

Seeing God Through Suffering

Lessons from The Book of Job

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Chapter 1

The Purpose of God in Suffering

What is the purpose of God in suffering -- as revealed to us in the book of Job? That's an important question for which we must find an answer -- not only if we are to understand the book of Job -- but it is important if we are going to understand The New Testament revelation on the same subject. Why does God allow His people to go through suffering?

Clearly, when Job was going through his great trial, he did not understand the purpose for his suffering. But he eventually would understand. And because his story is recorded for us in the inspired Word of God, we also can know the purpose for which Job suffered.

And so what I want to do is to begin at the end -- I want to first read the END of the book of Job. For it is there that our question is answered -- it is there that God reveals His purpose behind Job's suffering, but it is also there that we find revelation as to why followers of Jesus Christ are allowed to suffer. Once we find that answer we can then go through the story leading up to that conclusion, and it will give us definition and meaning.

How many understand that God ALWAYS has a purpose? He's not just making things up as He goes along. God is not indifferent to us; God isn't confused. God knows exactly what He's doing -- even though when we are in a great trial, we often don't understand what God is doing.

There are many people who suggest that the conclusion that we ought to draw from The Book

of Job is that God will never bring meaning or purpose to what He allows, or that He will never reveal to us why we are suffering. But most who say that are thinking in terms of God explaining how our suffering and trials affect our natural lives. For example, if I lose my job, it is easy to try to calculate how this will impact my future in the nature realm. But the purposes of God are far beyond that. So, while God may have a secondary purpose in the natural realm for what He does or allows, His primary purpose is spiritual – God desires to use all thing to reveal Himself to us. Thus, if we focus upon our natural lives, and ask God for answers there, He will often be silent. HIS focus is otherwise. Indeed, this fact is part of what we are going to see is revealed at the end of The Book of Job.

So, rather than suggest that God will not reveal to us the purpose for which we suffer, we are going to see that the Bible already reveals it – and that if we can discover that purpose – the need for answers regarding the impact of our suffering upon our natural lives will fade into the background.

God showed Job exactly the purpose for which he suffered. And at that point, Job was satisfied. All of the questioning and arguing ended. Indeed, all through the New Testament we are told why Christians must suffer.

The Purpose and Greatness of God

And so let's get right to our question: Why did Job have to suffer? And why do WE have to suffer?

At the end of The Book of Job -- in chapter 42 -- that purpose is revealed. The purpose of God in Job's suffering was simply this: That Job, by losing himself to God in his suffering by faith, might SEE GOD HIMSELF. Or to put it into NT language: God allowed Job to suffer in order to bring Job into an inward realization of God Himself.

Now notice: This purpose of God does not, "just happen." It does not, "just happen" – even if a person suffers. No. It is possible to suffer but to resent God; sidestep God's purpose, or even reject it. The key is mentioned above: A person must be willing, "lose his life, in order to find it."

If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matt. 16:24-25)

What we see here is NOT a surrender to suffering. No. Rather, it is a surrender to GOD while in the suffering. That is indicated by the words, "for MY sake."

Job DID lose his life in surrender by faith to God. Now, he was not born from above in the NT sense, but his experience, and the spiritual principle revealed, is exactly this NT Truth.

What does it mean to, "lose your life for Jesus' sake?" It means to give yourself to Him – to abandon yourself to Him unconditionally. We can begin this by asking Him, "to do whatever it takes," to bring us into the fullness of His purpose.

Often we limit, "losing our lives," to that which is material. Well, God might allow us to lose that which is material. But even if He does allow that – and He did with Job – losing that which is material, in itself, cannot accomplish the purpose of God. Only if we open ourselves to God by faith – through our loss and suffering -- can the real work begin.

This is about an inward realization and relationship with God through Jesus Christ. For that to be possible, we must lose our self-ownership and our self-righteousness. But as noted, we cannot simply DO that – we have to open ourselves by faith and ask God to do it IN US – no matter what it takes. That commitment alone – if we mean it – is how we being to LOSE our lives to Christ for HIS sake.

And what WILL it take? It will take a work of the Cross -- a work that will bring death to all that you are IN YOURSELF. But we must also remember that if we lose our lives to Christ that we will FIND HIM as our life. And along with finding Christ as our LIFE we will find Christ as our LIGHT. In short, I will begin to SEE JESUS CHRIST – and to the extent that I do see Him, I will be set free. I will begin to understand the purposes of God.

This is what happened to Job. He came to the place where he gave himself to God. And when Job gave himself to God -- he SAW GOD.

This is utterly contrary to human thinking. Indeed, while we are in these trials -- are we ever OUT of them? -- while we are in these trials nothing may make sense. It might seem as if there could not possibly be any good purpose. It may seem as if God is indifferent. He may seem

to our understanding to be unfaithful. But things will seem like that because we do not yet SEE JESUS CHRIST. Begin to see Jesus, and as was the case with Job, you no longer have the questions you had before. And you will begin to realize that God is simply doing exactly what He has promised to do in His Word.

Impact of Seeing Christ

Seeing Jesus Christ is not a matter of using your imagination to muster up a picture of Christ in your mind's eye, or from out of your imagination. Neither is it some sort of vision. No. Rather, it is an inward realization. It is of the spirit of God. And when we begin to come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ the impact upon us will be more than intellectual or emotional. It will renew our minds according to the Truth – it will change us towards God and give us a perspective that is completely different towards all else – God's perspective.

We see in Job 42, which is at the end of Job's trial, that God did begin to speak to him. But this was more than words. As God spoke, He was revealing Himself to Job in an inward way. God revealed Himself to Job as being sovereign, almighty, and beyond anything that Job could have imagined. And of course, when God revealed Himself to Job, Job felt very small in his own eyes.

When a person begins to see Jesus Christ, God does not need to command them to be humble. No. Seeing Christ will make us humble. Why? Because of His greatness. We will see that we are nothing – but we will rejoice in that fact.

Seeing Jesus Christ means seeing the Truth. It is that simple. And the Truth is that He is all and we are nothing. That will result in true humility. But how many understand that TRUE humility is NOT the result of you and I putting ourselves down? True humility is NOT the result of us taking, "a spiritual cat of nine tails," and hitting ourselves over the back with it -- so that we can, "prove to God," that we are, "really humble." People for the last 2000 years have tried to come up with things that they could do, or practices that they could involve themselves in, to make themselves humble, or to appear humble, or to prove to God that they are humble. How many understand the moment you try to do that you are walking in self-righteousness? If you try to make yourself humble you are trying to establish your own righteousness. True humility is never the result of human effort. True humility is the result of seeing the TRUTH about Jesus Christ -- HIS greatness.

This is why, when God calls somebody to Jesus Christ, that absolutely they will see the love and forgiveness and the redemption of God in Him. But that same light is going to show how much they NEED Him. That same light is going to show us for who we are in Adam. It HAS to – it's LIGHT! It's not a discriminating Light. It's Truth. And so you have to be willing to accept the WHOLE Truth. We don't need to be down on ourselves. And it would be folly to exalt ourselves. You meet Jesus Christ and you will see your true condition, and you'll want to run to Him as Savior.

When Job saw God he saw he was nothing. And this realization set him free. But his freedom was

anchored in seeing that God was ALL – and that God was GOOD.

The Need to Know Christ

In Job 41, God begins to reveal Himself to Job. In chapter 42, we begin to see the impacts. Yet notice: At no time did God actually reveal to Job the answers to his suffering. God did not come down and say to Job, “This is the reason you are suffering.” Nope. Rather than reveal to Job reasons and answers, God revealed HIMSELF to Job.

This is essential to see. I think most of us want INFORMATION from God as to the facts regarding our suffering -- as to why we are suffering; as to what we should DO -- or what we should NOT DO. Or maybe we ask what we did to get ourselves in this mess. But rather than simply give us those facts or INFORMATION, God wants to give us a REVELATION -- OF HIMSELF.

This is actually why God is usually SILENT when we are in the midst of a trial. We may pray, “Lord, if You would just tell me what You want me to do! I would do it and we could put an end all of the suffering.” But God cannot answer that prayer because if we are praying it we would not be able to understand even if God did answer. Besides, the Truth on this matter is given in His written Word – the experience of Job is one place it is revealed. So you can take it as a principle – when God is silent to you it is because silence IS presently His answer. He wants us to abide by faith unto the revelation of Himself to us.

Christianity today is filled with false teaching. So many are blind to the desire of God to reveal

Jesus Christ IN His people – blind to the purpose of God to bring His people into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. Thus, what emerges from this blindness are teachings that are based on OTHER purposes that are not God's primary purpose – or perhaps based upon purposes that are completely contrary to the mind of Christ. There are false teachers who suggest that Christians merely need to find the right, "button," to push – in order to get God moving; in order to get God to deliver us from our trial.

Some people say, "Write a check to a ministry" -- "THAT will 'activate your faith.'" That is nonsense. If you believe and trust God, your faith already IS, "activated." Faith is either there or it isn't. God doesn't fall for that kind of baloney. And because He has a purpose from which He will not deviate, we can be thankful to Him that such things will never move Him from it.

Other people try to say that faith is, "a force," that you and I need to generate out from ourselves – that will then act upon God and move Him. That is heresy. Faith is NOT a force. Faith is a relationship. Others suggest that you can, by speaking, create the reality from God that you desire. They call this, "the word of faith." No. We cannot speak and by our words move God. Rather, we need to HEAR God – and be moved BY HIM.

There are many professing Christians who have no place in their understanding for the silence of God. And yet God was silent to Job for a long time. It did not matter how much Job cried out and desired to hear from God – God remained silent. We do not know for how long. It could have been years.

But there came a time that God did begin to reveal – not answers to Job – but God began to reveal HIMSELF to Job. What made this possible? What made it possible was that God had finally brought Job to the place where Job saw he was nothing. This is gathered up in Job 42:1. Job says:

“I know that You can do everything, and that no thought can be withheld from You....Therefore I've uttered those things that I understood not -- things too wonderful for me - - which I knew not.” (Job 42:5-6)

We will see much more about this later, but for now, note that Job was basically saying, “I did speak the Truth – but I did not understand what I was speaking. It was beyond me.” In fact, God Himself agreed. He says that Job spoke the Truth. God said, “My servant Job has spoken rightly of Me.” (Job 42:7)

Now how is it possible to speak the Truth about God, and yet for what you speak to be beyond you? That is possible, indeed, it is going to be the case, if we know the Bible intellectually, and yet have NOT seen Jesus Christ.

Of course, the best teacher in the world, “sees through a glass darkly.” Every believer, to one degree or another, believes and teaches what is beyond them. Even if a person has come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ there is always eternally more of Christ than any of us will know in this life. Therefore the problem arises, not because Jesus is beyond us – but it arises if we think we DO know all there is to know about Him.

Job essentially confessed that he thought he KNEW because, "he had all the Bible verses" – and of course, he did not have a Bible -- but you know what I mean -- as it applies to New Testament Christianity. It is entirely possible for you and I to memorize the Bible, book and verse - - to know all the doctrines; to write about them -- but to NOT know God. Indeed, "knowledge puffs up." This is a danger.

Jesus told the Pharisees about that very possibility. He said, "You search the scriptures, thinking that in those scriptures there is eternal life. And they DO testify of Me." He said, "But you will NOT -- despite all of your bible knowledge -- come to ME that you may have life." (John 5:39-40)

But He also told them the real necessity: "You have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not." (John 5:38)

It is one thing to intellectually know the Bible, but another to have Christ in us and to know Him in an inward way. The letter kills, but that the spirit gives life. The Pharisees, who were the bible experts of Jesus' time, despite knowing every verse in the OT Bible that promised that God would send the Messiah, nevertheless looked at that Messiah straight in the face and said, "You have a devil!" And then they betrayed Him into the hands of the Romans. So much for Bible knowledge -- but without a heart for God; so much for knowing the written word -- without seeing Jesus Christ.

Make no question about it, the Pharisees were fully responsible. They were responsible for not

knowing because they COULD have known. That is the case with each of us. There are many people who are blind – and because they cannot see they are not to blame. But there are others who refuse to see – they have their hands over their spiritual eyes. They refuse to see anything that would convict them of sin and unbelief in themselves.

There were some Pharisees who did come to Christ, such as Nicodemus. He did want to see. And because of that – he did.

The trial to which Job was subjected was geared to bringing him to open himself to God. Not that he was knowingly closed to God. But none of us know what we don't know. Many of us don't know we are blind. Thus, God allows suffering to open our eyes – not to facts, or merely to doctrines, but to Himself.

It is entirely possible for any of us – as did Job -- to have uttered correct facts, right things – and to have even taught true doctrine about God. But it is possible to do all of that without any real spiritual understanding; without any real inward knowledge of God. As Job, we could, “utter things that are too wonderful for us” – we could speak rightly of God and yet to have never actually come into an inner realization of Jesus Christ.

Sometimes when I talk about the necessity of knowing Jesus Christ, and receiving revelation from God of Him in an INWARD way, people think that I'm discarding doctrine or that I'm saying the bible is unimportant. No. To the contrary, the Bible itself tells us this is our need – as I just read. The Bible itself tells us we need to receive

revelation from God; we need to see JESUS. And if we do, then what we do see in Christ is going to agree completely with the written Word.

There is only ONE Truth. The Bible is the written Truth. And any revelation that God gives of Jesus Christ is going to agree one hundred percent with the Bible -- because HE is the Living Truth.

Jesus said, "I am the Truth." He also said, "Thy Word is Truth." There is ONE Truth -- and so no matter how God is speaking, and revealing, it all comes back to the fact that God is speaking in His Son -- Who is the personification and embodiment of all Truth. The danger is to be blind to the Living Christ all the while worshipping the written Word.

And so teach Truth, believe Truth, and hold to sound doctrine -- absolutely. But in the end, it all comes back to knowing Jesus Christ in an INWARD way -- and that by the spirit of God.

Now With Wisdom of Words

Job's confession to God was the outcome of seeing the Truth -- yes, the Truth about himself -- but all in the light of seeing the Truth about God. He said, "I have uttered things about You, Lord -- things that I thought I understood -- but I didn't even realize how wonderful these things were -- because I did not understand how wonderful YOU ARE."

How many know that a lot of us sometimes think we've "arrived" -- because, "knowledge puffs up?" We pump ourselves full of biblical knowledge -- and I'm not down on that -- but we pump ourselves full of that, and we come out, and

we think we've, "arrived." We think, "We have IT now. We are God's man or woman. We are righteous. And we are able to teach."

Some of us are good at speaking. Some of us are good at explaining. All of that is fine. But how many understand that the Bible itself will tell us – and Paul said this – "I did not preach the gospel with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ be of none effect."? (I Cor. 1:17) He is saying that you cannot bring a person into the Truth through a logical argument. You can't make people see Jesus by using some kind of a psychological gimmick, or by stirring up their emotions, or by scaring them to death. All of those methods are what people in the WORLD use to move others; to captivate audiences, and convince people to a certain point of view. But unfortunately, it is also what many supposed preachers use: "If I can just help you to see my point of view; if I can just get you to concede that Jesus is Savior, then you'll be saved." No, you won't. Wisdom of words, and all of that, Paul called -- and he was being a little bit facetious, but there was a point to be made -- Paul called, "the foolishness of preaching." We are to preach, and we are to teach, but it is all supposed to be unto the end that people see that Jesus Christ is ALL, and that they are NOTHING. That is the CROSS:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

And so Paul said, "I'm not here to use clever arguments, or little clichés, or little anecdotes to amuse you. I'm not here to get up on Sunday

morning and give you 20 minutes of a comedy routine and then stick in a Bible verse here and there, so that after I'm done, you could say, 'Wow. That guy is a good preacher!' No. That is NOT what preaching is supposed to be about. Preaching is to be THE TRUTH OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS – Truth that will set people free.

In a very real sense, God had been, "preaching," to Job. And it brought Job – under the OT – to the Cross, by anticipation of the Christ. His confession about himself was the outcome of seeing the Truth – the outcome of seeing the Truth about God.

The Purpose of God

In Job 42:5, we come to this confession – it is the point to which the entire experience of Job builds:

***I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear:
but now mine eye sees thee. Wherefore I
abhor [myself], and repent in dust and ashes.***

So there it is. What is the purpose of God in suffering for His saints? That we may SEE GOD - that we may have an INWARD REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST. That is God's purpose in suffering.

God allows suffering to give us the opportunity that we would never have otherwise -- the opportunity, by faith, to lose our lives to Christ -- that we may come into true life in Him; a true revelation of Him. We must take our place in the Cross; we must let the suffering have its work – NOT by yielding to the suffering; NOT by yielding to circumstances – but let the suffering have its

work by yielding to God IN the suffering -- and asking Him to do whatever it takes to get His will in us.

Chapter 2

The Chastisements of a Loving Father

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was perfect (mature) and upright. And he was one that feared God and hated and avoided evil.” (Job 1:1)

This verse is from the inspired Word of God. Therefore, we can believe that this is a description of the true character of Job. But God Himself is going to repeat this in a few verses:

And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that [there is] none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? (Job 1:8)

God does not lie. So even though Job was as fallible as the rest of humanity, from the standpoint of where Job was in his walk with God – he was walking in the light that he had been given. Therefore, we can know for a fact that the trial of Job was NOT because Job had sinned. God did not allow Job’s trial because Job had strayed into unbelief. No. God said that Job was, “a good and upright man who feared God and hated evil.”

This is an essential point to see if we are to understand the Book of Job – for so much of this book presents an argument back and forth as to the reason WHY Job had to suffer. Job’s friends are certain it was because Job had sinned. Even Job wondered about that. But in the end, even though Job confessed he was without righteousness, he would not confess specific sin of which he had not been convicted. In other

words, Job insisted on being honest before the Lord.

There are many Christian people who confess sin, not because they have been convicted of sin by God, but to appease their false sense of guilt – or to try to keep themselves righteous. Confession of sin is never to be a religious exercise. It is never to GET forgiven all over again. No. The forgiveness of God for our sin is as final and complete as the Redemption of Jesus that paid for it. We are to confess sin for the same reason Job confessed it – because we know and believe that we are already forever forgiven. Therefore, confession is nothing more than a confession of the Truth – the Truth about our sin – but the Truth about Jesus Christ.

In the context of Job's present walk with God, God was able to say that he was a good and upright man. But as we have seen, that did not mean – nor does it mean for any of us – that Job knew God to the extent that God desired. Job had lots of INFORMATION. But he didn't have that much REVELATION. God wanted to take steps to set Job free. And that required a great trial.

Chastisement, Not Punishment for Sin

In Job 1:6 we read:

There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them, and the Lord said unto Satan, "From where have you come?" And Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and from in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

Then in verse 8:

And the Lord said unto Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job -- that there is none like him in the earth -- a perfect and upright man, one that fears God hates evil?"

There are a couple of things worth noting or repeating that we find in this verse. First of all, God Himself takes the initiative to call Satan's attention to Job. Can we see that? Indeed, God initiates the entire ordeal of Job at the hand of Satan.

This is important to see because it shows that Job's trial was not an accident. It was not bad luck. No. God actually USED SATAN. But as we read the dialog between God and Satan thorough out the first events of this book, we also see that Satan was permitted to do ONLY that which God allowed.

