



# **True Christian Ministry**

**David DePra**

## Preface

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God...For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to [*give*] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 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 always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death works in us, but life in you." (II Cor. 4:1-12)

This passage is Paul's description of true Christian ministry. This book will explore what the Bible says about ministry that is of Christ from this verse and many others like it.

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**by David A. DePra**

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# **Chapter 1**

## **True Christian Ministry**

What is true Christian ministry – that is – what is ministry that is of God? It is just this: It is the Person of Jesus Christ being ministered – that is, it is the life and light of the very Person of Jesus Christ being manifested in a way that impacts others.

The result of Christ being ministered is that people will be brought to where they can have a person relationship with Him through their personal faith.

In other words, if Jesus Christ is being ministered, then Truth is being ministered. And the progressive impact will be life, light, and freedom in those individuals to whom Christ is ministered and who embrace Him.

But we must pause for a moment on this matter of Christian ministry and ask an even more foundational question: What is Christianity?

Christianity is, “Christ in you.” (Col. 1:27) Or, if you prefer, Christianity is a matter of believers being IN CHRIST.

This was Paul’s proclamation at the end of one of the most important passages of scripture – found in Colossians 1. Thus, we must begin with this passage in order to grasp the Truth about ministry.

### **The Spiritual Nature of Ministry**

As we break into the passage of Colossians 1 at verse 24, Paul is already writing about ministry.

In verse 23, he says, "the gospel...whereof I am made a minister." However, he does not immediately write about the preaching or teaching aspects of ministry. Rather, he writes about another aspect of ministry that is not often mentioned or thought about among Christians. Paul writes:

***Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you,  
and fill up that which is behind of the  
afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's  
sake, which is the church: (Col. 1:24)***

Paul is stating that his suffering for Jesus is, by extension, for the sake of the Body of Christ. How so? Well, what God is accomplishing in Paul through suffering – through the work of the Cross in Paul's life -- was resulting in a contribution of the LIFE of Jesus through Paul -- unto the entire body of Christ.

Is this not MINISTRY? Yes. Indeed, it is the basis for ALL ministry. Any preaching or teaching must emerge from – indeed, be a product of -- the life of Christ Himself wrought in the one who would minister.

It is actually a fact that the ministry of the life of Christ through a believer can take place even though that believer never preaches or teaches at all. Paul directly states this Truth about ministry in II Corinthians 4. There he says, "Death works in us, but life in you." (II Cor. 4:12) This is spiritual ministry – it is Christ being ministered – not only by words -- but by LIFE.

Once we discover that ALL ministry is of HIS LIFE, we will likewise see that this is a responsibility

that has been given to all who are IN CHRIST – for all who are in Christ are partakers of HIS LIFE.

The measure of ministry in the eyes of God is the measure of Christ – it matters only what is of HIS LIFE. And His life can be ministered out from any person who is in Christ – even if that person is hidden, alone, or unknown. Just as the sufferings of Paul had an impact of life upon the body of Christ – completely aside from his public ministry – it is likewise possible for each member of the body of Christ to have that same impact.

So, as Paul describes the ministry that God gave him. He tells us that his ministry – at the core – is spiritual in nature. That core is Christ in Him -- it is the LIFE of Christ working through Paul -- for the sake of the Body of Christ. It may be expressed through preaching, teaching, or fellowship. But the SOURCE is Christ.

Paul's ministry was made possible by the work of the Cross in Paul – and then was manifested through preaching, teaching, fellowship, or a number of other means. But the means of ministry is of less importance than is the LIFE of Christ that is being ministered through the means.

### **Fulfills the Word of God**

Paul then begins to expand upon the nature of this ministry:

***Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me***

***for you, to fulfill the word of God. (Col. 1:25)***

Note that the ministry that God gave Paul was given to him TO FULFILL THE WORD OF GOD. This is an immense statement. If this ministry “fulfills the Word of God,” then it was given to Paul to bring to pass the plan and purpose that God intended from the beginning of creation.

