

He Loved Righteousness ... and Hated Iniquity

by Mose Stoltzfus

Denny's life and ministry were characterized by his love for righteousness, hatred of iniquity, and a burning and shining light that continues to inspire and guide others.

Scripture: Hebrews 1:8

Topics: "Faithfulness To God", "Christian Leadership"

Description

Mose Stoltzfus reflects on the life and impact of Bro. Denny at his funeral service, highlighting their unique and divine relationship that transcended mere friendship. He shares how Bro. Denny's love for righteousness was evident in his devotion to God, his passion for preaching the gospel, and his unwavering commitment to living out the teachings of the Bible. Despite their differences, their unity in purpose and understanding allowed them to navigate challenges in ministry together. Mose also acknowledges Bro. Denny's deep grief over the state of the church and challenges the listeners to consider following Bro. Denny's example of faith and dedication to God.

Transcript

Based on the message given by Mose Stoltzfus at Bro. Denny's funeral service

I find it incredibly difficult to put thirty-plus years into a few minutes of expression, in great feebleness. I want to read Isaiah 57:1

The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.

It has been thirty plus years since I found Bro. Denny and his wife sitting hippie style on the floor at a wedding reception in Sparta, Tennessee. My wife and I were invited to their home the next day for a meal, and I remember Bro. Denny trying to learn how to run a woodstove and stirring a fire with a poker. I remember how Denny had awakened to feed the fire in the middle of the night and God had spoken to him, "Denny, go stir up the churches."

I asked him, in light of something happening here in Lancaster County, whether he would consider such a thing as working together, and I think his answer was, "I'd go anywhere to preach the gospel." I have found that to be a true statement, from the dark, difficult regions of Africa, to all over the US and Canada and other parts of the world.

Our relationship was incredibly unique. Different ones have come to me through the years and referred to our relationship as a near husband/wife relationship, and I would have to say that it had its similarities to that type of relationship. It was divine, I believe. I remember coming home from Tennessee that time--in December it will be 31 years--and there was something that held my spirit in the hand of God and that seemed that something was about to happen, or that God had done something in our hearts that was not human. I still believe that very firmly.

We were very different men, but that difference was complimentary to each other, as I knew that whatever I faced or the mistakes I made, Bro. Denny loved me ... and I loved him.

And that paved the way for many, many years of being able to understand each other, to the point of it not being a battle for me to know what he was thinking, and it was not a battle for him to know what I was thinking. We'd get into many difficult situations in church work, and as we would confer together, our hearts would often blend in an amazing way to come up with an answer for a situation we were facing. I thank God from the depth of my heart for this great privilege which was beyond any words I can put together.

It was a great difficulty, that--due to the growth of the congregation at Charity Christian Fellowship--Denny and I separated into two congregations. Many men have considered it a mistake that we were separated in our ministry, and we have to let that in the hands of God, but that is certainly a possibility.

Concerning Denny's input in my life, first of all, I was wounded a bit and struggling with things, 30 years ago. He came from a very different perspective--not coming from my traditional background--which was a tremendous help to me in not becoming a bitter man, and to respond rightly through difficulties, condemnations, or rejections. I often cried to him in those difficult times and he led me to think and feel right about all those things and to continue on. I remember many times when we had difficult experiences, trying to find some broader acceptance in the body of Christ, and would get a closed door. Denny would say, "Well, we'll just go on. We'll just go on and do God's work."

Last night a verse came to my mind in Hebrews 1, where it is speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ:

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

I am not trying to make Denny a messiah or lift him up above that which is right to do, but I would only like to explain his love for righteousness as I knew it through the years.

This man loved righteousness, beyond a shadow of doubt in my heart!

First of all, he taught us much of the centrality of Jesus Christ. His love for the Lord Jesus was expressed in many messages and conversations. Denny loved righteousness!

He often preached out of Colossian 1, "in whom, of whom" and he would go on with that in the centrality of Jesus Christ. He loved the book of Isaiah and often preached out of it, and he loved Isaiah's vision when he saw God high and lifted up and His train filled the temple, and he saw his own undoneness. Denny compared that to our human experience as we saw the holiness of God. Bro. Denny loved the attributes of God and preached them here in Bible School, and preached them in great detail.