There are two truths here: One, God will use even Satan to accomplish His purpose in the life of a believer. Two, God will allow only that which suits that purpose. This is a Truth that is stated outright in Psalms:

Surely the wrath of man shall praise You. The remainder of wrath You shall restrain. (Ps. 76:10)

The principle here is clear – God will allow only that which He intends to use, and will restrain all else. Of course, this does not guarantee that any of us will submit to God – in which case He may allow further things to happen. And yet even those further things are intended to bring about

His purpose. The point is, God is not only in charge, but what He allows is FOR OUR GOOD IN CHRIST.

The second point worth repeating is that God Himself had stated that, "Job is a perfect and upright man, one that fears God and hates evil." In fact, later on, God also said to Satan, "You moved Me against Job WITHOUT CAUSE." (Job 2:3)

The point is this: The trial and suffering of Job was NOT because Job had sinned. God said so. God said the trial of Job was, "without cause" – in other words, it was NOT a punishment because Job had sinned. There is NO sense here of, "punishment," whatsoever.

This is an especially important point because so much of this book is an argument back and forth as to how a good and upright person can be allowed to suffer. Job had not sinned, but he was suffering as if he had sinned. How can this be if God is just? It cannot be, reasoned Job's friends. This is the question that perplexed Job, and it is certainly the question that most often perplexes believers in their walk with Jesus Christ.

Most of us continue to think that whether we are blessed or not blessed; whether we suffer or don't suffer – we continue to think that this is based on our works or our faith before the Lord. The book of Job teaches otherwise. But what is taught in the book of Job is affirmed continually throughout the New Testament. Believers who are walking by faith and in the Truth will suffering – they will suffer according to the will of God. But it is not punishment. It is CHASTISEMENT.

The Greek word translated, “chastisement,” in the NT means, “to train a child.” That is a completely different thought than what we normally consider to be PUNISHMENT. To CHASTISE is to train in LOVE, for the good of the child. And even though it might seem unfair at the time, and even though we might misinterpret it as punishment, it is not. God is seeking to set us free from ourselves and to bring us into relationship with Himself through Christ.

The Truth is, we could possibly be 100% in the will of God -- in the context of the light we have; we could possibly believe and obey God the best we are able to do so with the light given -- and yet God may allow a great trial to come upon us. I say that because it is so easy -- if we were sailing along, believing and obeying God – that if something horrible happens, to think that either God is unfair or that we surely must have done something wrong to merit this kind of, “punishment,” from God. Isn't that true? That's what we think. In fact, as noted, Job and his friends spent the better part of 40 chapters arguing that point back and forth. And yet it is not so.

Trials Purify Our Hearts

Often when we read the Bible we forget that the people involved in the story did not know what we now do know. The point being, that Job did not know the prequel to his suffering. He did not know about the conversation between God and Satan. He did not know – in until the end – what God was trying to accomplish. All he knew was that he was suffering.

Job reasoned and reasoned as to the CAUSE for his suffering. But there was NO cause – God said so. There was no cause that could explain Job's suffering. But there was a PURPOSE. And because God loves Job, and loves His people, God will allow what He intends to chastise us into the Truth.

The conversation between God and Satan did continue. We have seen that God pointed out to Satan that Job was a good and upright man -- one that feared God and hates evil. But in verse 1:9, Satan answered the Lord and said:

“Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him? And about his house, and about all he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face.”

Satan is basically saying to God, “Yes, Job obeys You. But he obeys You because it PAYS him to obey You.”

There was Truth to this accusation of Satan. I think that can be concluded -- because throughout the suffering of Job he deals with the contradiction that he had obeyed God and yet was seemingly cursed. Job had operated under the false assumption that his works earned or aborted the blessings of God. We might even say that such a belief constituted the doctrine of Job. It was wrong – but Job did not know it.

It is here that we begin to see how anyone of us, despite walking in the light we have from God,

could nevertheless be completely blind to the FULLNESS of the Truth. And that is exactly why God must chastise His children. He has to allow that which will bring contradiction to our false assumptions so that we might seek Him for the fullness of the Truth.

Chastisement is not merely unto INFORMATION. It is not so that we will find a better teaching to incorporate into our present doctrine for Christian living. No. Rather, chastisement is unto the purification of our heart. It is so that we might be given opportunity to set our heart fully upon God – for His interests no matter the cost.

In Job's case, and most of the time with believers, we do obey God because we think it pays us to obey Him. We may not say that out loud, but it is a deception that is built into our nature. It is how we function in our self-occupation. We may, in fact, operate that way so naturally that we are completely blind to it. Thus, God has to break that false motivation. He has to break it, not so much by a teaching – but He has to break it through the work of the Cross. We have to have it proven, not only TO us, but IN US, that there is nothing of value in us. We have to be shown that all that God has to give is given solely by His grace in Jesus Christ – and that this means that it is solely by the grace of God that we must receive.

This can be memorized as a doctrine. But we have to learn it by learning Christ. And learning Christ is, "the training," that constitutes chastisement in the life of the believer. If we learn Christ we will no longer obey God because it pays us to obey Him. We will obey Him because we love Him.

Of course, what we are talking about here is the need to lose our self-righteousness. We must stop living under the law. God wants to set us free. He wanted to set Job free.

The Sovereignty of God

The Lord said unto Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power. Only upon himself put not forth your hand." Notice again: Satan is only allowed to do what God gives him PERMISSION to do.

So, the Lord opened the hedge around Job. He lost everything. He lost all of his possessions -- his sons and his daughters -- and in verse 20 -- this was after he lost his possessions -- it says:

Then Job arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." In all of this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

But Satan wasn't satisfied. He came before the Lord again, and again God pointed out Job -- in verse 2:3:

"Have you considered My servant Job? That there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that fears God and hates evil? And still he holds fast his integrity, although you moved Me against him, to destroy him WITHOUT CAUSE."

We see here an idiom, or figure of speech, in Hebrew -- where even though Satan did all of this,

God Himself takes responsibility for it: "You did it, Satan, but I let you do it, so I'm taking responsibility for what happened." Again, God is always in control.

And Satan answers and says:

"Skin for skin. Yet all that a man has he will give for his life. But put forth Your hand now and touch his bone, and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face!" And the Lord said unto Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand. But save his life."

So in verse 7, Satan smites Job with sore boils from head to foot -- and it got to the point where even Job's wife suggested to him that he ought to, "curse God and die." But Job said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaking. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, but shall we not receive evil?" And in all of this Job did not sin with his lips."

So we have Job losing all of his possessions, and praising the Lord. And then we have him losing his health. Even then he praised the Lord.

The health part is especially difficult because once you are tormented by health problems, such as Job was, even your mind begins to rise up -- you cannot find rest; you can't hide from the trial anymore. The trial is upon your very person -- similar to the way in which Paul had a thorn in the flesh. And yet, at this point, Job is not sinning. He is holding fast his faith in God.

Children of God

We have read the story behind Job's suffering. We have seen that Job's suffering was NOT a punishment from God. Rather, it was the chastisement of a loving Father – so that Job would come to SEE GOD and be set free. This is what is taught all through the NT.

Let's turn to Hebrews 12. As we begin reading Hebrews 12. There we read:

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected [us], and we gave [them] reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened [us] after their own pleasure; but he for [our] profit, that [we] might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. (Heb. 12:5-12)

God does not PUNISH His children. He does CHASTISE. And there's a big difference between

the two. PUNISHMENT carries with it a sense of vindictive, punitive revenge. In other words, if God punished, when we do wrong God would always make us pay for it – but with no redemptive purpose. That's how PUNISHMENT works. CHASTISEMENT, on the other hand, could be because we have sinned, or have gotten out of the will of God. Sure. But CHASTISEMENT is always to bring us back IN. It is for our betterment. It is ALWAYS redemptive.

Read again the passage from Hebrews 12. Why do earthly fathers chastise their children? For their good. For their training in the right way. And earthly fathers are quite fallible. God is not. When He brings chastisement it is ALWAYS redemptive – even if we resist.

As noted earlier, if you are being chastised of the Lord, it could be because you are already IN His will – and He wants to give you a GREATER freedom in Christ. That was the case to a great degree with Job. But if you are being chastised by the Lord, it might also be because you have made some big mistakes and you are OUT of the will of God. Both are possible for a Christian. But the goal of God is always the same: To bring you back into His will -- or to keep you in it -- and to cause you, if you yield to Him, to see Jesus Christ.

I say this because a lot of people – when they get into trials; when things go bad as a son or daughter of God -- they begin to re-trace their steps and catalog all the mistakes they have made, and then they think, “Well, I got myself into this mess, and so I cannot expect God to help me get out, or to redeem me.”

But such reasoning is nonsense. For even if I have gotten myself in the mess I am in, God always wants us to turn to Him. That is what repentance and surrender means. Besides, our very nature as fallen humanity in Adam means that we are in a mess from which we have no escape through our own efforts, and no escape through our own merits. We have to turn to God. To throw up our hands and give up is unbelief.

Regardless of whether I believe my blessings are due to my good works, or whether I believe that my trials are due to my bad works – BOTH are born of self-righteousness. You have got to stop making YOURSELF the basis of anything before the Lord. Christ is the basis. And we are walking in the Truth only if we have ALL of our faith IN HIM.

Chastisement is Training

The reason God must chastise us is to break us of these errors in our heart. And as was the case with Job, to be plunged into a trial even when you have believed and obeyed God – that will begin to open our eyes.

Of course, we can choose to become bitter. But even then, God will not relent. He will continue to chastise because He loves us. This is why Hebrews says, “My son” -- and daughters are included – “despise not the chastening of the Lord.”

It is possible to DESPISE or resent what God is doing in our lives. Indeed, we probably will at first. Isn't that the common reaction of a child? Sure. But if we will continue to seek God at all cost, even the bitterness will be broken.

God is training us to live with Him forever. How? By bringing us into an inward realization of His Son -- God is teaching us CHRIST. That's how. And it's the only way it can be accomplished. God is a Heavenly Father who loves us. He is training his sons and daughters.

And that's what Hebrews is talking about: "My son, despise not -- the training in love; the chastening, in other words -- of the Lord. And do not faint when you are convicted by Him, or rebuked of him." Don't reject the conviction of God because it makes you look bad. Don't reject the conviction of God because you cannot accept that you could be that wrong. You ARE that wrong. We all are -- but instead embrace it.

There are a lot of people who get a certain concept of God in their head. And God comes along and He convicts them that they're in error -- but they won't budge. They think they are standing for truth. No. You are standing for your own thoughts; and for your own beliefs. God never says stand for what you believe in. He says, "Stand for the Truth." And so, "My Son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor give up when you are rebuked of Him."

In Hebrews 12:6 it tells us WHY we should not, "despise the chastening of the Lord." It says that God Almighty is chastening us because He loves us. It's all for our good. And He is allowing us to suffer, and go through trials, because He, "chastens those whom He RECEIVES." The thought there is that God chastens those whom He is, "POSITIONING in Christ."

Now what does that mean? Well, it really is a reference to something that Jesus Christ said in the gospel of John, chapter 14. There, Jesus said to his disciples:

“Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me. In my Father's house...”

-- and we have to remember that the phrase, “My Father’s House means INHERITANCE. We might even say that Jesus Christ IS the Father's house. Well, are we not IN HIM? Don't we live in Him? Yes. So Jesus Christ IS the Father's house -- Jesus Christ IS -- figuratively speaking -- God's inheritance that He has for us.

So, Jesus said:

“In My Father's house are many abodes. If it were not so, I would have told you. But I go to prepare a place for you. But if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you might be also. And whither I go, you know, and the way you know.”

Now -- just that much: Jesus is saying that during this age He is going to be preparing a place for His people IN HIMSELF; in My Father's house; in the inheritance of God.

In Hebrews 12, it speaks of this exact same inheritance in Christ -- but only from another angle. Instead of talking about the fact that Jesus is preparing a PLACE for us, Hebrews 12 speaks of it from the angle of US being prepared for the place. So it is. God is, “positioning,” us as sons and daughters in Christ -- that we may abide in

Him -- the Father's house – forever. He is our inheritance.

This is why God is chastising us, and it is why He allows suffering -- He wants to bring us into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, so that we may be positioned in Christ and abide in Christ.

This age is where it BEGINS. But it is all unto the eternal inheritance that God has for His people in the next age. So it's exactly the same Truth: God is positioning us as sons, so that we may live and move in Him forever through His Son, Jesus Christ. And chastisement and training is unto that end – IF we will believe and receive and obey.

Verse 12:7 says: “If you endure – which means to, “abide under” -- if you abide under God's purpose through chastening -- then God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is he whom the father chastens NOT?” So the emphasis here is that chastisement is because God loves us as a Father.

Hebrews goes on to say, “If you are without chastisement, whereof we are all partakers, then you would be illegitimate, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence -- shall we not much rather be in subjection under the Father of spirits and live?”

And so he says in verse 10, “For they are temporal, earthly fathers. Verily for a few days they chastened us after their own pleasure” -- in other words, according to what they thought was right. “But God chastens us for OUR profit.” Why? “That we may be partakers of His holiness.”

We can only be partakers of His holiness if we see Jesus Christ – have Him revealed in us, and begin to walk in Him. This is the purpose of chastisement. It is the purpose for which God allows suffering.

So all of these truths are connected. It all gets back to the Person of Christ in us -- and our coming into an inward realization of Him. Christ is made TO BE unto us SANCTIFICATION. (I Cor. 1:30) Well, sanctification IS holiness – it is the same Greek word. And so in order to be, “a partaker of His holiness,” we have to see Jesus. But in order to see Jesus, we need to be chastised and trained – often through suffering.

Travail and Seeing Jesus

In John 16, Jesus spoke to His disciples shortly before He was going to be crucified – because He knew that they would need some encouragement ahead of time. He said in verse 21, “A woman, when she is in travail” -- in other words, in the middle of this great pain and suffering of childbirth. This is a comparison to OUR trials and tribulations in life. He says, “A woman, when she is in travail, has sorrow, because her hour -- or her season of suffering and travail -- has come.” And so, while she is in the pains of childbirth, the suffering is what her mind is on. He then says, “But as soon as she has delivered the child, she remembers no more the anguish -- because she now sees a man, or a child, is born into the world.”

Now what He is saying here is that when we are in the midst of trials and suffering, it is going to hurt. We are going to suffer. There is going to be anguish and pain. God isn't despising that; He

knows it's going to happen. And we don't need to feel guilty about it. In fact, we can believe and trust God all the while we are suffering and hurting. We can trust Him even though we may not yet understand what is happening to us or why. BUT something is being BORN. Something is being birthed. We are being brought into the fullness of Jesus Christ. Once we begin to see Jesus, then we are going to rejoice.

No one who sees Christ through suffering will regret the suffering. Rather, they will rejoice in the result of knowing Christ. Paul said, "the suffering of this present time cannot be compared to the glory that is to be revealed in us." And that, "glory," is HIM. It's the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ -- revealed in us in His fullness -- beginning in this present age -- but it's all unto the fullness of release in the next age.

Colossians 1:27: "Christ in us" -- that's NOW. "The HOPE of glory" -- that points to the full release and the eternal wages -- of what it means to be united with Christ in spirit.

And Jesus is saying that here: "You are like a woman in travail. It hurts. But once you see what is born -- Christ in you -- then you are going to rejoice -- and you are not going to remember the pain anymore.

How many understand that when we finally meet Jesus Christ at the end of the age, that all of the suffering, and all of the circumstances that went into that suffering -- ALL of it is going to pass away into history? And what is going to be left is NOT the circumstances that caused the suffering; what is going to be left is NOT the suffering -- what IS going to be left is what was BIRTHED

through the suffering: Christ in us -- and our relationship with Him.

Job caught a glimpse of that. He said, "I wanted answers. I wanted information. I wanted to see WHY." But God said, "I am not going to let you see why, and I'm not going to let you see the information -- I'm not going to let you see the answer. I'm going to give you something better: I'm going to let you see ME." And Job got a revelation of God.

And you'll notice that the end of the book of Job, that when Job got the revelation of God, he was still suffering. His suffering didn't end at that point. But from that point Job no longer was going back and forth about it -- because God was his answer. He did not need to any longer ask WHY. And eventually Job's suffering ended.

If you read John 16, you will see there that Jesus alludes to that -- he says, "In that day, when what is born -- a revelation of Jesus Christ -- in that day you are not going to ask Me any more questions because I will BE your answer." Jesus Christ is the Truth. Jesus Christ is all that God has for us -- and all that is in Him. You come into a revelation of Him; you come into an inward realization and knowledge of Jesus -- and in THAT day you will not ask as many questions as you did before. You will ask SOME, because there is never any end to His unfolding. But that is what Job came to see and know: God Himself. And the questions ended.

This book of Job has in it great revelation for us today -- as we have been seeing. And I think that one of the things that it tells us is really how we ought to pray. Most of us pray for information; for

answers. Most of us want to know WHY -- we want God to explain things to us. And I understand that -- I've done that. You have done it -- we are human -- and God knows that. But the lesson of Job ought to tell us what we really ought to be praying for: We ought to be praying -- NOT for answers; NOT even, "to have more faith." We ought to be praying for a REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

Paul said that he prayed that God would give the church, "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself." (Eph. 1:15) How many understand that if God begins to reveal Christ IN you and I, that faith will come -- because faith comes by hearing the Word. HE IS the Word. How many understand that if we SEE JESUS that questions will begin to cease. We need an inward, ongoing revelation of Jesus -- which is exactly what God says He WANTS to do - - and He uses suffering to accomplish it.

So this is the purpose of God in suffering: That we may come into an inward realization of Jesus that will set us free and be the foundation for inheritance; the foundation for holiness; the foundation for being able to live, and walk, and commune with God, forever -- throughout the eternal ages.

Chapter 3

Suffering For Jesus' Sake

Why, if Jesus suffered for us, do we have to suffer -- as a follower of Jesus Christ? Certainly every member of the human race suffers. Atheists suffer, and people who believe in false religions also suffer. Suffering isn't limited to Christian people. But God will use suffering for eternal purposes in the life of a believer.

We have seen that the overall governing principle as to God's purpose in allowing suffering in the life of a believer is that we may come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ -- meaning that we may have Christ formed in us -- that we may be set free to see and know Christ and to walk with Him.

Soul vs. Spirit

Now, the necessity of suffering will make little sense to us unless we understand condition of those IN ADAM -- over and against the possibilities found in becoming a new creation in Jesus Christ. God is taking spiritually dead human beings -- who are born spiritually dead in Adam; whose minds are at enmity against God; who have no life and no Truth in them -- and He is joining them to Jesus Christ; planting them into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The result is a new creation in Christ Jesus -- a complete reconstitution of humanity from out of darkness into the light. But by definition, this is going to create a tremendous conflict -- a conflict between the two realms; between the two natures in us; and a continual war between flesh and spirit. The result will be suffering.

This conflict is best grasped if we understand the separation between soul and spirit in each believer. When a person comes to Christ by faith, Jesus Christ joins that person to Himself and they become one with Him in spirit:

He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (1 Cor. 6:17)

Being joined to Jesus Christ in spirit is how Christ dwells in the believer – it is what it means to be IN CHRIST, or, if you prefer, it is what it means for Christ to be in us. “Christ in you,” (Col. 1:27) is the essence of Christianity at the core.

It is because we are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him that we have eternal life. But note that we are not given a THING called, “eternal life.” No. Rather, we are given Jesus Christ who is THE LIFE – and because we are joined to Him, He is then OUR LIFE. (Col. 3:4) In fact, God does not give believers THINGS apart from Christ. Rather, He gives us Christ, in Whom He has freely given all things. (Rom.8:32)

Our resurrection union with Christ in spirit is the new creation in Christ Jesus. It is the new man. It is the seat of salvation. But note: We are NOT joined to the Lord in our physical body or soul or psychic man. Not in this age. These remain outside of our spiritual union.