We must see this. Paul’s ministry, which is of the same life of Christ that dwells within each believer, was given TO FULFILL THE WORD OF GOD – which means to fulfill the plan and purpose of God for this age.

But what is that purpose? Paul is going to tell us. He continues:

***...To fulfill the word of God. Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints...Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col. 1:27)***

The MYSTERY that was now revealed – which fulfills the plan and purpose of God – is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” All ministry begins and ends with this reality. All ministry is governed by the reality of Christ within.

CHRIST IN YOU is Christianity. Christ in His people is the foundation of God’s purpose – He is the basis upon which the Word of God is fulfilled. Therefore, the building up of Christ in His people IS ministry.



## **Preaching the Person**

***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 work in me mightily. (Col. 1:27-29)***

Note that Paul was not limiting ministry to a MESSAGE that he preached ABOUT Christ. No. In fact, ministry is not merely a theological message ABOUT, "Christ in you." No. Paul wrote, "Christ in you...WHOM we preach...." Paul's ministry was, yes, to preach about the Person of Christ – but more importantly, it was to minister Christ Himself. That is what it really means to, "preach Christ."

Paul preached the PERSON of Jesus Christ. His ministry was, yes, to reveal the fact that Christ was IN believers. He taught that everything that God does is based upon that reality of Christ within believers. But beyond that, it was Paul's ministry to actually manifest Christ Himself, and in doing so, to edify others in Christ.

Paul was to be a vessel in whom and through whom Christ would be seen – and through whom Christ could actually be ministered to others. Through the presence of Christ in Paul, Christ could be ministered through Paul – and others could come into an inward realization of Christ for themselves. This is ministry – it is true ministry in the eyes of God.

Read Ephesians 4. Paul clearly states the purpose of the gifts, which is equal to the purpose of all ministry:

***For the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a mature man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:12-13)***

What we see in all of this is that ministry is not merely theological, doctrinal, or academic. It is not about learning HOW to practice ministry, or about how to serve in church. Rather, ministry is LIFE – His life. Ministry is OUT FROM the Christ who dwells within. Where that is the case, believers will grow in Christ. Where it is not the case, the results will be as lacking in life as is the ministry that produces them.

### **Doctrine**

It is unfortunate that any time Christ is preached as being revealed IN believers – where a need to actually experience Christ is preached -- there are always those who immediately jump to the conclusion that this minimizes the importance of Biblical doctrine. Or, people fear that such preaching promotes, “extra-biblical revelation.” No. The fact that Christ must be revealed IN His people – and that believers are to experience Christ -- IS Biblical doctrine. It IS true Christianity and is revealed all through scripture.

There is only ONE Truth. Thus, our discernment and knowing of Jesus Christ will always be in complete harmony with scripture. Jesus Christ is the Living Truth. Jesus Christ is the Light. Jesus Christ is the Living Word of God. The Bible is the written counterpart – and will therefore reveal that same Truth in written form. But believers

are not indwelt by the Bible. We must not settle for theology ABOUT Christ. We must move on into the experiences that biblical doctrine teaches, and we must do what the Bible exhorts us to do. Believers are indwelt by the Living Christ – the exact Christ who is revealed in God’s written Word. And God wants us to know and experience Him.

The Bible itself proclaims that, “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” is the great mystery that fulfills the Word of God – and that all ministry must be a preaching of the Living Christ as One, yes, Who has redeemed us -- but as the One who presently IS the life of the believer – and as the One Whom we can personally and individually experience. God wants to reveal His Son TO us – but more importantly IN US. And if that happens, then our inward revelation, or realization, of Christ will be in harmony with the written Word.

Paul preached the Person of Christ, that is to say, Paul ministered the Person of Christ. That included teaching and doctrine. But he also suffered for the sake of the body. All of this was ministry. Yet all of this was unto the end that believers would come into a personal and individual realization of the Living Christ Who was in them. This is ministry that is of God – and the ministry that ought to be happening in the Body of Christ among all believers.

