwing out the rest. These areas or rooms of our lives are then accessible to both us, the Lord and the Holy Spirit. In moving into these rooms we are recovering what has been previously lost to both us and to the Lord.

At conversion none of us are able to give the Lord our whole house. The doors do not get spontaneously opened nor do all the windows get closed automatically. All of these matters await our journey into greater Christ-likeness. Some Christians want to pretend this all gets sorted at our conversion, but if this were true then holiness would not be a journey for any Christian. It would merely be an inherited state at conversion! Put another way, developing the 'mind of Christ' or

becoming mature in Christ would not be a life-long journey or battle, but merely an instant gift. Looking at the evidence of our lives, this is clearly not the case.

All of us enter the Kingdom of God with lots of our rooms ransacked and closed to us. We have closed most of these doors ourselves and in some cases we have thrown away the key because we do not want to go back there. Each room will be a different area of our lives that must now be brought under the Lordship of Christ if we are to grow up. We must all go through the pain of going back into the rooms to clean them out. Often Christ will be waiting for us in these places in our house.

All of the above activity is taking place in our spirit, which is our house and symbolic of the core of our being. It is also one of our links between the physical and the spiritual world. It is the receiving area or depository of much of the damage in our lives - that is, all the 'baggage' and its sin that we inherit or create ourselves during our lives (e.g. the junk in the rooms).

The battleground of our Christian lives will be to get as much of our house under His control as possible. But there is one further problem that resists us in this process. The biggest enemy of all in the house is the housemaid. She lives in the basement and has very strong opinions about what should and should not be done in the house, especially when it comes to cleaning it up! It is a constant battle to get her to do as she is told - she will always have a mind of her own. Our mind has acted as our housemaid all these years, supported by habits and expectations of ourselves, others and God. In the process of restoring the house, God will want to bring a different perspective that part of us will instinctively resist.

This problem is further compounded because the housemaid now has only some of the keys and even those she has are all muddled up. She lost the labels and does not want to sort them out or cooperate with a house renovation. She may even lie by claiming that she does not know where they are! Where we cannot get in to the rooms we will need the Lord's help. He will give us His perspective, for this is the 'key' to open the door and enter.

Once we get in to a room it is relatively easy to close the windows and clean the room. There will be lots of suitcases, chests and boxes as well as odd pieces of furniture. All of these items will have names on them. Say, in the room marked 'Revenge' a woman has a box called 'Uncle Tom' who raped her when she was nine. Another chest is marked 'teacher', and she was the woman who continually mocked her in class. Another room may be marked 'big sister' and will have a corner full of neglect where you felt unimportant when you were around her. You may find a room called 'Never Again', where you discover your self-curses litter the floor.

Some of the contents of each of the rooms you will want to keep and take into your future, like all your good memories of childhood, but much of it is there not because you wanted it, but because before you came to Christ you had no way of getting rid of it. Christ is your second chance. You and He will rename the room and redecorate it, so it is a place of redemption and more of who you are created to be can be recovered.

Types of Sin in Our House

From the very start of our Christian lives we are carrying around rooms full of baggage. All these areas of sin and baggage are covered by Christ from our first confession, but will not be specifically dealt with till we choose to do so. This baggage and its sin will take three forms:

- The most unusual is the INHERITED sin or baggage of our forbears. Most of this is unknown to us but all of us have some of this damage. We will not be held responsible for the actual sin of our forbears but we do all suffer the consequence of their sinful actions. This is a curse God has put in place on the parents in each generation. He hopes it will deter our parents from sinning, knowing that we, their children, will suffer (Ex 34.6-7, Lam 5.7, Ezk 20.4-5). We all need to resolve the consequences of this sin. Although most frequently we have just a little of this damage, there are some who have whole floors of their house to contend with. Just like all of us inherit good things from our families, we all also inherit some of their damage.
- Then there is the SIN AND ITS BAGGAGE THAT IS LAID ON US BY OTHERS. These are the things that have happened in our relationship with others that God never intended to be part of our experience. There are most commonly five types of abuse: verbal, emotional, physical, sexual and spiritual. There are also other areas of damage that we would not call abuse, but God knows it is the residue of something He had not intended us to experience. Much of this we are not necessarily consciously aware of, though some we obviously will be. God is eager to expose what is hidden, especially that which is getting in His way, sometimes even that which we think is already sorted. Some of this will probably be in the form of words and curses (Mat 10.26-27, Col 3.9, Tit 1.1, Ps 42.10).
- The third area is the sin or baggage we have COMMITTED AGAINST OURSELVES but which we have either forgotten about or have not realized that God calls it sin. It is our response to the people and circumstances of our life – often how we try to stay safe, to be acceptable or to survive. This sin will stand between us and God. We cannot specifically deal with all of it at conversion because there are many areas of our lives where we will need to repent in specific ways, and have to wait for the precise knowledge to be able to do so. This God promises to give us if we press hard after it (Is 59.2, Ezk 18.19-20, Gal 6.7, 1Chr 21.4-8). We often call this ‘sin against ourselves’. It is the damage we have done because of what others have done to us.

The Importance of Our Emotions on Our Healing Journey

Many Christians believe they have already sorted all of these things out, but the evidence of its presence in their life tells a different story. Sometimes we have merely said with our words that we are sorry for carrying, say, the revenge, but we never think of getting in touch with the feelings attached to the event. Often we do not want to - the feelings are far too painful. Yet in order for each room to be cleaned successfully the repentance must be felt as well as thought and we must let go of the emotion. Revenge, for example, will require that we lay down our ‘right of revenge’. The act of repentance must involve our whole being, so must include our feelings. It is essential that the cleaning out of the room is accompanied by the release of all the emotion that has been buried there as in a time capsule since the event.

This is the final part of our story about our run-down old house. Our feelings, like God’s and our spirit, are eternal. So the process of going into our feelings engages much more than just the toxic pain. It will also engage spiritual reality and God Himself, as and when we wish. Most of our feelings, because of the damage and sin of our past, lie locked away in some of these rooms. We must go in, find them and clean them out by letting them flood us. This part of our cleansing journey is essential for our growing relationship with God. When our feelings are not healed they prevent us knowing the fullness of who we are created to be.

Sin Against Ourselves

It is important to have a special note about this area of our lives. Most of us have at some time or another locked many of these rooms in our house ourselves. In doing so we have locked in not only the memories, but also all the feelings that went with the events. Since many of these feelings will be unpleasant, they will have festered and poisoned not only the room, but also other adjoining rooms in our house. So the damage we carry is not just what has happened to us, but what we have unwisely done to ourselves, to try to cope with what others have done to us.

Much of the time we do not want to again get in touch with these feelings because they have such painful or confusing associations. Yet to be totally free we must do the necessary surgery in our spirit, letting go of the toxic feelings by first touching into them - something we have probably either refused to do in the past, or have been unaware of their true presence. We must catch their scent, welcome them back and then by touching into them let them go forever. This is what we mean by thoroughly cleaning out a room.

In Summary

Bringing all these strands together, it is essential that we are willing to move in to the spiritual world, beginning with the opening up of our spiritual house. We all need to accept we have baggage locked away, often held captive by feelings we deny. Each room in our house needs entering and cleansing, and this will always involve our emotion, for our feelings always speak truth to us, unlike our minds.

To open these rooms we must first admit that our feelings are very damaged. They are like the cement that holds the bricks (e.g. the damage) in place. Bad feelings keep the bad memories alive. We first get the knowledge (the key), then we repent of the sin, then engage the feelings, giving them cleansing. In sweeping through the room and closing the windows to the Enemy we are able to stand more firmly, consistently, with the Lord. This allows us to remove our vulnerability to the Enemy and to ongoing damage. Also, as a result of these windows being closed, the Lord is able to occupy more of our house and our relationship with Him and ourselves continues to grow in wholeness and holiness.

(Please note the illustration of 'The House' is not our invention, nor is it intended to be a 'theology', but came as an idea while reading such passages as Lk 11 v 24 - 26, 11 Tim 2 v 20 -22, Matt 7 v 7-8, Ps 127 v 1, Matt 12 v 44, Mk 3 v 25, Acts 7 v 49, Heb. 3 v 6 etc.).