Therein lays the conflict. Believers have two natures within. And the two are contrary one to the other.

It is the purpose of God to reveal Christ in us to the point where our faith and experiencing of Him will come to govern that which is NOT joined to

Him. But this requires that the natural man – which is not joined to the Lord – come under the work of the Cross. This is the only way in which the life of Christ will govern and be made manifest through our mortal bodies.

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. (II Cor. 4:10-11)

Note the Truth here: Death to the natural, so that the Christ with Whom we are joined in spirit might be manifested and come to govern as Lord. In short, there is always going to be a war between soul and spirit. But to the extent that we pick up our Cross and follow Jesus the soul power will be broken and Jesus, by His spirit, will emerge.

If believers would come to recognize this Truth of the separation between soul and spirit we would be able to understand much more as to WHY we function the way we do, and much more as to WHY God deals with us the way He does. God brings suffering to set us free from the power of the soul and flesh, so that we might be free to live in the power of Jesus Christ risen.

The Work of the Cross

It is precisely because the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is a finished work that once we are planted into His death and resurrection that we can bear about in our body His dying, and come to manifest His life. This is the work of the Cross.

The work of the Cross will break the power of our natural man. The Cross will bring us to where we see our utterly depravity and emptiness. Seeing this will be more than a doctrine. It will be the result of seeing and experiencing Jesus Christ.

We have no idea of the depth of evil that is found in fallen man. Oh, we might accept that as a true fact. But God must allow us to experience and taste some of it so that we will surrender ourselves to Him. Certainly, Job saw some of what was in his own heart. That is why he said, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye sees thee. Wherefore I abhor [myself], and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:5-6)

Note again that Job saw the truth about himself only because he saw God. God is the Light. God is the Truth. Unless we see in His light we are not really seeing. And if we saw ourselves without seeing HIM – that would leave us in a sorry and hopeless state indeed.

Seeing oneself in the light of seeing Jesus Christ is simply seeing the Truth. That is why it is a key to being set free. Yet to bring us to this point there must be the work of the Cross – and the work of the Cross always involves suffering.

Freedom From Sin Through Suffering

That which is born of the flesh IS flesh, and that which is born of the spirit IS spirit. The two are contrary one to the other. And yet God is bringing us from the kingdom of the one to the other through Jesus Christ. It entails a dramatic upheaval; it entails losing everything about that

old life, especially religiously. It means a completely new life in Jesus Christ, on a completely new basis, with a renewed mind and a new heart.

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. That he no longer should live the rest of [his] time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. (I Peter 4:1)

Note the phrase, “he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” How does suffering result in freedom from sin? Well, as noted earlier, only if we give ourselves to Jesus Christ THROUGH the suffering is that possible. But if we do give ourselves to Christ through suffering – and do that the way in which God means it – we will be surrendering the very root of sin: Self-ownership. Thus, since self-ownership is the ground in which all SINS are rooted, if we surrendering our self ownership to Jesus Christ, those sins will lose their power. We will cease from sin.

Jesus spoke of this very necessity in Matthew 16. He said: “If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself...” -- meaning let him deny his self; relinquish his self-ownership -- let him deny his right to himself -- “...and let him pick up his cross daily and follow me.” He said what would happen if we did. He said, “If you pick up that cross and you lose yourself, your life, your throne, your self-ownership for My sake, you will find true life in Me.”

Everything is predicated upon that sentence, “If any man would come after Me.” If you and I want

to follow Jesus Christ we have to lose ourselves to Him. There is simply no other way to follow Him.

Now, let's ask the question: If we pick up the cross and we lose your life to Jesus -- do we think that it will be a picnic? No, it is going to mean suffering. This is a fact because of the nature of things. We have to be set free from what we have been in Adam into the new life in Christ Jesus – the one being contrary to the other. Often that means we will have to be shown by experience the futility and evil built into the old so that we will make the choice to put our faith in Christ.

Jesus said we must pick up our cross if we are to follow Him. Well, what is that cross? It will be whatever brings you into a death to yourself. It will be whatever opens up the choice to LOSE yourself to Christ. The vehicle used will vary depending on the person – but in the end, the cross is an instrument of death – yet it is a gateway into experiencing the life and freedom in Jesus Christ.

It is a waste of time to cry out to God, or to try religious methods, to get free from specific sins. It is a waste of time if we will not lose entire SELVES to Him. We have to lose the life – the old life – in which all specific sins are rooted. Only then is real freedom from specific sins possible.

Following Christ

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

We saw in Matthew 16 that if we expect to follow Jesus Christ we can only do so if we pick up our Cross and lose ourselves to Him. In I Peter 2:21, Peter affirms by saying that suffering is that to which we are CALLED – we must suffer if we want to follow in Jesus' steps.

It is important to understand that there is a difference, though you could call it part of the same whole, between the suffering of Jesus Christ during His final week and the suffering He underwent in the thirty plus years of His life as a man. I think a lot of folks read about the suffering of Jesus Christ in the Bible and think that the only suffering He ever faced was that of the Garden of Gethsemane and His Cross. We don't understand that from the time He was born until the time He was raised from the dead, all He did was suffer. He faced every enemy possible – and was tempted in all points.

So, if you and I want to follow Jesus Christ — ultimately we have to follow Him by entering into the fellowship of His sufferings. This is the same thing as, "suffering for Jesus' sake." Now, what exactly does that mean? It means to suffer because of our spiritual union with Christ – it means to suffer because God is doing a work in us of bringing us into an inward realization of Christ. We are apprehended for God's purpose and we are going to suffer because of it, "for Jesus' sake."

One of the best scriptures which illustrates the heart of Jesus in suffering, which He had toward His Father, and stands as an example for us, is what Jesus said as He hung on the cross. He said to His Father, "Into your hands do I commit

my spirit.” He was hanging on the cross and knew that He had no way of raising Himself up out of the death He was about to die but He trusted that God would. This is what God would have us do. We can say to Him, “Father, I have no way to raise myself up from out of all of this, all I can do is give myself to You over to the death.” Or, to put it in more simple terms, we can ask God “to do whatever it takes to get His full purpose in Christ.” This is how God would have us respond in our suffering, as we hang on whatever cross ours happens to be.

So, what’s the goal here in suffering? Lose your life to God. Give yourself to God. You can do that by asking Him to do whatever it takes to get His will in the matter. That’s a commitment and a starting point from which we should never depart. As God does what it takes, continue to pick up that cross and follow Him and believe Him.

His Glory Revealed

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. (1 Peter 4:13)

Believers are PARTAKERS of the sufferings of Christ because we are partakers of Christ Himself – we are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him. We are crucified with Christ. We are baptized into His death. We are planted into His death. These are not just empty words. They represent a dynamic reality. In short, if a person is IN CHRIST they are going to suffer. The nature of the new birth in this age demands it.

Yet, as we have been seeing, this is all unto a great purpose. 1 Peter 4:13 directly states that

we ought to rejoice in being a partaker of the sufferings of Christ – so that when His glory shall be revealed we may be glad with exceeding joy. Peter could never say such a thing unless suffering were doing a work that was making place for the glory of Jesus Christ to be revealed in believers. In fact, Paul says in Colossians:

Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col. 1:27)

Christ in the believer is the core of all that Christianity IS – and Paul says that our spiritual union with Him is, “the hope of glory.” Of course, He is not the hope of OUR glory. Rather, because Christ is in the believer, we have the certain expectation that we will experience HIS glory at the resurrection.

So we see that all of these Truths tie together – Christ is in the believer, and because we are joined to Him, we are going to experience conflict and antagonism from all that is against Him, including our own nature. But all of this is intended by God to bring us to where Christ can be manifested through the believer, yes, in this age – the greater release of His glory will be for the eternal ages.

The Hope of His Glory

Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also

labor, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily. (Col. 1:26-29)

We have seen that Christianity, at the core, is, "Christ in you." But we have also seen from the passage above that attached to, "Christ in you," is the phrase, "The hope of glory." The word, "hope," that is translated in the English NT means, "a positive and confident expectation." Thus, it carries no sense of uncertainty as the word often does today. No. "Hope," in the NT speaks of an expectation based on the Truth that I know. Thus, we have, "Christ in you, the certain expectation of glory."

Can we see that Paul is talking about the present reality of Christ in the believer – but pointing towards a greater realization? Christ in us NOW is, "the hope of glory." But all through the NT, we are told that this, "hope of glory," is unto the REALIZATION of the fullness of His glory in the eternal ages.

The NT is likewise clear that this purpose of God in believers is achieved through suffering in union with Christ:

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with [him], that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time [are] not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Rom. 8:17-18)

Note: His glory – not our glory – but HIS glory is to be revealed, not merely TO US, but actually IN US. This is the full manifestation of the sons of God – when Christ, who is NOW the, "hope of

glory," will be fully manifested IN HIS PEOPLE as the full, "realization of the God's glory."

This is the purpose towards which God is working through the indwelling of Christ in us NOW. It is the inheritance of God's people – the full realization of Jesus Christ in us – in a resurrected body THEN.

Face to Face

The purpose of God for His people – a purpose that is achieved to a great extent through suffering – is spoken of all throughout the NT. It is essential to grasp this purpose if we are to see God's purpose in suffering. Another place where God's purpose is stated is found in I Corinthians:

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (I Cor. 13:12)

The parallel here to what happened to Job is more than obvious. The ultimate goal of God is that His people SEE HIM. That is what God is making possible now through suffering. And it is unto an ultimate experience of seeing Him face to face in the eternal ages after the resurrection.

The, "glass," through which we see Jesus Christ now is natural man. Not necessarily sinful man -- but natural man. We have already seen that the natural man cannot receive the things of God. (I Cor. 2:14) Even though Christ dwells in the believer, and this does equip us with the capacity to grow to see Jesus Christ -- in this age, and in this body, we will never be completely free from the natural. In one way or another, we are going

to see Christ through -- and even interpret Him through -- what we are in our natural man. Much of the Christian life is a matter of God bringing our natural man under the work of the Cross so that by, "bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus," we might experience, "the life also of the Lord Jesus being made manifest." (II Cor. 4:10-11) We will not only manifest Christ, but SEE HIM or ourselves.

That is possible for this age. But I Cor. 13 does tell us about the future. The last phrase in the verse says it all: "THEN I shall know even as also I am known." During this age, there are times – as was the case with Job -- when I cannot see God. There are other times when I do not see Him clearly. But regardless, God sees me. We are being told that there will come a point at which all of the natural will be transformed and we will know God and His Son, Jesus Christ, face to face – we will know God as He already knows us.

What is being described here is what it means to have God, and His Son, Jesus Christ fully revealed IN US. If we are joined to the Lord NOW (I Cor. 6:17), we are still encumbered by this natural. But at the resurrection, the natural body will be no more. We will be released from it and be able to fully experience the fullness of Jesus Christ – through the means of a resurrected body. In effect, there will no longer be a dark glass through which to experience the Lord. We will see Him and experience Him face to face.

"THEN I shall know even as also I am known." That is an unbelievable promise. God knows me so thoroughly that to Him, whether I sense it or not, I am as if totally transparent. Hebrews says, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest

in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4:13) We are being promised that when these things come to pass, we shall know GOD in this very same way that He knows us. God is NOW preparing us for such a revelation, indeed, for such a life in Himself.

When He Shall Appear

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

This is a particularly important verse. The verse could be paraphrased:

It has never yet been made manifest what we shall be, but we know that when what we are in Christ is manifested, that it will be out of His likeness, and that this will enable us to see Him as He is.

This is based on the original Greek (per M.R. Vincent). It is an awesome thought. If you think about this, it means that what will be manifested is the new creature that we are in Christ – Christ FULLY manifested through us -- without the limits of the natural.

This is the same Truth we saw in I Cor. 13:12: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." And, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (I Cor. 2:9)

These are tremendous promises that are spoken of throughout the NT. They speak of God's eternal purposes for the ages yet to come – this is what He is preparing for His saints. Thus, it does behoove us to grasp the Truth about how God is now doing this in Christ.

Christ Realized in the Believer

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. (Gal. 4:19)

The Greek word translated, “formed,” in this verse means, “to inwardly realize and express.” This is God's great desire – as evidenced through the apostle Paul. We are joined to the Lord in spirit, but God wants us to decrease and for Christ to increase – not so we might, “look like Jesus” – but so that Christ might be made manifest in and through believers.

The vehicle He uses to accomplish this work – as we have been seeing is the CROSS. The Cross crucifies the natural man in order that the Christ with whom we are spiritually joined might be released into a greater manifestation in and through us.

We've looked at this passage a few times already, but here we must bring it front and center, because it is a great description of the necessity of suffering, and God's work of the Cross in the life of the believer:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken;

cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. (II Cor. 4:7-11)

The only way in which I can come to manifest Jesus is by picking up the Cross DAILY and LOSING myself to Him. (see again, Matt. 16:24-25) Only then will my life decrease and His resurrection life find release or increase. Only then can I proclaim in Truth, "Yet not I, but Christ."

Read the end of the book of Job. Did he not come to this place – OT version – but nevertheless can we not see that he finally proclaimed, "Yet not I, but GOD!" Sure. All of his suffering was geared to bringing him to that realization.

God wants to bring His people into an inward realization and expression of Jesus Christ. Thus, He must allow suffering – for suffering in the flesh will bring us to the end of the flesh as the governing power in our lives, and make it possible for us to realize Christ.

Sanctification

What is sanctification? Some folks teach that sanctification is a matter of me looking more like Jesus. Others teach that sanctification is something that happens because God, "acts upon us," by His spirit, and, "does something to us." No. No. Sanctification is Christ manifested and being seen in and through the believer.

Paul said this directly:

***That no flesh should glory in his presence.
But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of
God is made unto us wisdom, and
righteousness, and sanctification, and
redemption: That, according as it is written,
He that glories, let him glory in the Lord. (I
Cor. 1:29-31)***

Sanctification – Christ manifested -- is the result of the work of the Cross stripping off the layers of natural man, sin, and unbelief – not so that I can look like Jesus – but so that Jesus can be seen. Are we not ALREADY joined to Him? Sure. So now there must be a work that gets US out of the way – the work of the Cross.

One of the practical things about sanctification is that it is the result of the believer losing his self-righteousness, and being set free from occupation with SELF. But often the only way God can bring us to this place is by revealing to us the utter evil in ourselves. Then we will cry for freedom and voluntarily discard ourselves to Jesus Christ. We certainly see that Job came to this place. He said, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” But all of that was then overridden by the fact that Job saw GOD HIMSELF – and thus – began to live on an entirely new basis, with a renewed mind.

A renewed mind is a process – but the outcome of seeing, and continuing to see, Jesus Christ. Freedom from self-righteousness and self-occupation are outcomes. Therefore, it is a fact that those who manifest Christ the most in this

age are progressively those least aware of it. That is because they have lost themselves – have left themselves alone – and are simply abiding in Him by faith. This is what happens when we die to ourselves – we die to our own righteousness and we no longer under any law that supposedly tells us where we stand with God. We aren't forever fussing with ourselves, trying to make our flesh behave so that we can be right with God. This abandonment of our spiritual lives to God never leads to license. It is actually the only way to freedom from sin. We are abiding in Christ as our life and living from out of Him in faith unto obedience.

I mentioned earlier that once Job saw the Lord that he no longer asked questions. He no longer fussed with himself or his suffering. And that was true even though his situation had NOT changed. But when a person sees God, and begins to realize Jesus Christ, their mind is renewed. Nothing else may change but they have changed, and that is the goal of God.

The Body of His Glory

For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. (Phil 3:20-21)

According to Greek scholar M. R. Vincent, this passage is not translated well. It could read, "Who shall fashion our present limited bodies to conform to the body of His glory." The last part of the passage suggests that this fashioning has

begun NOW – but that it is all unto the point where, at the resurrection, we will be clothed upon with a body that is able to contain and manifest HIS GLORY. In short, Christianity in this age is, "Christ in you, the HOPE of glory, but then, at the resurrection, there is no more need for hope, so it will be, "Christ in us, the REALIZATION OF HIS GLORY."

There are a number of ways to say the same thing. We might say that today, through the forming of Christ in us, that we are being prepared to fully contain and manifest the fullness of Christ in a resurrected body. By comparison, this is limited in our natural, or, "vile," body – we are joined to the Lord in spirit for this age – and can manifest Him to a certain extent. But it is only then that our body will be one that can fully contain and manifest Him.

It is little wonder why the apostle Paul could barely find the words to express the purpose of God for His people. One place he tried was in Romans 8:

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Rom 8:17-18)

In the above passage, Paul speaks of glory that will be revealed IN US. What does that mean? Well, as noted, it goes back to the fact that the core of Christianity is, "Christ in us, the HOPE of glory." (Col. 1:27) In other words, Christ already dwells in us – and HE is the hope of the glory

spoken of by Paul in Romans 8. How so? If Christ is being FORMED in us (Gal. 4:19), and we are being formed together with Him (Rom. 8:29), then this is setting the stage for the time when, "we may be glorified together," with Him. In other words, He is creating IN US a spiritual union with Himself – much of it through suffering -- that is wonderful now -- although it will be released only to fullness in the eternal ages.

Note that it is not we who are glorified apart from Christ, as Xerox copies of Him, but we are glorified together with Christ – it is HIS glory revealed in us – it is all HIS body of glory. In short, God is now forming Christ in us – but when we are changed at the resurrection, we will be loosed from this natural body and be able to realize the fullness of His life IN US – and we will manifest His glory through us. This is the great purpose of God in Christ unto the ages yet to come. If you want to know whether you will be able to manifest the fullness of Jesus Christ THEN, ask whether you are doing it NOW.

The Body of Christ

God is working His purpose in individuals so that He can have a purpose through the collective Body of Christ. Never get this backwards – Christ is first in you personally. That is the only reason you are in His Body. You cannot get saved, or right with God, by going first to the Body. No. Christ must be in YOU. Christ is being formed first in individuals. That is the only reason Christ can then be seen in His greater Body.

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself: that in the

dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him. (Eph 1:9-10)

This passage is telling us that it is the purpose of God to gather all things in Christ – the meaning of which is to glue them all together by the Person of His Son, in the perfect will of God. Things cannot be gathered or glued within the will of God in any other way. In fact, God will unglue all else.

The Body of Christ is the first fruits of this purpose, now, in this age. God is gathering or forming a body that will hold His fullness: "God has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all." (Eph 1:22-23) But this is all unto an eternal purpose – for the ages yet to come. It is by Christ through His Body in the ages yet to come that God intends to work out the fullness of His Redemption: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. (Rom 8:19)

The Body of Christ that is formed in this age is to be an instrument of God's greater redemption in the next: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:7) The plan of God is rooted here, in this age, but it has a never-ending and far-reaching impact in the ages yet to come.

The Purpose of the Fiery Trial

There is another passage here in 1 Peter, chapter one, verse six, where he is talking about suffering and he says, regarding the salvation of Jesus:

Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold trials. That the trial of your faith, being more precious than the trial of gold that is tried by fire, even though it is perishable, might be found to the praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:6-7)

Peter is really drawing an analogy here. He is saying that when gold is mined, it is impure. But then it is tried by fire wherein it is made pure. They put gold ore through a trial by fire and what happens is that all of the impurities come to the surface. They are brought to the surface where they are skimmed off, leaving a purer gold.