## **Chapter 2**

### **What is the Church?**

Paul was given a ministry that fulfilled the Word of God – but unto WHO? Paul says his ministry fulfilled the Word of God unto the CHURCH. What is the CHURCH?

The church is Jesus Christ in His people – or if you prefer – believers IN Christ.

This should not be surprising. If Christianity is, “Christ in you,” then it follows that the church is comprised of those in whom Christ dwells. Indeed, the term, “Christian,” actually means, “a Christ-one.”

The Greek term translated, “church,” in the NT is EKKLESIA. It means, “called out ones.” Notice that term closely: Called out ONES. Thus, we see that the church is comprised of individual believers who are, “called out.” But the collective body of those individuals who are, “called out,” and who are now, “in Christ,” is the church.

In addition, the term, “in Christ,” reveals that neither the individual, nor the church, exists apart from Christ. The church is not a THING that people join. The church IS people who are IN CHRIST. Get that: The church is PEOPLE who are in spiritual, resurrection union with Christ. Thus, the only way in which you are OF the church is if you are OF Christ.

The church was never a building, a corporation, a denomination, a religious movement, or anything

orchestrated by human beings. The church is the composite of those who are IN Christ.

### **Built Upon the Rock**

The following conversation between Jesus and His disciples from Matthew 16 was a pivotal moment for both Himself and them. Every part of it contains Truth about the meaning of the church – indeed, about the meaning of Christianity.

***When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some [say that thou art] John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed [it] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matt. 16:13-19)***

This exchange was initiated by Jesus Himself. He begins with a question: “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” The disciples give their answer to the question: “Some say that you are

John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." Jesus listens to their answer, but then asks, "But who do YOU say that I am?"

Note that Jesus first asks them what other people say about His identity. But then He asks His disciples what THEY say about His identity. There is a reason for the order of these questions. Jesus is going to show them that as it pertains to their personal relationship with God, it does not matter what other people say about Jesus – it matters only what YOU say and believe about Jesus.

Can we see that this is the same Truth of, "Christ in YOU?" Your Christianity begins with, "Christ in YOU," personally and individually. It does not begin with Christ in another. Indeed, fellowship in Christ with others is not even possible unless we first have Christ dwelling in us personally.

My faith and my experiencing of Christ cannot be based upon what someone else says about Jesus, or upon someone else's experience of Christ. It is based upon MY personal faith. This is why Jesus first asks them about what other people are saying about Him. The disciples do answer -- but then He sweeps that answer completely aside and asks: But who do YOU say that I am? Jesus is clearly showing them that the revelation of Jesus Christ is a personal and individual revelation from the Father. It is not a revelation that anyone can actually impart to another person.

To minister Christ does not mean to impart Christ. But it means to reveal Christ so that people can

see Him and make personal choices of faith – and then come into a personal experience of Him.

We MUST see this. True ministry will not make people reliant upon the faith of others. Neither will people simply adopt the teachings of others. No. True ministry will provide true teaching – which we should believe – but it should all be unto the end that each individual come into a living experience of Jesus Christ as personal Lord.

There have always been folks who have attached themselves to various congregations of believers. There have always been folks who have simply adopted the teachings of Christianity – almost as if it was a religious system to follow. But the question is whether THEY have received Christ WITHIN. True ministry will not settle for a religious system. True ministry will preach the Person of Christ.

This is clearly the Truth Jesus is getting at as He begins this conversation with His disciples. He asks them what others say about Him, but after they answer, Jesus sets all of that aside, and asks them directly what THEY believe about Him. Jesus is setting the stage for what follows in this conversation.

Again -- Christianity is CHRIST IN YOU – not Christ talked about – not Christ as a doctrine – not Christ somehow in a group – but Jesus Christ within the individual person. That is a Christian – and it is the only way that a person is a member of Christ, and thus, “a called out one.”