Another attribute about him is that he loved the gospel. He had a hold of the gospel message in a concise way. For many years we took trips to New York City to Washington Square Park and I was always thrilled in my heart as he would get up and give a little description of his hippie life of smoking marijuana and living in sin and fornication, and how God changed his life from top to bottom. And he would put the gospel message in a concise way as the people sat and stood spellbound, many times, listening to the gospel story of the change made in this man. Many of the listeners would have had a hard time believing that God could change such a man.

Bro. Denny loved righteousness, in that he had an unparalleled devotional life beyond anything that I knew. When we travelled together, staying up late at night, he would still try to rise early so he could have his devotional time with the Word of God. When I first saw his Bible soon after we met, and saw the two year's worth of notes (the time in which he had spent in Hammond, Indiana, trying to find out who he was and what he believed), he had so many notes in his wide-margined Bible that it was beyond anything I had ever seen. I was touched and impressed by that.

He was a man that if it was in the Bible, he believed and sought to practice it. It didn't matter what it was ... whether about brotherhood or other Anabaptist doctrines that were a bit new to him when we met. He embraced them. Because he believed in a literal practice of the Word of God, when he came upon the holy kiss and footwashing, he embraced them and similar doctrines and they were no problem to him. If it was in the Bible, then it was in his life and with a passion he sought to practice them. His Baptist friends did not understand this at times and were intimidated or embarrassed by it, but he would often challenge them, "Is it in the Bible?"

Bro. Denny loved his family, and would begin to pray for the little one as soon as pregnancy was discovered, before it came into the world. He also loved the "remnant" people--those coming out of apostatizing churches-- and had a heart for them and was quick to answer a phone call from anywhere if it was from someone from his Evangelical background who was reading the Bible and trying to find their way. I tended to minister more to people from my background, the Plain People, and he tended towards his background. But we often crossed over and this helped to balance us out.

But I must also say, and without any apologies, that Bro. Denny HATED iniquity. He was a hateful man, if I can say it that plain and boldly. He HATED iniquity! He hated sin. He hated the world.

I was often tremendously challenged as we went out to witness in the streets in the local fairs and places like that, and he would walk up to the professed "Christian" world that was there to enjoy the night on the town, and ask them whether they hated the world ... and they didn't know what to say in light of the fair and the rides and the gambling dens and the much food, etc. He HATED iniquity!

And he hated his past life. I remember him looking at the cover of a magazine, I believe it was Time or Newsweek, when Jim and Tammy Bakker's sin and corruption came to light. He picked it up threw it back down, saying, "I can't read this stuff; it's defiling due to my past life." That's how he hated iniquity.

He also hated mediocrity. He hated complacency. He was a fervent man, and when he sold out to God, he gave it all he had. He HATED mediocrity. He pled against it, he prayed against it, he preached against it, he talked against it. It was always so refreshing to take a look at ourselves and see where we may have been slipping in material pursuits or anything when we had those types of conversations together.

He was a great visionary. I was that type of person myself, and what a joy it was to sit down and talk and dream together. In 1993 we purchased a tent and put together a trailer with three prayer rooms and would travel together preaching in the US and Canada. Later we did some separately, and also did some local tent meetings. We would alternate preaching. Afterwards, we would sit together and talk about what God was doing. In those days, much of our talk was positive--men were calling for help and men were responding and repenting and seeking victory over sin. There was a revival going on across the land--which we did not start, by the way, but was well on its way before we ever met--and a seeking after righteousness and practical Christianity as the mainline churches deteriorated into worldliness. In those days much of our talk was positive as we shared together.

But I also have to tell you that Bro. Denny had a period of grief. And if he would have been here these days, and if we would sit back in the office here or in some living room, and reminisce about what has happened and the people that have come through, there would be a deep grief on our brother's heart. He was grieved at the departing of the church. He was grieved at the changes people made. He was grieved at the drift that was so obvious and evident, both on the outside and the inside.

The question I have at the close is, "Who is going to follow his faith?"

I don't think he would be interested at all that you would pay your respects to his frame, his dead body. My plea is that you consider his faith, his example of life. And that grief can be turned into joy when he ends up meeting you across that great beyond.

1 Corinthians 15:26 says, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." That has been destroyed for Bro. Denny. He awaits the great resurrection day when his spirit shall unite with a new body and he will be entire and whole for all eternity.

If I were to put an epitaph upon his gravestone, it would be that which was said of John the Baptist:

He was a burning and shining light.~

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