Now, there is a common misunderstanding about this passage. Peter is not saying that the fiery trial will get separate the good in you from the bad in you, and then get rid of the bad in you so that the good in you will be what remains. No. There is NO good in us. Rather, he is saying that the fiery trial wills separate YOU from the Christ that is in you, leaving you in death, so that Christ might be made manifest. This agrees completely with what we have been seeing about God's purpose in suffering.

So, once again we see the purpose is for suffering – for suffering for Jesus' sake: That we may see Him, know Him and manifest Him. That we may have Christ as our inheritance and that

God may have us as His inheritance. That God may have individuals and a body through whom He can find an expression of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 4

The Silence of God

When a believer is suffering in a great trial, the circumstances of that trial are often a source of suffering. But perhaps the greatest reason for suffering in a trial of faith is the SILENCE of God.

It is almost certain that if a believer is in a trial of faith that God is going to be silent. The silence of God in a trial of faith is NORMAL.

This fact alone ought to be an encouragement. It ought to be an encouragement to know that the silence of God is not necessarily an indication that something is wrong. No. It may be an indication that we are right where God wants us to be – in His will.

If a believer has walked with Jesus Christ for any length of time, and has learned Christ at all, it will become clear that not only is God often silent to us during trials, but He is, in fact, silent to His people almost all of the time.

Now, by, “silent,” I mean that it is not normal for God to talk to people in special words, visions, dreams, and prophecies. There are those in the church that practically LIVE on the basis of such things -- but they are wrong. Rather, God today speaks to His people primarily through an ongoing inward revelation of HIS SON.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by [his] Son. (Heb. 1:1-2)

The body of Christ needs to read these words and take them seriously. The writer of Hebrews directly states that IN TIME PAST God used to speak to His people by the prophets. But, the writer goes on, IN THESE LAST DAYS – meaning since Christ ascended – God is speaking to His people, and this is the proper translation: SON-WISE. In other words, the language in which God is today speaking is Christ Himself.

Jesus Christ is the Living Word of God. He is the LOGOS of God – HE is that which God is speaking. And because He is the Alpha and the Omega, in Him is God's final and complete word to humanity. But Jesus Christ dwells in the believer. The entire purpose for which the spirit of God was given is to reveal Christ within, and bring believers into in inward realization of Jesus. This is how God is today speaking.

But are there not prophets today? No, the OFFICE of prophet, or that of apostle – both of which are the foundation upon which the church is built (Eph. 2:20) – are finished. God is not rebuilding or adding to the foundation of the church. Rather, there can be GIFTS of prophecy, etc. But those gifts are simply the way in which God speaks CHRIST. The idea that God gives words and prophecies as His primary way of giving direction to do this or that is not found in scripture. If a believer wants to know the way to walk, we are told that Jesus Christ IS THE WAY. We must grow to know Him – and all else will become progressively clear.

That may not sit well with some folks, but it is when we ignore the Truth on matters like this that we bring confusion and deception into the body of Christ – which is exactly what we have in the

places that do ignore the Truth and practice such things instead of knowing Christ.

So, God speaks Jesus Christ. He is NOT silent when it comes to speaking Christ. Yet He is most often silent when it comes to speaking to us reasons and explanations for our suffering, or specific directions as to what we should do, or not do. Most of the time He simply puts us into the trial without explanation – and does an INWARD work in us to reveal Christ. A great part of this work is that we may have a single eye and ears to actually see and hear the Christ that God is speaking through His spirit.

Opening Our Eyes

Job did not know the prequel to his trial. He knew nothing about the conversation between God and Satan. All he knew was that he had lost everything, including his health, and was suffering without explanation. And none of that agreed with what he had believed about God.

When we are under the mistaken notion that faith and obedience to God guarantees us blessing and freedom from trials, while disobedience guarantees us those trials – and then trials come upon us despite our faith and obedience – we are going to be faced with a contradiction between what we have believed and what is happening. This is the contradiction that Job faced.

Job absolutely believed that his obedience to God kept him in blessing and out of trouble. His friends also held this belief. We might call this, “Job’s doctrine.” None of them had any frame of reference that God would ever operate outside of this, “doctrine” – because to them, it was THE

TRUTH. But God did operate outside of it – and did so without offering any explanation whatsoever. In fact, God was completely silent.

There are many Christian people who hold exactly the same, “doctrine.” We may not put it in those exact words, but there is a spiritual smugness about us – it is really self-righteousness. We think that we will exempt ourselves from trials and suffering if we keep certain principles and laws. But this is a complete misunderstanding as to God’s purpose, and really, a great blindness to our need to be set free from ourselves and our fallen nature.

We have already seen that the trials that God allows are NOT punishments. They are the chastisements of our Heavenly Father – His tools to set us free from our blindness and to open our eyes to Jesus Christ.

Our trouble is that we do not know we are blind to Jesus Christ. We do not know what we do not know. And when that is the case there isn’t any way we can, of ourselves, do anything about our condition. God must cause an upheaval. He must shake us. He must bring into our lives that which He intends to open our eyes to His Son.

God’s Silence to Job

When a person believes what we have called, “Job’s doctrine,” as a Christian, such a trial will likely have the same initial effects as Job’s trial had upon him. We will not understand what is happening to us, or WHY. We will be shaken as to our faith in God. What God has allowed will not agree with what we thought about Him. And

God will not explain. He will be silent. And yet all of that will be for our good.

Christian people need to realize that there is more to God than what we presently believe about Him. All of it is revealed in scripture, of course, including the fact that there is more to God than what we believe about Him, but so often we simply do not have a point of reference for such a possibility. But what if God does, or allows, something which is not included in our, “doctrine,” about God? What if God allows that which contradicts what we were absolutely sure about? Then what? This is what happened to Job.

Can we see that this is a call for faith? It is an opportunity to believe God – to trust God rather than our understanding of Him. It is an opportunity to realize that the Truth is outside of our previous, “doctrine” – that the Truth is something we have never seen. In short, God is allowing this to bring us into a greater knowledge of Himself unto our greater freedom.

In Job, chapter 23, in the midst of Job’s great trial, we find him expressing many of these things. Job cannot find God. And he does not know why:

Then Job answered and said, Even today [is] my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Oh that I knew where I might find him! [that] I might come [even] to his seat!

Now, Job did want to find God. But at this point, he did not know that it was possible for him to actually SEE GOD. Thus, in seeking God, he was limited to wanting to ask God for ANSWERS:

I would order [my] cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. (i.e. questions) I would know the words [which] he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me.

Isn't this exactly what most of us do when we are in a great trial? We seek God for answers. We don't even know to seek God for HIMSELF. The possibility of actually SEEING JESUS CHRIST is an unknown to us.

Here we can repeat what we saw earlier. God does not want to give us merely INFORMATION. Rather, He wants to give us REVELATION – and that of Jesus Christ. Yet in order to accomplish this, God must withhold any information – because it would not get us through. We need faith, not facts. Besides, all of the information we need is already right in front of us in scripture.

What we need is a BIRTHING. God already tells us that – but merely knowing it will actually birth nothing in us. We have to go through the experience, and the birth pangs. There is simply no other way to come to know Christ.

Job could not find God. He thought if he could just find the Lord and ask Him questions that God's answers would satisfy him. But God would not answer. So Job found himself having to abide in his trial WITHOUT answers.

Behold, I go forward, but he [is] not [there]; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold [him]: he hides himself on the right hand, that I cannot see [him].

This passage is the trial of faith – we cannot find God. We cannot perceive God. It is as if God is hiding Himself. What is the answer? We find it in the next verse:

But he knows the way that I take: [when] he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Job is beginning to have his eyes opened – the eyes of FAITH. He stated that he cannot see God. But now he realizes that, “God sees ME.” That is a tremendous step of faith.

There is great irony here – once we connect this passage with the end of the book of Job. In this passage Job says, “I cannot see God, but I know God sees me.” But at the end of the book of Job, he is able to declare, “Now, I do SEE YOU!”

That, in a nutshell, is the lesson of the book of Job, and agrees with what is taught all through the Bible. None of us can see Jesus Christ. But God will bring us to the point – through these trials – where we can, by faith, rest in the fact that we know that God sees us. And then, down the line, God will bring us to the point where we will actually come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ.

The Key of Seeing Jesus Christ

Seeing Jesus Christ – coming into an inward realization of Him – is a great purpose God is after in the lives of believers. But He cannot simply TELL US ABOUT Christ. He must reveal Christ in us. And that requires the work of the Cross.

If we were to turn this into a formula, we might say that since Jesus is both THE LIFE and THE LIGHT, then in order to have LIGHT we must have Christ as our LIFE. But in order to have Christ as our LIFE we must lose OUR life. Thus, God must put us under the work of the Cross to crucify us – bring us to the loss of ourselves to Him – in order for Christ to experientially become our life, and thus be our light, i.e., that we might SEE HIM.

Or, we can just simply quote Jesus from the sermon on the mount:

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Matt. 5:8)

The fact is, scripture says that Jesus Christ IS the Light, and IS the Truth. These are not just hyperbole. Indeed, everything God has to given humanity is given solely in Christ. It is only by knowing Him that we can know anything else from the perspective of God.

Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may KNOW..... (Eph. 1:16-18)

Paul's great prayer for the church was that believers might come into a knowledge of Jesus Christ. And note that he says that if we do come to know Christ that we will then be able to KNOW all else that constitutes the plan and purpose of God. Sure. Jesus is the LIGHT. Jesus is the TRUTH. Knowledge apart from knowing Him is not real knowledge. It is corrupt.

Paul likewise said in Colossians:

In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col. 2:3)

We are here being told that IN CHRIST is all the wisdom and knowledge of God. In other words, it is only to the extent that Christ is revealed in us that the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are possible for us to experience.

Can we know see WHY God cannot simply give us information? That mere explanations will not do? No. God must reveal to us, and IN US, Jesus Christ. That is not only the goal of God in all trials, but it is the key to walking with God in Truth.

Job came to see God, and when he did, his entire perspective changed regarding his trial – even though his trial had not subsided. That is because God is LIGHT. (I John 1:5) And when a person sees God, they are then able to see the Truth about their situation and the plan of God.

But what a trial this required! God had to subject Job to the attacks of Satan so that Job would eventually lose himself to God – ask God to do whatever it takes to bring him through to the Truth. We see the essence of this in Job 40. Job says to God:

Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further. (Job 40:4-5)

God had begun to reveal Himself to Job. And here we see that Job is essentially done – at the

end of himself. He is losing himself to God and will now be able to allow God to have His full way – will now allow God to do whatever it takes.

This was the key to SEEING GOD. It was the work of the Cross bringing a person to down into a death – but unto a resurrection.

Chapter 5

Why Believe and Obey God?

“Why should we believe and obey God?” If you recall, Satan accused Job before the Lord by saying that Job only obeyed God because it PAID him to obey. And so we do know that part of what God was accomplishing in the trial of Job was to purify Job’s motives and heart.

God wants believers to obey Him, not to garner blessings, or to avoid curses, but because we love Him. Or, to put it another way, all that is of God is by His grace. God has given all things freely in Christ – solely by His grace. And therefore, if we are to walk in the Truth, we must receive all things solely by His grace. The result, if we are to walk in the Truth, is that we must give of ourselves to God, and to others solely by His grace.

Yet so many of us, perhaps unwittingly, do obey God for what we can gain from it. As was the case with Job, trials of faith are geared to setting us free from these motives. For if I am obeying God because I think it pays me to obey Him, then what will I do if the, “pay,” is removed? Will I continue to believe and obey Him?

As we can see, the trial of faith is not merely a matter of whether we continue to trust God. It is surely that. But in the ultimate sense, faith means surrender to God. We no longer belong to ourselves. And the trial of faith will bring us into this Truth through experience – and give us the opportunity to lose ourselves to Christ.

Rewarded According to Works?

The Truth is, our works DO have consequences. If I rob a bank I'm going to jail, and so forth. All through the NT, we are exhorted to do good works, and to stop sinning. But as far as the impact that our works have upon God's love for us, and as far as the impact that our works have upon an eternal reward – that same NT tells us that our works do NOTHING to change either. Indeed, we are told that to believe otherwise is to be under, "another gospel."

Now someone is going to protest and say, "Well, the Bible teaches that we are going to be, 'rewarded according to our works,' does it not? Well, yes -- but those verses have to be interpreted in the light of the whole context of scripture.

For a moment, let's examine what it would really mean if you and I were rewarded according to our works -- the way that this is commonly interpreted. It would mean that every time you did a good work, your reward goes UP, and every time you do a bad work, your reward is REDUCED. This is what would happen both in this age, and eternally if we really were, "rewarded according to our works" – as is usually suggested by those who believe it.

But in order to examine this closely we must first talk about what, "WORKS," really are. What constitutes WORKS in the eyes of God? We usually limit works to OUTWARD acts. But how many understand that if we are talking about works, we must include ALL that a human being produces out of themselves? We must include INWARD thoughts, motives, intent, and

attitudes? For are these not what is BEHIND the outward acts? Sure. In fact, if we are talking about works, we also have to include unbelief and faith. The Bible uses the phrase, “the work of faith.” (see I Thes. 1:3 and II Thes. 1:11) And Jesus stated, “THIS is the work of God, that you BELIEVE.....” (John 6:29)

So, when we talk about the works of a person, we really mean the, “workings,” of a person -- which includes everything they do in every way.

Now, here’s the question: If every time you produce a good work, your reward goes UP, and every time you produce an imperfect one, your reward is DECREASED, how much of a reward do you think you are going to get? The answer ought to be obvious.

There is even a bigger problem here: How, “good,” is good enough? How, “good,” does a work have to be -- to be good enough to earn a greater reward from God?

The greater problem is exposed in Galatians. If my motivation for doing good works is to keep myself righteous before God, then my works are out from UNBELIEF – and therefore not good at all. My works might look good, but my unbelief is SIN.

As ironic as it may seem, if I am doing good works from out of myself – to do for myself what Christ has already done – then I am doing my supposedly good works – not because I believe Jesus Christ – but because I do not believe. My works are a substitute for Christ; for faith in Him.

Is God going to reward that? When you begin to examine these things, you have to come to the conclusion that if you and I were rewarded for our works-- as is commonly interpreted -- we would not only have zero for a reward, but we would be in a horrible deficit position. We therefore must conclude what the Bible concludes -- that all good works in the life of the Christian are supposed to be the outcome of faith in Jesus Christ. And because they are to be the outcome of faith, then everything God does in our lives, and has for us eternally, is not based on those works, but is based solely upon faith.

It is amazing how many Christian people, who gladly accept that we are saved by grace through faith, put the entire Christian life under a system of law AS saved people. The Truth of the matter is, if I believe I am saved by grace -- if I think that from that point on the Christian life is a matter of earning a greater reward by works – then I am under the law just as much as if I thought I could earn salvation. And such deception is going to produce the same kind of Christian life as if I were continually trying to earn salvation.

There are many variations of this, “works mentality.” Some Christians believe that by works we build in ourselves the character of Christ. In other words, there is an unspoken notion that within us are the building blocks of Christ-like character and all we need to do is the building through good works.

All of this is backwards. Again – good works are to be an OUTCOME. Good works are the outcome or product of Christ within. Never are they the means thereunto. It is always, “by grace, through faith...unto good works.”

It is a fact that if I have been brought to where I see that I am nothing that I will then value and gladly receive the grace of God in Jesus Christ. I will know that is the ONLY motivation under which I can receive from God. But if that is the case, then grace will have changed me. Having received all things by His grace in Christ, I will no longer be able to walk with God for a reward – I will no longer be under the delusion that my works can earn anything. Rather, I will give myself, and all that I do, to God, and others, by the same grace that I have received.

It is a fact that it simply not possible to see and receive the grace of God and to live under any other motivation than that same grace. I cannot work for God for a reward if I have been set free from myself and given myself to Jesus Christ. It will be impossible.

The bottom line is this: We are to unconditionally give ourselves to Jesus Christ. That means we do good works whether it pays us to do them or not. We abandon ourselves to Jesus Christ regarding any rewards or results. We must get free from any sense of bargaining with God; from any sense of being a hired servant of Jesus. We are not. We are, as Paul said of himself, bond slaves of the Lord – in every good sense of the term. Is this not GRACE?

Now, obviously, if we actually saw the Truth, we would know that there is no possibility that we could keep any law from out of ourselves. And we would see that there is no way to earn the priceless things that God has for those who believe. Thus, to operate otherwise is indeed

deception, and we need beware, lest it become sin.

The Correction of a Question

In one of His parables, Jesus answered the question, "Why should we obey God?" And in that same parable, Jesus also addressed how God deals with someone who obeys God only because it pays them to obey Him. The answer is found in Matthew, chapters 19 & 20.

As a background, we have to remember that the disciples of Jesus had an idea of the Kingdom of God which was earthly and material. They were certain that, yes, Jesus was the Messiah, but they were also certain that He would set up His kingdom in Jerusalem -- where He would reign and rule from the temple. Most importantly, they believed that they would be in on the ground floor of that kingdom.

This expectation was why the disciples, at that point in their understanding, were following Jesus. They had left everything to follow Him because they expected a position in the kingdom as a reward. We see this thread all through the gospels in the various exchanges Jesus had with His disciples.

In Matthew 19, Jesus had an exchange with a rich young ruler, and out of that came this statement:

"It is with great difficulty that a rich man enters into the kingdom of God." (Matt. 19:24)

Because the disciples had the wrong idea of the kingdom this statement threw them for a loop. They were expecting to be rich; they were

expecting to have authority; they were expecting be greatly rewarded. But now Jesus was saying some shocking things that ran counter to these expectations.

That statement by Jesus -- about the difficulty with which a rich person enters the kingdom -- upset the disciples so much that Peter comes to Jesus with a question. Peter asks Jesus, "Behold, we have forsaken everything, Jesus, and followed You. What are we going to have?" (Matt. 19:27)

How many see that this question exposes the motive for which the disciples were following Jesus? "Lord, we have believed and obeyed you; we have lost and forsaken everything! So what are we going to get out of this?"

This is the question that so many of us ask. Perhaps some of us think it is good and right to follow Jesus for, "what we are going to get out of it." But it is precisely because this is in the heart of so many of us that God must allow some trials into our lives. As was the case with Job, perhaps we are not obeying God for nothing -- but for what we think we will get out of it. God MUST set us free from this deception. And He must often must do it by removing any present reward for following Him -- and thus expose our sin and unbelief.

God wants to make each of us into a work of grace. This cannot happen if we are supposed to walk with Jesus Christ working for a reward! That ought to be quite obvious. There is great freedom in walking with Jesus Christ without such motives -- to simply walk with Him because of grace, love, and Truth. God wants to bring us to that point.

Jesus is going to answer this question. He is going to answer starting in chapter 20, with a parable. But if you notice, He really doesn't directly answer the question, "What are we going to get out of this?" No. What He does is CORRECT the question. The parable itself is a rebuke for asking the question to begin with – and an exhortation to serve God, not for a reward, but for Himself.

Losing to Find

Now, starting in verse 28, Jesus actually tells them that there IS going to be a, "reward," for following Him. But He is warning them, "Don't you dare serve Me FOR that reward?" In a nutshell -- and we are going to see this in the parable -- He is going to teach them that, yes, there IS a reward, but you are to LOSE all thought of that. Get it out of your motivation -- and serve God unconditionally and freely in love -- and leave that reward to God. Leave it to Him to decide. Again – all is of grace.