## **An Inward Revelation**

Peter answered the question of Jesus for them all. He said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed [it] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

Now, as an aside, if there was ever a time that Jesus could have denied that He was the Son of God – Divine in nature – this was it. But instead, he said that Peter was BLESSED for having seen it.

Returning to the conversation – Jesus answered Peter's confession of Him as the Son of the Living God by saying, "Flesh and blood has not revealed My identity unto you, but my Father which is in heaven has revealed this to you."

Note that Jesus states that this revelation of Himself must be received directly from the Father. That is exactly what He means because, as we have seen, He has already dismissed what other human beings have to say about Himself as the source of the revelation. This revelation is an inward revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of the Living God. He directly states that none of us can receive it from any, "flesh and blood," source.

What would be some examples of supposedly receiving the revelation of Jesus from a source of, "flesh and blood?" In context, it would be to base my faith upon what others say about Jesus. I might simply adopt the beliefs of another person about Christ.



What others say about Jesus might be true. Indeed, it might tell me what I need to receive for myself – and true ministry will do exactly that. True ministry ought to have the impact of bringing me along so that I will begin to see Christ for myself. But unless I begin to see Christ and experience Him for myself – unless I have a personal faith in Him -- because the Father has revealed Him to me as an individual – it will not get me far.

But doesn't this describe the faith of many professing Christians? We believe doctrines and facts that others have taught us. That is not a bad thing, in and of itself, if those doctrines are the Truth -- but the question remains: Do I have a personal and individual experience with the Person of Jesus Christ? Am I, "in Christ" – personally and individually?

The goal of those who minister Christ should never be to get people to adopt their list of teachings, or to get people to jump on the bandwagon of their ministry. The goal should be that others come into a personal experiencing of Jesus Christ by their personal faith.

Another, "flesh and blood," source of, "revelation," could be a person's OWN flesh and blood. In other words, it is possible to muster up a revelation of Jesus from out of our own nature, intellect, emotions, religiosity, upbringing, or bias – and be deceived into accepting this as being from God. No. Again – we must receive the revelation of Jesus WITHIN – on an individual basis – from the Father.

The Truth here is clear: To truly know Jesus Christ we must receive an inward revelation from the Father – in other words a revelation initially from the outside of us into us from the outside. It cannot come from any other source than from the Father by His spirit – although ministry can be used.

This points us to a function of true ministry: True ministry will direct people to the Father that each person might seek God for an inward realization of Christ. This is the ministry of the church.

### **The Rock**

Jesus continued by saying, "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

There is a play on words in this answer. The name PETER means, "little stone." Thus, rather than say He is founding the church upon Peter, the little stone, Jesus is saying the opposite – He is saying that the church will be built upon Himself – for He is the Rock.

But let's be more specific – and understand the meaning of Jesus in context. The context is the necessity of receiving inward revelation of Jesus from the Father. This is the ROCK. Thus, Jesus is saying that He is going to build His church – He is going to build the PEOPLE who comprise His church – upon the inward presence and revelation of Himself – for He is that ROCK.

Can we see that this is an affirmation that Christianity is, "Christ in you?" Sure. Of course, the disciples could not yet fully understand that reality, but Jesus was giving them Truth that they would later realize.

Jesus said, "I will build up my people upon the presence and revelation of Myself in them. I will build upon Myself as the Rock; as the foundation." In effect, He is saying that once we receive Him at salvation – once we are joined to Him in spirit – everything that He will do is going to be built upon His presence; upon His life -- in His people. And He will use ministry.

Jesus Christ will use members of His body to build His church upon Himself. This is ministry; it is a ministering of Christ. All ministry that is of God will be of the Truth, light, and life of the Person of Jesus Christ.

Can we now see why Paul was able to state that the ministry that God gave him – gathered up in the reality of, "Christ in you" – fulfilled the Word of God? Jesus is ALL – He is the Alpha and the Omega. Thus, all that God has given, and all that God is doing, is out from the Christ with Whom believers have been made one in spirit.

### **Resurrection Life**

Jesus went on to say, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." The gates of hell cannot stand against the life of Jesus -- in His people -- because His life is resurrection life – and resurrection life already

has complete victory over all that speaks of death. Thus, all ministry that is of HIS LIFE will topple the gates of hell. On the other hand, ministry that is NOT of His life will not be able to manifest His victory.

If we look back at 2000 years of Christian history we cannot help but conclude that what we call, "the church," and what we call, "Christianity," has NOT toppled the gates of hell. Indeed, it has been invaded by, and given place to, the gates of hell. Was Jesus wrong? Has His promise failed? No.

We would conclude that the promises of Jesus have failed only if we are looking at the VISIBLE church – or for what passes as the church. If we look at the organized church -- the church that is defined by a great religious system – we would have to conclude that it has not toppled the gates of hell. But once we realize that the real church is spiritual and invisible – Christ in His people – then we will know that the promises of Christ have come to pass.

The proof of the life of Christ is found in victory over death – for the gates of hell CANNOT stand against the presence of Christ in His people. Therefore, the fact that the visible church has NOT – generally speaking – overcome the enemy -- but has surrendered to him – proves that the presence of Jesus Christ has NOT been operating through His people in the visible church.

Yet there is what could be called, "the invisible church" – these are those who are truly IN CHRIST and in whom the promises of Christ have

come to pass. There have been millions of them down through the centuries – farmers, peasants, slaves, the common person, etc. Most have been unknown, out of the public eye -- yet living by faith. There are many such ones today. This is the invisible church.

Resurrection life in Christ is the only means of victory possible. Thus, only those who are in resurrection union with Christ have the possibility of victory. And those who are not in resurrection union with Him have no possibility of victory.

Christ builds His church upon the Rock of His presence and revelation of Himself in people. The power of the enemy cannot stand against Christ in His people.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Keys of the Kingdom**

***I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.***

All of the Truth found in Matthew 16 is necessary to grasp if we are to understand what Jesus said about, "the keys of the kingdom." First, some background regarding the words in His statement will help. The word, "kingdom," in the original Greek, means, "rule," or, "sovereignty." But not in the sense that the kingdom of God is a PLACE. No. "The kingdom of God," is the rule of God Himself over ANY place or person. In other words, the kingdom of God is the authority of God Himself.

With that in mind, what ARE these, "keys of the kingdom of heaven?" The keys OF the kingdom are keys that are representative of, indeed, they are keys that are an extension of the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ. Sure. He has ALL authority. He is Lord of all; King of all. And as Lord of all He said that HE would be giving the keys of His authority to His ekklesia.

Why are these keys given? Jesus said these keys would bind and loosen. But it is here that there has been great error in some parts of the body of Christ. Only if we read His instructions in the

original Greek can we discover the real meaning. It reads:

***I shall be giving unto you the keys of the kingdom of the heavenlies. If ever you should be binding on earth, the same shall be having been bound in the heavens. And if ever you should be loosing on earth, the same shall be having been loosed in the heavens.***

That is a little awkward but the meaning is clear: The keys will bind and loose on earth ONLY that which is FIRST bound or loosed in heaven. In other words, the keys that belong to Lord Jesus can only open or close – bind or loose – according to HIS will and sovereignty. This means that these keys function only within the will of God.

The keys of the kingdom are extensions of the kingdom – that is – they are the means by which the Lordship of Jesus Christ is manifested in a way that has the impact of binding and loosing according to the will of God – in God's time, in His way, and unto His glory. And these keys are given to His people – He says, "If ever YOU should be binding....be loosing." In short, the will of God is settled. But He is not simply going to impose it or do it by bypassing His people. He wants to bring it to pass through His people.

But even that needs clarification. Jesus is NOT giving authority to His people to simply do what He would do – according to what we think is the will of God. Rather, He is giving authority to His people to do what HE IS DOING. That is why, in the original Greek, it reads, "I shall be giving."