This brings us to a principle -- and that principle is this: We remember that Jesus said that whoever would lose his life for His sake would find it. This parable is going to teach us exactly the same principle as it applies to a REWARD -- it really applies to EVERYTHING in the Christian life. We could just as easily say, "Whosoever would lose all thought of serving Me for a reward will, in fact, find his true reward in Jesus Christ."

That is absolutely the Truth. "All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ." (Col. 2:3) And, "God has given us all things FREELY in His Son." (Rom. 8:32) In short, ALL is found in

the life of Christ -- and nothing is found outside of the life of Christ that God has for us. It is ALL in there -- and it is all freely given IN HIM. Therefore, in order to come into the fullness of any reward, you need to come into the fullness of Christ. In order to come into the fullness of Christ, you have to LOSE your life – lose yourself. Included in this is the necessity of losing any motivation of gaining a reward for yourself by what you do, “for God.” Indeed, because God has given us FREELY all things in Christ – then we need to not only freely receive all things, rather than try to earn – but we need to likewise give it out to others FREELY. All that is of God is fully of grace.

The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard

So, Jesus is going to tell a parable starting in Matthew 20. This parable is Jesus’ response to the question, “Jesus, what are we going to get out of obeying and believing You? Are we going to get a big reward? What therefore, shall WE HAVE for following You?”

The purpose of this parable by Jesus is to show His disciples, and us, that ALL is of grace in Jesus Christ. He wants to show us that we can earn nothing, and that there is great danger in trying to do so. Thus, this parable carries foundational Truth.

Jesus begins the parable by saying, “For the Kingdom of Heaven.....” Now, note something here: He is NOT talking about the Millennium -- He IS talking about the heavenly realm into which we are born -- if Christ is in us. You and I begin to enter the kingdom of God right now when Jesus enters us -- and joins you and I to Himself in

spirit. That is the Kingdom of Heaven. So in effect, Jesus is talking about the Christian life – He is talking about life in Christ by the spirit of God. And didn't Jesus say that the Kingdom of God is within you? So this is what many of the parables are talking about when it says, "For then the Kingdom of Heaven shall be likened unto"

Thus, the parable of Matthew 20:1-16, commonly referred to as "The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard" begins:

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. When he had agreed with the laborers for a penny for the day, he sent them into his vineyard."

Now let's begin to organize this parable a little bit. It will help us to understand. Note that these laborers, mentioned in verses 1 & 2, were the first ones who were called – they are the, "first," to which Jesus refers later in the parable. They did not have to wait to be called. This meant that they had to work the entire day -- which was longer than anyone else. And as it states in verse 2 -- they went and worked for an AGREED UPON amount -- here called a penny.

So these are the facts about the FIRST – they were the first called, and thus, had to work the entire day – bearing the heat of the day – and they agreed to work for a specific wage.

Note especially the AGREEMENT. Peter had asked the question, "What are we going to get out of following You?" Thus, the agreement in the parable represents that expectation. It is an

expectation that is already present at the start of the calling; at the beginning of the, “work day.”

There are many believers who are following Christ for what they expect as a reward. It is more than ministry that is being addressed in this parable. It is our living in Christ unto the bearing of fruit. Many of us – and this can be very subtle – follow Christ for gain. Some of that gain might be nothing more than self-righteousness; feeling right with God. Some of it might be the pride of a position above others. Our wage might be favor before others. Or perhaps we are following Jesus Christ for some material or financial reward. But this parable is addressing the danger of entering into life in Christ for what we think will be a reward – the agreed to wage is what represents this in the parable.

That is the first group – those who were, “the first.” Jesus continues:

“And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place; and to those he said, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and WHATEVER IS RIGHT I will give you.’ And so they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day long?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and WHATEVER IS RIGHT -- that shall you receive.’”

Now let’s compare the groups: The FIRST group worked all twelve hours and had the greatest

opportunity to bear fruit -- but at the cost of bearing the heat of the day – and had entered into service in the vineyard for an AGREED wage. But the subsequent groups, while they had less opportunity to bear fruit, at less cost to themselves, had no agreement as to their wage. They were willing to work for, “whatever seemed right,” to the master. In other words, they gave their all and trust the master to pay them what HE deemed to be fair.

The message here is clear: There are going to be those who walk with Jesus Christ for what they expect to get out of Him. They may indeed put great effort into serving Him, walking with Him, and even bearing fruit for Him. But behind it all is a subtle motivation of working for a reward. But there are others who walk with Jesus Christ solely by faith and trust in Him – leaving any rewards or benefits to Him. The first group is not walking, “by grace through faith,” as are the others.

There is also significance in the fact that the first group did not have to wait to be hired – but the other groups did. If that were happening in real life, the subsequent groups would certainly be of greater need. They would appreciate ANY work for ANY wage because of that need. And isn't it a fact that to the extent that we are brought to see our need we will value His grace? The two always go together. Always.

Now, we must remember that this is a parable. It is simply an illustration of a spiritual principle. Jesus is not saying that if you are called first that you are necessarily going to fail to value His grace. Or that if you are called last that you will automatically value His grace. No. He is simply picturing possibilities. The disciples of His time

were surely represented by those who were called FIRST in the parable – Peter’s question certainly represents the attitude for working exhibited by those called first in the parable. And with that calling does come a greater danger – a danger of thinking that what you are doing for God is of greater value of what Jesus Christ has done for you. Jesus is trying to show them, and us, the Truth on this matter.

Neither does anything that Jesus says preclude the possibility that if a person has been working and walking with Jesus for a reward that they cannot repent and change course. Indeed, most of us probably have followed Christ for what we thought would be gain to us at one time or another. This parable is given to correct our course.

Freely Received and Freely Given

I mentioned earlier that, yes; Jesus said that whoever would lose their life for His sake would find it IN HIM. Well, surely walking with Jesus Christ and any reward that arises is included in our life in Christ. Thus, it is a fact that whoever would LOSE his reward for the sake of Jesus would FIND it. It is all the same unconditional giving of oneself to Jesus Christ.

God wants those who will lose themselves fully to Him for whatever it takes, for whatever He wants – and for us to leave all rewards, consequences, and results in His hands for, “whatever is right.” That is always the offer of grace, and it is the only we can truly receive grace.

In Matthew 10, we read about the very first time Jesus sent out His disciples to preach in His

name. So certainly the instructions He gives to them in that chapter parallels what He is teaching in this parable. He says to them:

And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. (Matt. 10:7-8)

There it is: Freely you have received. So freely give. God has freely given us ALL THINGS IN HIS SON. All is by His grace. Nothing can be earned. But because that is the Truth – if we have come to value the grace of God given to us in Christ – we will freely give. We will freely give ourselves to God and to others.

This Truth of grace is the revelation that Jesus is giving in this parable. He is showing that all that is of God is by His grace – but likewise showing the dangers of trying to walk with God upon another basis.

The End of the Day

All of the motivations for walking with Jesus Christ are pictured as being exposed at the end of the work day in the parable:

“So when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, ‘Call the laborers, and give them their wage, beginning from the LAST unto the FIRST.’ And when they (THE LAST) came – they that were hired about the eleventh hour -- they received every man a penny. But when the FIRST came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.”

Notice: Those who were called LAST in the day would be FIRST to get paid -- even though they had only worked one hour. And these LAST received exactly the same wage promised to the FIRST – the same wage as those who worked the whole day. To those who were called first, and had worked the entire day, this seemed unfair – it seemed unfair even though they received exactly the wage to which they had agreed.

Now, let us see this great Truth: Jesus is saying that God has exactly the SAME REWARD for each one of us – to the complete disregard of what, “we have done for Him.” Can we see that? Some people won’t like that. But read the parable. Consider the question the parable is addressing. That conclusion is inescapable. It is the Truth.

And consider also this: It is only if we are walking with Christ FOR a reward that we would object to this Truth. But if we have seen that all is of God’s grace, we will not only rejoice in the fact that God gives the same to all, but we will give ourselves to Him if it benefits others. That is what grace DOES in a person. It is what happens when we actually SEE JESUS.

The Lord Himself is Our “Reward”

How many see -- and this is important -- because again, Jesus is correcting the question, “Lord, we’ve forsaken all. What are we going to get out of this because we have?” – how many see that what Jesus is saying is that it doesn’t matter what you do for God. It doesn’t matter how much you do, how long you work, or what fruit you had a chance to bear. He is saying in this parable that what He has to give at the end of the

age – really, what He has to give NOW – IS EXACTLY THE SAME FOR ALL. This parable is correcting the question about what we get out of this -- and that is what He is saying – He is saying that He is giving the SAME TO ALL.

Now, if it were true that our serving and our following of Jesus EARNs US a greater reward – if that were true -- could Jesus have possibly told this parable the way He did -- wherein He shows that no matter how much work you do in the vineyard that you all get the SAME thing? And could He have shown the danger of thinking otherwise?

Now, someone is going to ask as to how the reward could be the same for all? Well, that will make sense once we realize what the reward really is. In the final analysis, the reward God has for all is Jesus Christ HIMSELF.

The parable calls the wage a penny – but it is an illustration given to the disciples before they could have possibly understood what was ahead of them – “Christ in them.” But it is the principle that applies – God calls all to Christ into various functions and at various times. Some are called to suffer more than others. Some are called to do much and others are called to do little. But the issue is not how MUCH we do. The issue is whether we are FAITHFUL to Him in little or much. And faithfulness begins by losing all of ourselves to Him unconditionally -- it means that we do not serve Him for gain or reward. We serve Him for Himself; as the result of love and grace.

Are we faithful to God? Or are we more faithful to ourselves and the reward we expect? That is a question that needs to be asked.

People think they are going to be given great rewards in this life and in the next – reigning and ruling, etc. But can we see that all of those possibilities are based on our relationship with Jesus Christ to begin with? If I am serving God for a reward, how much can He entrust to me? But if I have abandoned myself to Him regardless of reward, am I not a faithful servant who can be entrusted with His possessions?

The bottom line is this: JESUS CHRIST IS OUR REWARD. He is giving HIMSELF to us. And this is the SAME for all. Yet it is our faithfulness to Him, and our motivation for walking with Him, that determines, not how much of Himself that Jesus gives, but determines how much of Jesus we will experience.

We must see this. Jesus Christ is no respecter of persons. He gives Himself equally to all. But all do not experience Him equally. Why? Because we have not abandoned ourselves to Him. We are not receiving Him and experiencing Him by grace. We are walking with Him for gain.

We saw that God gives all things freely in Christ, and that because He does, we must receive all things freely, and give to others freely. But if we do not receive all things freely – but are trying to earn them – then how could we possibly fully experience what God gives freely? We cannot. We are walking in error. We are walking counter to the grace of God.

The greatest reward any of us could possibly receive is that of being able to fully experience everything that Jesus Christ is. But this is not EARNED. It is possible only if we fully give

ourselves to Him to the disregard of earning. And then if we do fully experience Christ can God build on that with subsequent responsibilities, now and in the age yet to come.

The Consequences

“When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner, saying, ‘These LAST men have worked only one hour, and you have made them EQUAL to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.’”

“But he answered and said to them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a penny? Take what is yours and go. But I wish to give to these LAST the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?’”

We have seen that despite the DIFFERENT amounts of work done by the laborers that the wages paid were exactly the SAME. But there was something else that was DIFFERENT. It was the value placed on the wage – and more importantly – the attitude towards the one paying it. Those who worked less valued the wage. Those who worked the most felt cheated – despite the fact that they received exactly the wage to which they had agreed ahead of time. In fact, they accused the one paying them of cheating them.

Those who were called first were now discovering something – they were discovering that regardless of the work done, it was the calling itself that guaranteed that wage. The wage was ALWAYS going to be the same for all. But they were blind

to this because they demanded an agreement. They did not understand that if the laborer was faithful to the Master in the calling he was given – no matter how much work he did – then the calling itself, and not the work done determined the wage. And it was exactly the same for all.

Jesus is revealing to us that our calling to Him guarantees that He offers all of Himself to us – all of His life and all that is in it is freely given to us by His grace. The calling itself carries that guarantee. If we really see this and value it then we will be faithful in whatever is contained in our calling – we will give our all to God because He has freely given all to us. But if we enter into our relationship with Christ carrying a spirit of bargain – seeking to use our life in Christ for personal gain – then we are going to discover that all of our efforts to earn actually earned us absolutely NOTHING. In other words, everything we sought to earn was always freely given by GRACE. And we had better beware because that same attitude of earning and self-gain will – if we don't repent – end up becoming a source of resentment towards what we wanted to earn, and a resentment towards Christ Himself.

There are professing Christians everywhere today, including many in leadership, who say that they are living for Christ, when, in fact, they are living for themselves – living for what they expect to gain from God. Most are self-deceived. They have never been broken; never been crucified; never come to where they see that there is nothing in them by which they could possibly earn or merit anything from God. But God is merciful – and He will seek to reveal the Truth on this matter, not only TO them, but IN them. He will bring about conviction one way or another to

expose their motives to themselves – in order that repentance may be wrought in them.

God will test and prove our reasons for walking with Christ. Have you ever believed and obeyed God, perhaps at even great cost to yourself, expecting that this will result in blessing – only to have it result in calamity? Have you believed and obeyed God to the best of your knowledge, only to have the entire thing come crashing down? Have you suffered – only for it all to seem to be for NOTHING? These are the experiences God used to expose our reasons for following Christ. These represent our time in the vineyard.

Again -- ultimately the reward of the saints is the Person of Jesus Christ. It really is. How that is worked out in reigning and ruling with Him throughout the eternal ages, and all that sort of thing, is simply an extension. But ultimately, Jesus Christ is our inheritance. Jesus Christ is our reward. The Bible says, “The Lord is your reward.”

God does not give some people more of Jesus Christ than He gives to others. No If you come to Jesus Christ, and He has joined you to Himself, and He dwells in you, you have in you ALL of Christ. There is nothing left that God has to give. He's given you ALL of Jesus and all that is IN HIM. But despite the fact that we have been given all of Jesus Christ solely by the grace of God, it is possible for us to experience LESS of Him than possible – because of unbelief, self-interest, and self-occupation. That is true even in this age. This is the danger Jesus was warning against, and what will happen if we try to walk with Christ for self-gain.

For Jesus' Sake in His Body

There is another Truth that is embedded in this parable. It is that whatever fruit you and I produce in the vineyard is shared by ALL. If the wage is the same for all, and the wage is the same Christ, then we all share the same Christ. Now, we may not value Him equally, but Jesus still gives to us all of Himself. God still pours out all of Christ to all of His people. The fruit which is produced by all of those individuals is SHARED because it is the same fruit in Christ -- and we are all members of ONE body.

We see a contrary attitude in the parable, where people say, "Well, they shouldn't have as much of Jesus as I have because I spent more time in the vineyard". These are people who resent God's blessing for others, turning the whole thing into nothing more than a competition. This can never fully experience the grace and love of God in Jesus Christ. No, if you and I really and truly come into the knowledge of the Truth, and really begin to see and know and appreciate what God has done for us, and given to us in Jesus Christ -- solely by the grace of God -- and come into this Truth and are set free, we are going to WANT EVERYONE else to have it free of charge. Indeed, if we can suffer that others may receive we will rejoice. If we have to suffer to produce that fruit; if we have to be the one to work twelve hours, and go through that suffering in this age -- then we will rejoice that God gave us the privilege -- in the same way Paul did. That is what love does.

Fullness in Jesus Christ

And so this parable, and the way Jesus told it -- and its conclusion -- very clearly states that the reward of the redeemed, if we could call it that, is fullness in Jesus Christ. It is Christ, Himself. This is the reward regardless of what we have to go through in this life as a Christian, and regardless of what we go through to produce fruit. Jesus Christ Himself is the reward -- and then all which extends from Him. But, we can determine how much we will be able to value and revere Him. Being in this for ourselves is the very definition of what it means to refuse to lose your life. We will never find full life in Christ, despite the fact that it is all there for us -- solely by the grace of God.

This issue is front and center in the experience of Job. That is why Satan asked the question, "Does Job serve God for nothing?" Well, God not only removed all of His blessings from Job, but allowed Job to suffer in return for all of his serving. That was a great testing. Yet in the end, Job let all of this go -- gave himself to God despite all of the loss and despite all of what seemed so unfair -- and finally saw God Himself.

The book of Job and the parable of Jesus reveals Truth on this matter that everyone in the Body of Christ needs to personally apply. Do we serve God for what we think we can get in return? The answer to that question reveals much about our relationship with God through Christ.

Chapter 6

The Necessity of Righteousness

Does God allow the righteous to suffer – WITHIN His will? Absolutely. We have been seeing much of the reason why from the book of Job. But let's really get down to the core Truth on this matter: What is RIGHTEOUSNESS – as defined by God? And why is righteousness necessary in order to walk with God? To have relationship with God? And just as important of a question: HOW does God accomplish righteousness in His people?

The Delusion of Self-Righteousness

The necessity for righteousness stands front and center in the New Testament. Paul talks about it at length in the Epistle to the Romans and in the Epistle to the Galatians. It is a main topic in the New Testament.

But if you examine the discussions in the NT about righteousness, you will almost always find a contrast – a contrast between the righteousness of Jesus Christ -- and SELF-righteousness. This contrast is dealt with, not only in the epistles -- but it certainly is a main topic in the Gospels -- where Jesus constantly condemned the self-righteousness of the Pharisees. Thus, we not only find the necessity of the righteousness of Jesus Christ central to the gospel, but we find that righteousness that is found in SELF is completely contrary to that gospel.

Self-righteousness is a delusion that deceives us into thinking that we are right with God within ourselves. It always carries blindness to Jesus Christ -- because if we were to actually catch a glimpse of HIM our self-righteousness would be

smashed to pieces. Thus, God must allow trials and suffering to come upon us that will thoroughly expose the truth about us – that there is NO righteousness possible in us – that our only hope is found in One who is other than ourselves – and that He alone can be our righteousness. Trials are intended to bring us into hopelessness in ourselves so that we will open ourselves to Christ by faith.

One way to describe self-righteousness is, “faith in self.” Indeed, even those who condemn themselves usually do so out of a frustrated faith in self. They keep trying to live up to their goal of self-righteousness – and keep failing. The trial of faith is intended by God to bring us to the place – not to where we are given power to succeed – but intended to bring us to the place where we realize we are doomed to failure. It is only then that we will finally put our faith solely in Jesus Christ.

A Question

The word, “righteous,” appears 22 times in the book of Job. The first occurrence is in a rhetorical question asked by one of Job’s friends that actually sums up one of Job’s major perplexities:

Remember, I pray thee, who [ever] perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?

The implication of this question is this: “Job, no one who is innocent or righteous in God’s eyes would ever be allowed to suffer as you are suffering. Therefore, you are not innocent or righteous. You are getting what you deserve because God is always fair.”

Now, of course, that reasoning is completely wrong. Indeed, we saw that God has already said that Job was, “a good and upright man,” and that what God allowed Satan to do to Job was, “without cause.” But what we have called, “Job’s doctrine” – and the doctrine of his friends – gave no place for a person who was faithful to God to suffer at the hand of God. No. If you obeyed God you would be blessed. If you disobeyed you would be cursed. Therefore, since Job was seemingly being cursed, he MUST have sinned.

If you read Job’s words throughout the book, you will see that he already knows that he is a sinner. But he cannot find any sin in himself that could possibly justify his present suffering. THAT is his great perplexity. In short, Job was simply being HONEST. He was not going to fabricate a confession of sin simply to make God look just. He already knew God was just, but could not explain HOW God was just in his present suffering – because his, “doctrine,” had no provision for what was happening.

Do we realize that to believe that our works determine whether we suffer – to believe that we can earn God’s blessing – do we realize that this is EXACTLY what it means to be living upon the basis of SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS? Do we realize that this is exactly what it means to be walking UNDER THE LAW? It is exactly that. Sure -- for to believe that we merit blessings from God by what we do is equal to saying that we are righteous enough for those blessings. And yet millions of us carry this error at the core of our walk with Jesus Christ – all the while proclaiming the gospel of GRACE. We are deceived by, “another gospel,”

“Job’s doctrine,” could not explain his suffering. Really, it provided for only two possible solutions: First, Job would have to admit he had sinned, thus vindicating God. Or second, Job would have to accuse God of being unjust, thus vindicating himself. The problem was that Job had NOT sinned, and yet God WAS just. That was impossible according to this, “doctrine,” and the beliefs of Job and his friends. In effect, they were, “under the law,” and were basing God’s actions towards them solely upon their works.

When we cannot explain what God is doing with our present knowledge of Him – with our present, “doctrine,” of Him – then the explanation is found OUTSIDE of our present understanding of Him. It is a big step in the life of the believer to realize that we are blind to the Truth that answers our perplexity – but that there is an answer in Jesus Christ. In short, it is a big step to know that even if we cannot see Jesus Christ that Jesus Christ sees us. That is exactly what we read earlier from out of Job 23.

Job finally did see answers. But he was never given information or explanations. He saw God Himself. Thus, when we cannot understand God based upon our present knowledge of Him the solution is likewise to see God Himself. That will either answer our questions or reveal that we need no longer ask them.

Freedom from Self-righteousness

Isn’t it amazing that even in this ancient book – the story of Job records the earliest events of any recorded in the Bible – even in this ancient book we find the gospel of grace? But it is there front and center.

Job was fully aware that no human being could be righteous before God. He said:

If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity. If I be wicked, woe unto me; and [if] I be righteous, [yet] will I not lift up my head. (Job 10:14-15)

Job states a great Truth – it is a Truth repeated in the New Testament. He states that none of us can provide God with any reason to acquit us of sin. But just as importantly, even when we happen to do what is right – that is nothing to boast about -- we have simply done what we are supposed to do. In fact, if we really knew our motives, we would see that many of us do right, not because we believe Jesus Christ, but because we don't – we do right because we are afraid not to do right. This is not faith. It is fear, based in unbelief.

Connect the above verse, along with what we saw in Job 4:7, "Whoever perished being innocent? And where were the righteous ever cut off?" Those two verses alone, not to mention the entirety of the NT, leaves all of humanity in a hopeless situation before God. It leaves humanity with no righteousness whatsoever before an eternally righteous God – and with nothing we can do to remedy the situation. Yet this is exactly the place to where God wants to bring us. Why? Because it is the Truth. There is no other Truth about humanity. Thus, if we want to be guided into all Truth we are going to have to see and embrace this Truth about ourselves personally.

But God will not reveal to us the Truth about ourselves and leave us there. For the only

reason it is possible to see the Truth about ourselves is if we are at least starting to see Jesus Christ – that He alone will BE our righteousness.

God will use trials to expose our hopeless situation. Our suffering will expose all of our fake faith and all of our self-righteousness. But the purpose is not to, “put us down.” No. Rather, the purpose is to show us the TRUTH. That Truth is that we do not have what we need and we have no way of getting it. In ourselves, we ARE hopeless. God wants us to face this Truth and confess it – and to transfer all of our faith over to Jesus Christ.

Each believer must come to experience this through suffering. There is simply no other way. Of course, we can resist. Some will not accept the Truth about themselves. But if we will embrace the Truth of Christ, we will be set free from our delusion of self-righteousness, and actually come to know what it means to know Jesus Christ; what it means to know the grace of God that is found in Him.

Christ, Our Righteousness

Humanity must be made righteous. Why? Because God is righteousness personified and it is God’s purpose that we be ONE WITH HIM through Christ forever. That is impossible unless we have a righteousness that is equal to His righteousness.

To be righteous before the Lord is really a matter of being RIGHT FOR GOD. It means to be able to fit into Him, so to speak. That is not possible

unless we are fully compatible with Him – fully compatible with a perfectly righteous God.

Of course, when we talk about God being righteous, it can be somewhat problematic understanding what that means. When we say God is righteous there is a natural tendency to immediately compare God to a higher standard – a standard that defines Him AS righteous. In other words, if God is righteous, then according to what is He righteous? It may elude us that in God's case He Himself IS righteousness personified – He is the standard. God carries in His own Person all righteousness and Truth.

What this means is that righteousness, Truth, holiness, light, and all that is good – these are not THINGS that exist outside of God. No. God, the Person, IS those realities – which makes Him the source of all.

Now this brings us to a great Truth. It is a foundational Truth of Christianity – the foundational Truth that reveals how God makes us righteous. God makes believers righteous by joining us to His Son – by making Christ to be the living righteousness of the believer.

This is directly stated in I Corinthians 1:

That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord. (I Cor. 1:29-31)

You cannot read 1 Corinthians 1: 29-31, and continue to believe that righteousness and sanctification are THINGS that God, “does to you,” or THINGS that God gives you. God does not ACT UPON US and make us righteous, or sanctify us. No. Rather than give us THINGS called, “righteousness,” or, “sanctification,” God gives us JESUS CHRIST, who IS made unto us righteousness and sanctification. In other words, Jesus Christ – Christ in us -- IS the righteousness of the believer. There is no other righteousness.

One of the great doctrines of Christianity is the doctrine of JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH. This doctrine states that if we put our faith in Christ then God will impute to Christ our sin, and God will impute to us the righteousness of Christ. This is absolutely correct – in the legal and moral sense. Paul goes to great lengths to explain this legally both in Romans and in Galatians.

But Christianity is not merely a legal transaction between God and humanity made possible by Jesus Christ. Rather, it is a new birth from above. Christianity is, “Christ in us” – we are joined to the Lord and made one with Him in spirit. (I Cor. 6:17) Thus, yes, God does impute to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ in the legal sense, but more importantly, God IMPARTS to us Christ Himself. He joins us to His Son in spirit and we become ONE with Him.

What this means is that rather than give us a righteousness BECAUSE of Christ, God gives us Christ Himself – and His very presence in us constitutes the righteousness of God. Jesus Christ the Person IS the righteousness of each believer. That is why Paul is able to say, in the above verse from I Corinthians, “that no flesh

should glory...but that he that glories ought to glory only in the Lord.”

Now notice something here. If all God did was, “declare us righteous,” because we put our faith in Christ, though that would be wonderful in the legal sense, would it actually MAKE us righteous? Would it do anything to actually change us? No. Legally declaring someone righteous does nothing to produce an inward change – does nothing to make it possible for a person to live in spiritual oneness with a righteous God. It simply changes their legal classification. But if we are joined to Jesus Christ – made one with the personification of all righteousness – then we are one with Righteousness Himself. That makes Jesus Christ our righteousness. And as we grow to experience and realize Christ then eternal fellowship with God becomes possible through Him.

Herein we see the absolute essential of understanding that the core meaning of Christianity is CHRIST IN US. Unless we see this Truth we will not understand that Christ Himself – by virtue of the fact that we are joined to Him in spirit – IS the very life of the believer; is the righteousness of the believer.

If, “Christ is our life,” (Col. 3:4) then this means that eternal life is not a THING or a CLASSIFICATION that God gives us – but God give us Jesus Christ Who IS the life. And His life is certainly righteous.

God’s Purpose

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the

world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law [is] the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God [which is] by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference. (Romans 3:19-22)

This passage from Romans is a nice summary of God's work in the heart of Job. Job had put himself under the law. He believed that his good works earned him approval from God, and his bad works earned him curses from God. But then despite all of Job's good works Job was met with catastrophe. This was not supposed to happen. Job could not understand. But what Job initially thought was curse from God was actually a blessing – a vehicle God would use to set Him free. This is actually revealed in this passage from Romans.

When trials come upon the believer we may initially believe it is a punishment from God. We may believe we need to obey our way out of the trial. But if we read this passage, it may be that God has allowed the trial to show us that we cannot obey Him. God may be doing exactly what this passage says: That the purpose of the law is to expose us all – to expose us as spiritually dead – to do so to the point where our mouth will be stopped talking about any possibility of our own righteousness. Sure. The more that you get under the law, the more it will point out the fact that you are a reprobate inside. There will be no escape from this conclusion by obeying the law –

because you simply CANNOT obey. If you succeed on one point, you will fail on another.

The problem with humanity which the law exposes is not found in what we do, or don't do. The problem is found in what we ARE – what we ARE before God. That cannot be fixed through law-keeping. Indeed, it will be exposed through our attempts at law-keeping. If we try to live before God on the basis of the works of the law, we will be exposed as unrighteous.

Now, of course, there are many professing believers who are exposed as unrighteous, but refuse to embrace that truth. They keep trying to keep the law. But this is nothing more than an extension of the same problem – and it is often why God allows the chastisement of suffering. He must break that pride and expose that unbelief through the work of the Cross.

Job was discovering this Truth of Romans 3 as he sought God in his suffering. He argued and reasoned and cried out to God – and eventually had to conclude that there was no righteousness in himself. There was nothing he could do to drag help or answers out of God. But along side of that he saw that ALL was in God – and that seeing this Truth was the entire purpose for which God allowed his suffering.

Even though the Truth of Christ or God as our righteousness is not directly stated in the book of Job, it is there all through. Job continually confesses that he is not righteous, but that only God is righteous. And Job also confesses that God is just. Do the math. These pronouncements add up to the same principle that we find in the NT.

The Work of the Cross

The work of the Cross is not merely to set us free from sin. It is intended to set us free from ourselves – self-righteousness being a major aspect of our self-occupation and self-ownership. Self-righteousness is nothing more than self-ownership along religious lines.

There are many ways in which God brings the work of the Cross. But all of those ways are intended to expose us dead sinners – so that we will take our place AS dead sinners crucified with Christ. The law is one means that God brings us to this place. Through suffering God will bring us to where Job was brought – to where we see that there is no escape from the conclusion that it must be ALL OF GRACE – all of the Christ who is in us. But if we are open to God, that conclusion will be one in which we will rejoice. It will be Truth that sets us free from the delusion of our own righteousness into the reality of Christ as our righteousness.

We see this conclusion in our passage from Romans. Paul writes:

***Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall
no flesh be justified in His sight...”***

That statement is a complete and utter dead end for humanity. There is nowhere to go from that point on our own. Yet, in verse 21, notice the first two words:

BUT NOW....

Those two words denote a CHANGE. Something has changed because of Jesus Christ. Paul tells us what has changed:

But now, the righteousness of God apart from the law (completely independent from law-keeping) is manifested..."

But what is this righteousness of God – a righteousness that has nothing to do with law-keeping? Well, it is a Person. It is Jesus Christ as our righteousness. He is witnessed to everywhere in the Old Testament. BUT NOW – under the New Covenant wherein believers are joined to the Lord -- He IS the righteousness of God – the righteousness of God that has nothing to do with law-keeping. He is the righteousness of God that is manifested in each believer:

...even the righteousness of God which is by the faith OF Jesus Christ.

The faith OF Jesus Christ – in contrast to faith IN Jesus Christ – is the faith that comes to birth in the believer by seeing and knowing Jesus Christ as our life; as our ALL; as our righteousness. To put it another way, the faith OF Jesus Christ is our oneness with Christ Himself in His faith. The more God we come into an inward realization of Christ in us, the more we will be one with Christ in HIS faith. Thus, we have:

...the righteousness of God, which is by faith OF Jesus Christ, upon all who believe."

Job experienced this reality – as much as was possible at that point. When Job finally SAW GOD Himself – when he received revelation – you will note that Job no longer questioned, argued,

or reasoned. He was finished talking about whether he was righteous, and he was finished asking God for answers. His answer was God.

Job had been brought to the end of himself, but to a new beginning in God. Job, as much as was possible before Christ came – and certainly a lesson for NT saints in type and shadow – had been brought to where he knew that the only righteousness that could exist was that of the Person of God Himself. And he saw that God offers this solely by His grace in Jesus Christ. This alone makes it possible for us to walk with God now, and will continue on throughout the eternal ages.

Chapter 7

Gaining an Eternal Perspective

The Book of Job contains spiritual principles that apply to God's dealings in the life of believers. The details may be different, but the principles are eternal – and that is why God has given us this story in His inspired Word.

In order for Job to be able to understand God's purpose in his suffering, he needed an eternal perspective. That certainly is the case with each believer. If we expect to be able to grasp God's purpose in our lives, but limit the possibilities to THIS age or to OUR temporal life, we will never understand.

Much of what God is doing has eternal ramifications. There is warfare in the spiritual realm. There are spiritual matters being worked out that affect more than just the person who is suffering. There is a Body of Christ being prepared for the eternal ages. We will never know the details of all of this – but we ought to at least realize it as a fact.

So, how do we come to have an eternal perspective? Only one way: We must see Jesus Christ. We must be in the process of coming into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. We read this earlier, but it applies here:

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes

of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what [is] the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set [him] at his own right hand in the heavenly [places], Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all [things] under his feet, and gave him [to be] the head over all [things] to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (Eph. 1:15-23)

Note that being able to spiritually grasp these realities in the purpose of God is fully dependent upon receiving, “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.” In short, SEE JESUS and you will come to see all that is in Him, and all that is in the purpose of God through Him.

But do we also see the folly of trying to understand these matters without seeing Jesus? We might be able to sort some of these things out from a theological standpoint. But, “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ.” (Col. 2:3) Only as Christ is unfolded to us will that which is of Him be unfolded.

Job Sees He is Blind

In Job 38, probably after a few years of suffering, God actually begins to directly answer Job. Can you imagine the impact this must have had on

Job? For so long he had cried out to God in his suffering and found only SILENCE. The suffering had been relentless – as had God’s silence. But now God began to speak to him.

It is significant as to the tone and spirit in which God began to reveal Himself to Job. You will note that God offered no criticism or condemnation. In fact, God’s answer didn’t mention much about Job personally at all. Most of it was God’s revelation of Himself to Job.

At Job 38:1 God begins to talk to Job. It says:

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, ‘Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?’”

God is basically saying to Job, “Job, you are doing a lot of talking – but you don’t have a clue as to what you are talking about.” God would later say the same thing to Job’s friends. This isn’t a condemnation from God. No. Rather, God is seeking to open the eyes of Job the fact that there is more to God than Job could presently know.

As I noted earlier, it is a big step to realize that fact – to realize that there is Truth outside of my knowledge – Truth that fully vindicates God. For Job, it was Truth that did not demand that he confess sin of which he was not guilty. And it was Truth that showed that God was just – even though He allowed Job to suffer, “without cause.”

There are times when we are in the dark about what God is doing. It is natural to try to reason, talk, and even pray our way out of our perplexity. In fact, even if we cannot get out of the trial, if

God would just explain things to us and clear up our perplexity over it – well, that would be something we would embrace. But that would NOT help us – for if it would help us, God would give us the explanation we seek. Rather, God often says to us, “Who is this that clouds the Truth by trying to understand that which cannot be presently understood?”

The point is, God cannot explain to us what we presently cannot understand. The problem is that we cannot see; we cannot hear. This is not a BRAIN problem. INFORMATION will not help us. Rather, we need REVELATION. We need our eyes and ears to be opened to Jesus Christ.

Revelation must come from God. We cannot muster it up out of ourselves. But we can be sure that God is presently doing a work that – if we will open to Him – will create in us the spiritual capacity to see and hear. Or, to put it another way, God is doing a work that is intended to bring us into an inward REALIZATION of Jesus Christ.

Job opened himself to God while he was still IN his suffering. That required faith – a submission to what God was revealing to Job about Himself. And the result was that Job SAW GOD. This is exactly what can happen in the life of any believer.

What does it mean to SEE Jesus Christ? It does not mean to see a vision. Neither does it mean to muster up a picture or concept of Him in your imagination. Rather, seeing Christ is the result of an inward revelation of God – first, in your spirit, and then eventually unto the renewal of your mind. It is not accounted for through human capacities. Indeed, Jesus said, “Unless you are

born from above you cannot see.” But it will happen. A realization of Jesus Christ will slowly dawn; come to birth.

We Must Know Jesus Christ

Christianity, at the core, is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:27) The Christian life is from out of Christ, who is in us, and lived on the basis of faith. But for the last two-thousand years, Christianity has been crystallized into a religion. There have always been Christian people putting forth a lot of theories, starting many fads, starting many movements, doing this or that – presenting almost anything other than Christ as the solution; offering a substitute for Christ.

But as was the case with Job, we do not know what we are talking about. There are things like the ‘Purpose Driven Church’ and the ‘Purpose Driven Life.’ There are ‘seeker-friendly’ churches. These are offered as, “the way to DO church.” There is the, “Word of Faith Movement.” And there are the various gospels of legalism, license, and pure academia. Every imaginable solution has been offered to meet the needs and wants of believers except the Person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus would say to all of us, “You are looking to all of these ways to find Me, or to walk with Me. But I AM the Way. Indeed, I am the ONLY Way -- and until you live in Me, abide in Me, and live out from Me as your very life – until you come into an inward realization of ME – you will not get far. You may be walking in darkness.”

How many understand that when Jesus said, “I AM the way, I AM the truth, I AM THE life,” -- that

He was not lumping Himself into a list of many possibilities? No. He is the ONLY way, the ONLY truth and the ONLY life. You and I are not only wasting our time with, “other ways,” or, “other ‘truths’”, but we are damaging ourselves. Jesus Christ has got to be OUR life, OUR truth and OUR way. He has to become our ALL. But the only means by which we can come into this by allowing the Lord to do whatever it takes to bring us into it --into the fullness of His Son; into an inward realization of the fullness of Jesus Christ.

So again – Jesus Christ is the only means that God has given by which we can come into the fullness of God’s purpose. It is only by knowing Jesus in an inward way, and coming into that inward realization of Him, that we can gain an eternal prospective. All discernment in the Christian life, no matter what we are talking about, whether it be little things, or big things, is a by-product of knowing Jesus Christ.

Knowing Christ – the way the Bible means it -- is not intellectual or emotional. It is a spiritual realization that cannot be accounted for by human capacity. Yes, our minds will be renewed according to the Truth. But this is not OF the human mind. It is of the spirit of God.

Jesus Christ is All

Jesus also said, “I AM the alpha and the omega?” How many understand that this means that Jesus is ALL? “I AM the beginning and the end” — in other words, I AM everything! The, “I AM statements,” of the gospel of John, express various dimensions of who Jesus Christ is to us and in us. There are not additional experiences that we must attain in order to find all that God

has for us. We are complete in Christ -- and in Christ alone. In Him alone has God freely given to us all things. (Rom. 8:32)

When we are saved, we receive one hundred percent of Jesus Christ. God does not hand us merely a portion of Jesus. That is nonsense. Jesus Christ is a Living Person and at salvation we are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him – not with part of Him, but with all of Him. Therefore, the Christian life is not a matter of our getting more of Jesus. The Christian life is a matter of discovering the Christ which we have already received in fullness -- and a matter of coming into a realization of Him.

We need to get these things straight, because unless we do, we are not going to gain an eternal prospective. We are going to be like Job and try to reason our way through difficulties. But if we know that all is given in Christ, then we will realize that instead of always trying to figure out the answer, or instead of always asking God, "Why?," we will instead ask God to reveal to us Jesus Christ.

This is what God is getting at with Job. He is saying, "Why are you trying to gain understanding by talking it to death; by thinking it to death?" That will get us nowhere. As we have been seeing, what Job needed was not INFORMATION – but he needed REVELATION – a revelation of God.

Job Sees God

Fortunately, if you and I find ourselves in a situation like the one Job was in, we can rejoice and give thanks. That is because we can know

that our suffering is all unto the end that God can reveal Christ in us in a much greater way than we could ever have expected or anticipated.

God spoke to Job. But if you read what God said, it is clear that God was actually revealing Himself to Job. God was showing Himself to be far greater than what Job could have imagined. And when Job saw that, he was humbled.

Have you ever been in a great trial that has brought out all of your doubts? Perhaps it has brought out your fears, anger, and demands of God. You struggle and fight. But finally you begin to surrender and lose yourself to God. Then you begin to SEE GOD – you begin to realize the Truth. You realize how ignorant you were – you feel so foolish. You are humbled – not so much because you have failed – but because you now realize HIS greatness.

True humility is not the outcome of condemning yourself, or of having your pride hurt because you know you have failed. You may pass through some of that, but ultimately, true humility is the result of seeing the greatness and love and grace of Jesus Christ.

This happened to Job. He said, “I spoke things too wonderful for me. I heard You with the hearing of the ear – i.e., I thought I, “had it; I thought I understood.” But then Job said, “But Lord, now I see You.” And when Job saw God his mouth was stopped. Not because he was afraid – but because seeing God caused fear to flee.

You will not find anywhere in this account that God gave Job INFORMATION. Nope. But God did give Job a REVELATION – of Himself. This is

a great lesson for us. We want to see answers, but God wants us to see HIMSELF. And if we would just abide in Christ by faith through our suffering we would come to see Christ in a way that would very often make ANSWERS unnecessary.

When you see Jesus Christ, you are seeing THE Light. How many know that if you see THE LIGHT, everything else progressively begins to be clearer because you are seeing those matters in His light? So, you want to know things, you want to understand things, you want to understand the Bible? All of that is great but you must come to the place where you understand and know spiritually and in an inward way, the Person of Jesus Christ.

Soul or Spirit

When we were saved, Jesus Christ joined us to Himself and made us one with Himself in spirit. (I Cor. 6:17) But we are not made one with Him physically, nor with our soul or natural man. No. Only our spirit is joined to the Lord in this age. But note: The moment we are joined to the Lord in spirit, but not in our natural man, there is created in us a separation between soul and spirit – a division in each of us between what is joined to the Lord and what is not.

This Truth is vital to grasp because it explains much. First, it explains why God works the way He does with us, and why our experience is what it is. Jesus Christ dwells IN US by virtue of our union with Him in spirit – and God has absolutely given us all things that He has to give in His Son. To put it more clearly, EVERYTHING that God has to give is already given in the Christ with whom

we are one in spirit. NOTHING that God has to give is given in, or resides in, what we are in ourselves. Thus, Jesus Christ is the source of ALL for the believer. We are the source of NOTHING.

This tells us that if we are to actually experience that which is of God – Jesus Christ is always the source. All things that are of the new creation are OUT FROM GOD as the source:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed over, behold, all things are become new. And all things (of this new creature) are of OUT FROM God. (II Cor. 5:17-18)

Now, what this means is that God always works from the inside out – all that we experience that is of God comes from out of Christ – Christ is our life (Col. 3:4) – and then our minds are renewed according to Christ. Our conduct is then impacted according to Christ.

But contrast this over and against walking according to OURSELVES, rather than according to Christ. What does that mean? It is what scripture means by the phrase, “to walk according to the flesh.” To walk according to the flesh means to walk according to ME -- according to my bias, my desires, my thinking, my mind, my religion, my pride, my motives, my ambitions and more. But what makes this worse is that many believers gather this all up and mistakenly assume that their walk, which is according to themselves, and out from themselves – they assume that such a walk IS a walk in the spirit. It is not.

The reason why we fall into these traps is because we do not have a revelation, in an inward way, of Jesus Christ. And that blindness can be held in place by our refusal to open to God and be taught of Him. People can be so hard-hearted, prideful and ambitious, even in the church, religiously and spiritually, that God cannot even make an impression on them. The deception is so strong that they cannot discern the difference between their own natural man and the Christ who dwells in them. Such deception is everywhere today.

We see this deception with Job and his friends. They sat around having a brain-storming session – they spoke from out of themselves and their own point of view. They thought that they KNEW – they spoke of things too wonderful for them and were blind to the fact that they WERE BLIND.

To be blind and not know you are blind – to the point where you think the darkness in you is light – this is a terrible condition. Jesus said, “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great [is] that darkness!” (Matt. 6:22-23) The only solution, as Jesus says, is to turn and make your eyes single to God – meaning to give yourself unconditionally to Him regardless of cost.

God’s Grace and Love

In Job 40:2, God says to Job, “So he that strives with the Almighty instructs Him. He that debates God -- let him answer it.” Now, I don’t think that these corrections from God are condemnations. I

don't think God was angry with Job at all. In fact, I think these words – along with the attitude of grace and love with which they were carried, were part of the revelation of God that He was giving of Himself to Job. God is making Job to see Him as One who is far greater than he could have imagined. He's revealing Himself as One Who is eternally bigger than our minds and understanding – bigger is a wonderful way.

When we are in a great trial and great suffering, it ought to be comforting to know that there is a revelation of God that is the answer – even if presently we do not have that revelation. In other words, we may not have answers, but it ought to be comforting to know that there IS an answer. And as we have noted, that answer is not INFORMATION, as much as it is REVELATION – a revelation of God Himself.

Part of what God is doing through any trial is to get us to realize that we need a revelation of Him that is presently outside of our present frame of reference. The answer is not found WITHIN ourselves. Neither can we think it through. God must reveal Himself to us.

Reveal Himself is exactly what God wants to do. And once He begins to do so – once He brings us to where we can receive that revelation – we will feel just like Job did. We will begin to see an almighty, eternal God, who is much bigger than we ever imagined. We will feel silly that we did not believe God. We may say, as did Job, “I spoke about things I didn't know anything about; I was clueless; I didn't have any idea what I was talking about -- but I sure kept talking. I griped and I complained and I talked; I prayed and begged You, Lord, to let me see answers. But

Lord, You did something that was not even in my thinking: Instead of letting me see answers -- You let me see YOU." And then we will likely say to the Lord, "Thank you, Lord, for not delivering me before You brought me to the point where I was able to know You."

Christ, the Rock

God began to reveal Himself to Job in chapters 38, 39 and 40. If you read those chapters, you will find a revelation of the great and eternal God. And since God Himself is eternal, seeing Him will carry more of an eternal prospective. Or, to put it another way, if we come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, our perspective on everything will progressively change from being a temporal, self-occupied perspective, to an eternal, Christ-centered perspective. In short, our minds will be renewed according to the Truth; according to Christ.

Now, don't get the impression that this means that God doesn't care about the temporal. No. But it is His desire that we no longer be governed by the temporal – neither the temporal nature in ourselves, or by the temporal world around us. Rather, He wants us to live out from Christ by faith – He wants us to be governed by an inward realization of Jesus Christ.

This is right out of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all of these things will be added unto you." (Matt. 6:33) In other words, give yourself to Christ. Live from out of Christ as your life. And if we will do that, God will take care of the temporal. It isn't that we won't have

business to attend to, or responsibility. But all of it will be governed by Christ.

You and I will never seek first the Kingdom of God unless we get a glimpse of the King. We have to see Jesus and come into an inward realization of Him. As we do, there will come freedom because we will know the Truth. We will want to seek the Kingdom first. It is not going to be a law to follow. No. We are going to want to SEEK FIRST the kingdom.

The true knowledge of Jesus Christ – an inward realization of the Person of Christ – is the Rock upon which God builds His people. Remember what Jesus Christ said to Peter in Matthew 16? Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you, but My Father who is in heaven has revealed it unto you.” Then Jesus said, “Upon THIS ROCK -- He is speaking of Himself as the Rock; as the Revelation of Himself in His people – that is the ROCK upon which I will build My church.”

Jesus is not talking about structures or cathedrals. Neither is he talking about increasing membership. Rather, He is speaking of building believers themselves -- building the new creation in Christ upon the Rock of the revelation of Jesus Christ who is IN THEM. If Christ begins to be revealed in you -- He is the foundation for everything else that God wants to build in your life, and in mine. That is the only way in which God can build in us an eternal perspective – we must be built up IN CHRIST.

All Things Gathered in Christ

For God has made known unto us through His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself. (Eph. 1:9)

God has an eternal purpose – a purpose that He decided HIMSELF. Now, what is that purpose?

That in the dispensation of the fullness of time, God may gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him. (Eph. 1:10)

If believers are to gain an eternal perspective, we must grasp and experience God's eternal purpose -- and that purpose is to gather together in ONE – all things in Christ.

Indeed, God then says:

In Whom we have obtained an inheritance. (Eph. 1:11)

What is the inheritance of the saints in Christ? Christ HIMSELF. In this age, we have, "Christ in us, the hope of glory," (Col. 1:27) But beginning with the next age, for the believer there will be, "Christ in us, the full experiencing of HIS glory." The realization of the glory of Christ in His people – this is the core of God's inheritance in the saints. And then, out from that, will be all of the experiences that result from the fullness of Christ in us – such as reigning and ruling with Christ.

God's eternal purpose in Christ begins in this age -- Paul explains that Christ in us by the means of the Holy Spirit can be likened to a down payment of the inheritance that God has for His people:

***We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise,
which is the earnest of our inheritance until
the redemption of that purchased possession
unto the praise of His glory. (Eph. 1:13-14)***

So there it is again -- in this age, we have Christ in us, who is our HOPE of experiencing His full glory. But in the next age, Christ in us shall be the actual REALIZATION of His glory. We will actually be able to fully experience His glory through the resurrection of the body. Both are an experiencing of the same Christ – but the experiencing of Christ in the ages to come will eternally exceed what is possible here, in this age.

So the bottom line is that seeing Jesus Christ is the only way in which we can gain an eternal perspective – it is the only way to know the real purpose of God for the saints.

Chapter 8

Leaving Ourselves Alone

In Job, chapter 42, we have seen that God brought Job, despite all of his suffering -- and even though that suffering was still continuing -- to the place where he was able to leave himself alone into the hands of God. I want to look at that today to discover how that is possible, why it is necessary, and what the outcome of that will be as it pertains to the Christian experience.

If there is one thing we need to realize in discussing this subject it is this: If we really SEE JESUS CHRIST – realize Him in an inward way – we are going to leave ourselves alone into His hands. We will do so, not only voluntarily, but joyfully. He will be to us as a place of safety; as our haven of rest. There will not be an argument about it. And we won't do that because we are afraid not to do it. Neither will we do it because we suppose we are commanded to do it. We will do it because seeing Him will put us at rest – we will know that we can do nothing about ourselves, but that He is our ALL. In short, if we see Jesus we will see we are loved and that He can be trusted with everything.

God's Revelation of Himself

God, beginning in chapter 38, began to reveal Himself to Job. We can read the words, but it is clear that along with hearing the words of God, there was an inward revelation that God was giving to Job through those words. Job saw that God was bigger and more eternal -- greater and gloriously more wonderful -- than Job could ever have imagined.

Now, that is a big understatement. But it certainly ought to be expected. For when God begins to reveal Himself to us we are NOT going to see a God who is SMALLER than our understanding. We are going to see One who is far beyond anything we could ever understand. God is infinitely BIGGER than the, “religious boxes,” I put Him in.

In a very real sense of the word, left to ourselves, all of us create God in our own image. We may not do this on purpose, but without a revelation from God given to us from the outside of us INTO us – without that – we are left only with what we can muster up out of ourselves. And the material we have to work with if left to ourselves is, well, OURSELVES. Thus, the God we create will be someone who is out from us – a product of what we are religiously. In one way or another He will be a god created in OUR image.

It is possible for a human being – even a professing Christian – to create God from out of themselves – and to be fully certain that they know Him in Truth. Some of the most deceived people are the most certain of what they believe. That is because they are at one with the principle that binds them – there is nothing in them running contrary to their concept of God. But again – human beings are capable of such deception. It is only if God shakes such deception to the core that a person will open themselves up to something else – to the Truth. This is what God did with Job.

Job did believe many true facts about God. He did believe many true doctrines and theological concepts. But he was blind to God Himself. How many realize that you can describe many facts to

a blind person, and they may accept those facts, but this does not enable them to see. The only way they can see is if their eyes are opened. God must open the eyes of the blind – first through the new birth – but then through revelation subsequent to that new birth. Unless He brings revelation of Himself TO a person, there is no possibility we can ever see.

Now, a person can certainly refuse to see. There are many professing Christians, including leaders, who COULD see but refuse to see. The cost is one they are unwilling to pay. So when light is given to them – revelation is given to them – they sidestep it. They focus their eyes elsewhere. There keep their moral compass pointed in the direction of their own agenda, and refuse to deviate from that course. But this is nothing but hardness of heart and unbelief.

Back to Job. God revealed Himself to Job – it was a revelation that was impossible for Job to apprehend on his own. God had to give it to him from the outside of Job into Job from the outside. But even that cannot simply happen. God must plow the field so that the seed of Truth can be planted and sprout. God must condition our hearts for the Truth.

How does God do this? The work of the Cross. Suffering. If a person truly wants the Lord they will seek God – and be willing to embrace the Truth no matter what it takes and no matter what the cost. And what will it take, and what will it cost? All of ourselves – we will have to lose everything about ourselves into the hands of Jesus Christ.

Now, that sounds so scary and terrible. But in reality, it is scary and terrible to seek to continue to possess oneself. We don't realize that because we are so used to being comfortable in doing so – and relinquishment to God is, to us, foreign territory. This is why God must plow the field of our hearts and shake us to our core. We must have a personal version of John the Baptist, even if in the form of suffering, to bring every mountain low and every valley high – to make ready in our life the way of the Lord.

Losing ourselves to Jesus Christ will carry with it many impacts. One of the greatest is that we will be able to LEAVE OURSELVES ALONE. As I noted, if we see Jesus Christ, we will do this – we will want to do it. And as we have seen, when Job saw the Lord this is exactly what he did – you cannot find even one verse after Job saw God where Job speaks about himself or his suffering.

Things Too Wonderful

When God spoke to Job, He did say that Job had, “spoken rightly of Him” -- unlike Job's friends. His friends had NOT spoken rightly of God. What was the difference?

Job's friends stated with absolute certainty that God would never allow suffering to come upon a just man. Therefore, they concluded that Job had sinned. On the other hand, Job knew he had not sinned. He did not have an explanation for what was happening to him, but he was slowly beginning to see that, yes, God was allowing suffering to come upon him, “without cause.”

Note that the issue was whether Job, or his friends, had spoken the Truth – not about the

suffering – but about God Himself. Job's friends ascribed to God a character that was void of grace – they described a God whose conduct towards humanity was absolutely determined by humanity's conduct towards Him. Job, on the other hand, through his experience, was beginning to see the God of grace – a God whose purposes in the human life cannot be contained within a religious system of legalism. In short, suffering can and does come upon people that obey God – in fact, the suffering may be because they have obeyed Him. It may be God's tool to bless them with ultimate freedom.

In Job 42, Job begins to realize the Truth. We begin to get a hint of it in verse 3. He says, in the latter part of that verse: "I have uttered what I understood not". Now, what Job DID utter was correct -- again, God said, "My servant, Job, has spoken RIGHTLY of Me". So how do we reconcile these two statements? Simple: What we believe and say might be 100% true. But that does not mean it is ALL the Truth on the matter. And it certainly does not mean it is living. Job, despite uttering what was correct, is admitting here that he did not truly understand just HOW limited his understanding had been. He did not grasp the full meaning of his own words.

You and I can say, "God is love; God is the God of all grace God is righteous" -- and if we do -- then yes, we ARE speaking true words. Or we could bring to bear upon a situation some Bible teaching in order to explain it. But as true as our words might be – do we dare think that we have somehow fully captured the fullness of Jesus Christ on the matter? If we would actually see Jesus Christ, and our eyes were opened to Him, we would have to say, "I said the right words --

but I uttered what I understood not." As Job said here we would have to say, "These things I uttered were too wonderful for me -- which I really did not know -- even though I thought I did."

Isn't it a fact that when we get a new and fresh revelation of the Person of Jesus Christ that it often makes us realize that even though we may have believed or taught correctly for years, that what we believed, spoke, and even taught, was shallow in comparison to HIM? It ought to be so. As we grow to know Christ, we ought to look back and say, "I spoke rightly of Christ, but my goodness, there was so much more of Him than I could have possibly imagined!"

What effect did seeing God have upon Job? He cried out, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye SEES You. Wherefore, I abhor myself, and I repent in dust and ashes." Here we see two effects: Job saw the greatness of God, and Job saw that he was nothing. This revelation set Job free to LEAVE HIMSELF ALONE -- and take his place as a recipient of God's grace. In short, Job lost himself to God by faith.

Freedom from the Self

In the book of Genesis, we have unveiled to us God's original design for humanity:

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Gen. 2:25)

This is humanity as God originally intended. Naked – meaning that we were to have nothing in ourselves as a resource. Not ashamed – meaning that despite being naked, there was no

consciousness of lack – because we were to be one with God. He was to be our all.

Can we see that God created humanity to be naked? He always intended humanity to be a fully dependent creature – without any resource in ourselves – but yet fully dependent upon God. There was never any other thought for humanity in the heart of God.

This is also a description of life in Christ. God wants to bring believers to the place where we see, and rejoice in the fact, that we are naked. There is NOTHING in ourselves upon which we can call. We have no righteousness of our own. We have no resources by which we can live. But Jesus Christ is supposed to be ALL to the believer. We are to abide in Him as our ALL by faith. If we do, then despite our realization that we are nothing, we will rejoice, because we will be living in and out from Christ.

When Adam sinned, we find that it did not change the fact that he was naked. Nope. Humanity was created naked – created to be dependent – and nothing was going to change that. But when Adam sinned, he declared independence from God. He chose to find resource in himself rather than in God. This resulted in death. A dimension of this death was that Adam was now a creature who would always be naked and dependent – but one who was choosing to try to live as one who had resource in himself and who was reliant upon himself. In short, Adam became a living lie. Thus, after his sin, we find that Adam, while still naked, was very afraid.

Adam was now alone – in the sense that he had abandoned his unity with God. That is what he

chose and that is what he received. And because he no longer had God as his only LIGHT, and because God was no longer his only LIFE, Adam had to compensate. Thus, he sought to fix himself with what the story calls, “fig leaves. Fig leaves are whatever we use to cover up, or mask, our true condition as fallen humanity. Some folks use religion – their fig leaf is, “self-righteousness.”

If we look at Adam after his sin we find a creature who is alone and afraid – and because of that – is completely self-occupied. He is tormented by his own nakedness; his own emptiness. But instead of turning to God, he perpetuates his sin by trying to fix himself.

This is a picture of fallen humanity. What we call self-esteem, pride, and self-centeredness all go back to this as the root. It is primary to what fallen man IS – alone and afraid and trying to fix it.

Some folks try to use religion. They are forever fussing with themselves, trying to do this or that in order to cure what ails them. Churches offer psychological counseling. There are any number of, “programs,” offered to sort out what ails us and fix us back to what we think is right. Others try to keep laws. But these are all fig leaves. They are trying to cover the Truth about ourselves: We are naked.

Now, God wants to set us free from this curse of self-occupation. But He cannot do this by merely giving us a better, “covering.” No. What He must do is strip off our man-made, religious fig leaves. He must use whatever He sees is necessary to

expose the Truth about us – we are naked and empty.

Now, when God undertakes such a drastic work in the life of a human being, it is going to be quite traumatic. It may seem as if something is going wrong with us – or that God has abandoned us. After all, it could not possibly be a good thing to be exposed as a person in whom there is no good, could it? It could not possible be a good thing to see what you thought was an admirable Christian life come crashing down, could it? Well, it is not as if God affirms sin. But God **MUST** expose the Truth about us – the Truth must be brought out. We are naked and we have to see that this is the Truth.

This is exactly what God did through the suffering of Job – Job saw he was naked. But he did not see that he was naked as a thing unto itself. No. He saw he was naked in the light of **SEEING GOD**.

That was redemptive. And it is how God always works. God may allow great suffering in the life of a believer. But it is always unto a redemptive end. He may want to show us the Truth about ourselves so that we will begin leaving ourselves alone and put our faith solely in Christ.

God does not want us to continue doing as Adam did – spending our life sewing together religious fig leaves to cover our true condition. He does not want us to be occupied with ourselves in such a way. So He must intervene.

Characteristics of Losing One's Life to Christ

I will never lose my life to Christ – relinquish myself to Him – as long as I think there is still something in myself that can be salvaged. To the extent that I believe that there is some shred of righteousness in myself I will seek to protect it, establish it, and live by it. But if God brings me to see that I have nothing in myself at all that can be salvaged – then I will gladly abandon myself and run to Him as my life.

One characteristic of losing myself to Jesus Christ is that I will leave myself alone – because I will know that there is nothing I can do about myself. I will not be living in misery over myself – for that is not what it means to leave myself alone. But neither will I admire myself – for neither does that mean that I am leaving myself alone. No. To leave myself alone means exactly that: I am replacing self-occupation with Christ-occupation.

Along that same line, if I lose myself to Jesus Christ, I will leave myself alone because I will know that He is my ALL – I am accepted by God only in Christ and Christ is perfect.

As far as my conduct is concerned, if I see Jesus Christ, and leave myself alone, I will find freedom to obey God like never before. Why? Because I am not under the law. I am not trying to earn anything. I am not trying to protect anything. I am free in Christ.

From all of this, we can arrive at a principle that cannot be understated. It is a fact -- it is a Truth -- which we find all through scripture. This fact is this: The ONLY place that God is ever going to bring any of us, indeed the ONLY place we could

ever arrive if we see Jesus Christ -- and thus see the Truth -- is exactly this same place as He brought Job. We are going to see the greatness of GOD and we are going to see the barrenness and reprobate condition of MAN. We will leave ourselves alone by becoming occupied with Jesus Christ.

Overcoming Sins

Leaving ourselves alone will eventually result in greater freedom from sin. Why? Because we are abandoning the root of all sin: Self-possession.

Most of us have believed that in order to overcome sins in our life we need, not to leave ourselves alone, but to turn in upon ourselves and try to purge sin, alter conduct, keep laws, and scrutinize ourselves down to every detail. But this will never help us overcome sin. Why? Because the sin problem is not rooted in what we DO. It is rooted in what we ARE – what we ARE in relationship to God. We own ourselves – and this carries a spirit that is at enmity against God.

But if we take our place in the death of Jesus Christ and ask Him to do whatever it takes to bring us into the fullness of Christ, such a choice in faith will break the back of the spirit of self-ownership. Of course, this must be real. It cannot be merely a religious exercise. And it is only the beginning. If I ask God to do whatever it takes then He will do it – and what it will take is a continual work of the Cross.

What does this look like? Well, it gets back to what we discussed earlier about the separation of soul and spirit. When a believer is saved they are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him.

(I Cor. 6:17) They are NOT made one physical body or soul man with the Lord. No. Those dimensions of the human makeup remain OUTSIDE of resurrection union with Christ during this age. But they do continue to exist in us. Thus, we have a separation in each believer between that which is united with Christ – the spirit – and that which is not united with Christ – the body and the soul. And the two are contrary one to the other.

Despite the fact that a believer is saved, the natural man or flesh – which is not united with Christ – continues to try to govern each of us. But God wants Jesus Christ – Who is in us – to govern us. He wants Christ to be our life and for His people to walk governed by an inward realization of His Son. Thus, the way in which this is made possible is through the work of the Cross upon the natural man or flesh – upon that which is NOT united with Christ in this age. And to the extent that this work of the Cross takes place, the life of Jesus Christ will find a greater release in the believer.

So take note: The work of the Cross crucifies that which is not united with Christ – so that the Christ with whom we are united in spirit may more and more find release and freedom to govern us.

Thus, when we talk about LOSING our life to Jesus Christ as subsequent to salvation, we are talking about asking God to do whatever it takes to crucify our natural man or flesh so that Christ might be manifested. This is exactly what Paul wrote in II Cor. 4:

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus

might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. (II Cor. 4:10-11)

We bear about in our natural man – we are crucified with Christ – we are united with Him in His death – so that He might be manifested in and through us. This is the work of the Cross and it is the purpose for which Christians must suffer – as taught in the story of Job.

Now compare this Truth to what is commonly taught and believed today. Today, it is almost never taught that believers must lose their lives – that is usually made to mean something pertaining to salvation, or something impractical. Indeed, we are taught ways and means by which we can get God to bless our lives – to bless the very natural lives that God tells us we must lose. Laws and principles are presented as the keys to success and blessing in the Christian life. It is all a lie.

God is NOT going to bless the life he tells us to lose. He isn't going to bless what He tells us must go the way of the Cross. He will bless only His Son and that which is out from Him.

We are here talking about which LIFE constitutes our life. Are we preoccupied with ourselves and our life? Or are we preoccupied with Christ?

The irony is, if we are preoccupied with Christ, God will be free to bless us in any way that suits His purpose. But if we are preoccupied with ourselves, God cannot do much with us other than

bring us again and again to the Cross. He certainly will not bless the life He tells us to lose.

In fact, unless we lose our lives to Jesus Christ, we suffer complete defeat trying to overcome SINS. Why? Because all SINS are rooted in THE SIN of self-ownership. Unless that ground is surrendered under the Cross the sins that are rooted in that ground will sprout up one way or another. But give your entire self to Jesus Christ no matter what it takes and over the course of time and experience you will find that the power of sin is broken.

So we must lose our lives in order to find them in Christ. This runs contrary to not only human thinking, but to religious thinking. We try to fix the life we must lose with religion. God says to leave ourselves alone in His hands for whatever it takes to bring us into His fullness.

Job Leaves Himself Alone

We find all of this Truth about the impacts of seeing Jesus played out in the conclusion of Job's ordeal. Job saw God and at that point he did leave himself alone. There are no more questions coming from Job about his suffering. There are no more questions about God. Rather, what we find is this simple statement:

***And the LORD turned the captivity of Job,
when he prayed for his friends. (Job 42:10)***

Once Job saw God he prayed for his friends. No longer was Job occupied with himself. He left himself ALONE in God's hands. Rather, he wanted his friends to see what he had seen – the Truth about God.

We are not being told in this verse that when Job prayed for his friends that doing so convinced God to end his trial – as if that was the secret button Job needed to push; as if that was the law Job needed to keep to end his trial. No. Job prayed for his friends because he was free – and even though it does not say so directly, he may have done so before his suffering was completely ended.

Compare this one verse to the rest of the entire book of Job. The difference is striking. Forty-two chapters of suffering, confusion, perplexity, reasoning, and arguing – forty-two chapters filled with the supposed wisdom of Job and his friends trying to understand what they could not understand. But then Job sees God and in one verse it is all over.

This is reminiscent of the words of Jesus:

***“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing.”
(John 16:21-23)***

When God is birthing in the believer a new revelation of His Son it will most often require suffering – birth pangs. Like a woman in travail, our focus might be upon our pain – like Job we might be consumed with our suffering. But if we will stand by faith the day will come when the birth will take place. And in that day all of the

suffering will pass into history – what will remain is what God produced out of it.

God is doing an eternal work in His people to bring them into an inward realization of Jesus Christ that we might live in Him forever. All that is necessary to produce that may cause suffering, and be costly in this age. But all of that will pass and no longer be remembered. What will remain is eternal reality in Christ.

Job's ordeal turned when he saw God. It was all wiped away into history. But what he carried forward from out of it could never die.

Chapter 9

Victory in Christ

Too often we think that victory in Christ is actually victory over God. We think we have victory when we manage to get Him to do what we want Him to do. We pray and pray and He doesn't answer, but then finally, we discover, He does answer. We finally convinced Him! We would not say we have victory over God, but there is a subtle attitude. Perhaps we think we have escaped our trial. So we think we found some key to getting God to move on our behalf. As silly as these things seem, many professing Christians believe them – the Word of Faith heresy comes down to such nonsense.

None of that is victory in Jesus Christ. So let's ask: What is victory in Jesus Christ – according to God's mind? It is when Jesus Christ is Lord – not merely in fact, but in actual experience. It is when God has His full and complete will and is satisfied – and has put under the feet of Jesus all that would oppose Him.

Now, that is God's victory. But when do WE have our victory? Actually, we never have OUR victory. Nope. For HIS victory is OUR victory. The believer has victory when, through faith, we are partakers of Christ in His victory.

If you think about this, it can mean only one thing: We cannot have victory in Christ unless Jesus Christ has victory in us. We cannot be a partaker of Christ in His victory unless we are fully under Him as our Lord.

This certainly brings us back to the essential of losing ourselves to Jesus. If we have not lost

ourselves to Jesus, we cannot call Him LORD. If we have not lost ourselves to Christ, we cannot honestly say we believe and trust Him. Victory in Christ is a finished reality in the spiritual realm, but it must become an experienced reality in His people.

Faith is the Victory

For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. (1 John 5:4)

The above verse, which states that FAITH is the victory, is a well-known verse. But the way in which we often interpret it tends to skew the meaning. Most of us think that we are being told that if we have enough faith we will press through to the victory. In short, we think that it is faith that carries us into any victory.

But wait. Read this verse carefully. It really does not say that our faith carries us into any victory. Rather, this verse states that faith **IS** the victory. Do you see that? It is not an insignificant distinction. Faith itself – the reality of faith in us – **THAT IS THE VICTORY**. Anything else that comes about because of this faith is not the victory, but the faith itself IS the victory.

Why? Because it is faith that makes us ONE with Jesus Christ – in Whom is all victory. By faith, we open ourselves to Jesus as our personal Lord. By faith, we open ourselves to whatever God wants to do. We join the Lord in His purposes. By faith, God gets victory over us personally, and thus, we become partakers with Him on His throne.

God is here telling us that if faith is established in us that this faith IS the victory. It is our victory, yes, but really, it is GOD'S victory – in us. The faith itself IS the victory. The faith isn't UNTO the victory. The faith IS the victory. In other words, the existence of faith in us is evidence of His victory in us. The two are as one, for the verse says, "This is the victory....our faith."

Seated In Christ

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set [him] at his own right hand in the heavenlies. (Eph. 1:20)

And hath raised [us] up together, and made [us] sit together in heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:6)

Believers are united with Christ in His death. But we are likewise united with Christ in His resurrection. Those are two dimensions of the fact that we are united with Christ, the Person. Yet often forgotten is the fact that we are united with Christ in His ascension. He are joined to Him and made one spirit with Him – we are seated IN CHRIST in the heavenlies.

You will note that this is a finished reality. The Redemption is finished forever. Our position in Christ in the heavenlies is not something we must achieve – we are not called to win any victory. Rather, we are to believe and stand in His finished victory. Or, to put it another way, we are to live out from the throne; live out from Christ. The two are as one.

Now, that is the Truth. But it must become experienced. And we will never experience it, or

be able to operate from the throne, until we see Jesus and come into an inward realization of Him.

We saw that earlier from Ephesians 1. Paul prayed that God give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself – so that the eyes of our understanding would be enlightened – so that we might KNOW.....all the purposes and Truth of God. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in the One who said, “I AM the Truth.....I AM the Light.” So again we come back to the fact that we must SEE JESUS. No wonder God’s purposes in this life are unto that end.

God wants us to realize that in Christ there is all victory. But we must SEE JESUS – and we must open ourselves to Him as Lord. Only then can His victory become our victory. And as we have seen, this begins with FAITH, and works out throughout life by believing and standing in Christ against all that would come against us.

Parallels to the Experience of Job

Throughout the Bible, the experience of Job is repeated in the lives of the saints. We may not have quite as detailed of the story, but the pattern is there.

This is certainly the case with Paul, the apostle. He underwent tremendous suffering during his lifetime. We get a glimpse of one such occasion in II Corinthians:

For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of

life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us. (II Cor. 1:8-10)

By Paul's own admission, there were times in his experience with the Lord that he was perplexed. We tend to think that these saints were so close to God that they never had questions or challenges to their faith. But in reality, closeness to God guarantees challenges to faith – challenges we cannot understand. This passage describes one of those challenges.

What came upon Paul in Asia was surely more than just persecution from people, and more than just difficult circumstances. God clearly allowed Satan access to Paul. The greatest struggles in these kinds of trials are inward – spiritual oppression and attack. You cannot put your finger on it but you are all out of sorts. Your natural man is reacting in ways that you don't want or understand – trying to cloud and confuse you in your relationship with God. This attack, according to Paul, pressed him beyond anything he could call upon in himself as a resource. That sounds bad. But it is actually good.

This certainly parallels the experience of Job. Job could not handle what was happening to him. He was pressed beyond himself. Yet there was no escape. Have you ever been in a trial where you cannot deal with it from out of yourself, and yet you are in it, without any way of escape? That was Job, and that was Paul. It was so bad that Paul said death would have been a certainty. What was the answer?

Paul said that this terrible trial was permitted by God, “that we might not trust in ourselves, but in God Who raises the dead.” That is ALWAYS why God allows suffering. The key therefore is not to try to figure a way out of the trial. The key is to trust God. In other words, FAITH is the victory.

Paul also speaks of what has come to be known as his, “thorn in the flesh:”

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. (II Cor. 12:7-10)

Here again we see what Paul said was a spiritual trial instigated by Satan – one that God allowed, and which apparently NEVER left him. And once again we see that the purpose of this trial was to empty Paul of all of his human strength – that he might put all of his faith in Christ.

How many see that these are things we can all read in the Bible, but that God wants us to go through them in actual experience? There is no other way to learn Christ.

When Paul talks about being emptied of his own strength, he was talking about being able to function physically, psychically, and spiritually. He could not do so. But what he did do was lay hold of Christ by faith. This did NOT make the buffeting go away. But it allowed Paul to live in Christ despite it.

The Truth here goes back to what we saw earlier. Victory is not a reality simply if our trial ends. Rather, victory is when we are living from out of Christ as one seated in Him DESPITE the trial. And most often this is what God will bring us to experience. It does not seem that this trial ever ended for Paul during his life. But it was God's tool whereby Jesus Christ could become his strength – in a livable and practical way.

From this we can garner a principle. God is NOT going to give us strength – He is not going to give us strength in ourselves so that we can overcome the enemy, ourselves, or anything else. Rather, He is going to allow that which will expose us as being utterly and totally weak in ourselves – so that we might have opportunity to experience Christ as our strength. If that happens, IT IS VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS.

How often Job likely prayed that God would give him strength, and how often believers pray the same. And when God doesn't do it we often do not understand. But again – God wants to make us weak in ourselves that Christ might be our strength, and God wants us to lose the life we may be trying to get Him to bless. Unwittingly, we operate at cross-purposes with God.

Another example from Paul is his conclusion to the description of himself written in Romans 7:

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 7:24-25)

This certainly parallels the exclamation of Job, “I abhor myself!” But in neither the case of Job or Paul is their situation left there. No. They see God and they see themselves. But they turn to Christ by faith and lose themselves into His hands. That again – is victory.

The reason Paul was able to teach as he did was not because he was naturally wise. Rather, it was because Christ was revealed IN HIM, and he was living what he taught. One place he gathered up his experiences in Christ and taught the Truth on these matters is in I Cor. 15:

Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where [is] thy sting? O grave, where [is] thy victory? The sting of death [is] sin; and the strength of sin [is] the law. But thanks [be] to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (I Cor. 15:54-57)

This is the principle of life from death. It is the principle of victory from out of surrender to God. It is the principle of losing oneself to Christ in order to find Him as our life. It is all the same principle.

God Turns the Captivity of Job

When Job was suffering he did not understand what was happening to him, or why it was happening. He could not find God. But then God began to reveal Himself to Job – an OT counterpart to Paul’s prayer that God would give

us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself – and then the eyes of Job's understanding were enlightened. The impact upon Job knew the Truth about God – and thus surrendered himself fully into God's hands. This was the point of God's victory in Job, and thus, it was the point of Job's victory in God.

The aftermath, as we saw in the last chapter, was that Job was able to leave himself alone. He turned from himself prayed for his friends. And it says that, "The LORD turned the captivity of Job."

Can we see the relationship between these two things? Job TURNED away from himself UNTO God – and this made it possible for God to TURN the captivity of Job. Obviously, occupation with self is a big cause of captivity. See God, turn from that, and the bondages break. Or, to go back to something we saw earlier, lose the old life in which all sins are rooted, and those sins will eventually lose their grip.

Restoration

The LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before... So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. (Job 42:10-12)

This description of God's restoration of Job is NOT the victory. No. It is the outcome of victory. God was able to restore Job in such a way because God had gotten victory over Job and in Job. That meant Job could now be trusted with greater blessing.

Jesus said, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." (Luke 16:14)

We saw this same principle in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. If I am following Jesus Christ because I think it pays me to follow Him, then what will I do if the pay is removed – indeed, if it begins to COST me to follow him? The truth is, if I am faithful to Jesus because it pays me to be, that proves nothing, and may be nothing but faithfulness to my own advantage. But if I am faithful to Jesus at great cost to myself, then I will be faithful to Him – period. And I can be trusted with greater blessing – God knows it will not steal my heart away from Himself.

The issue here is not the, “little,” or the, “much.” The issue is the faithfulness, or lack thereof, to God. Faithfulness to God means that I never take possession for myself, but treat all as belonging to God. It means that I always do the will of God regarding all. I leave the consequences to God. And again – we saw that all of this begins with ourselves. We must be faithful to God by giving ourselves to Him. We are not our own. We are bought with a price.

Paul stated this Truth with regards to ministry:

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. (I Cor. 4:1-2)

The Truth of God, life in Christ, all that pertains to God, etc., these are not the possessions of any person. They belong to God. WE belong to God. Indeed, the body of Christ belongs to Christ. Thus, no one has the right to do as they please regarding any of them. And no one has a right to use them for personal advantage, financial gain, or for the pride of position. Faithfulness demands

that Jesus Christ be given His place as Lord of all.

Job was brought down to where nothing he ever did for God paid him. Nothing he ever taught or said rightly about God seemed to matter anymore. Was Satan to be proven right? That Job served God only because it paid him? Job could have done what his wife said to do, “Curse God and die!” But no. Even when everything was stripped from Job, he proved Satan to be a liar – and saw God proved to be true. It was because Job was faithful to God in his heart that he was able to SEE GOD – and see that through his entire ordeal that God was, in fact, being faithful to him.

God allows suffering in the life of his saints so that we might SEE JESUS CHRIST. And if we can come into an inner realization of Jesus Christ then God can go on to build upon that by taking His people into His full purpose – which is His victory in His people.