This is an ongoing progressive matter – it is really a supply AS needed. Furthermore, in the context of this passage, in order for His ekklesia to extensions of Jesus Christ it is necessary for those people to be built upon the Rock. Unless a person knows Jesus Christ and is being built up in Him – unless a person is first themselves brought under the Lordship of Jesus -- there is no possible way for Jesus to use them as extensions of Himself to bring to pass His will for others.

“I shall be giving unto you the keys of the kingdom” – this is what Jesus promised in response to the confession of Himself as the Christ – based upon an inward revelation of Himself in His disciples. The promise of those keys – of that authority – is based solely upon those disciples knowing Him, and being built up upon Himself as the ROCK.

There are those who have taken these words to mean that we are able to walk around, “declaring victory,” and, “speaking victory,” into people’s lives and situations. Some read the Word of God and discover the will of God – and then launch forward believing that they have the authority to make it happen. But this simply does not work because it is NOT what is being given to believers.

Read the gospels. There was an occasion where Jesus gave His apostles authority to do miracles in His name. (Luke 10:17) They did those miracles and rejoiced in that fact. But there was another occasion where they tried to cast out a demon in His name but were not able. (Matt. 17:21) Why? It was the SAME name of Jesus.



What did they lack when they failed that they possessed when they succeeded? Jesus said the reason was FAITH – He said they could not cast out the demon because of UNBELIEF. He then stated that, “this kind comes out only by prayer.” (Fasting is not in the earliest manuscripts.) Prayer is communion with God. Thus, they were not functioning from out of communion with God in their failure.

This shows that authority is not a power that is given by God to people to use in His name. Rather, authority is a matter of acting as an extension of Jesus Christ – but which cannot function except that we are in living communion with Him; living under His Lordship. This is why Jesus used the picture of KEYS that can bind and loosen ONLY what is already the will of God to be opened and closed. The keys are extensions of Himself – given to people who themselves are already under His Lordship.

The gates of hell cannot stand against the presence and revelation of Christ in His people. Likewise, binding and loosing according to the will of God is only possible when the ekklesia operates according from out of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. So once again we are faced with the same sobering reality: The visible church has not prevailed against the gates of hell. Neither is the visible church acting as an expression or extension of Jesus Christ. There are, of course, many claims otherwise. But the fruits are undeniable, and the results are all around us.

## **Binding and Loosing**

There is not a single command by Jesus in this passage to bind or loosen. Have we noticed that? Rather, Jesus speaks of it as an outcome of being built upon Himself as the Rock. In other words, as we come into an inward revelation of Jesus Christ we are going to encounter situations wherein we must bind and loosen. It will be a, "normal," part of a walk with Jesus Christ: "If ever you should be binding....loosing."

So HOW do we bind and loosen – in the sense Jesus is describing? We saw earlier that PRAYER was an essential – for faith is born from out of such prayer. But here again we must be clear: The Bible never teaches that Christians are supposed to beg and cry to God for people to be set free. Do we think that we desire freedom for people more than God desires it? Does God need to be begged to help people be set free? No. Indeed, if we read this passage it tells us exactly what we are supposed to do: Through prayer and communion with God we are to JOIN HIM in His will for others. We are to be ONE WITH HIM for others. That is why Jesus said that whatever we bind or loose must have already – in God's will – be bound or loosed in heaven. We are simply joining HIM – and then acting as extension of Him to the extent God makes it possible.

We can be certain that God desires for all to be set free. And we can be just as sure that as we join God for His will that it is having an impact. We might not even need to say a word. We may not see much or see anything happening at first – or even for a long period of time. This is because

God always works from the INSIDE OUT. He must – or else freedom will not be real. But something IS happening.

The presence and power of Jesus Christ brought to bear in any situation – in any one of His people -- will NOT fall flat. There will be an impact – because when Christ is brought in there is always an impact. It may not be dramatic. But nothing remains passive where Christ is present.

### **The Interests of God**

Whatever we bind or loose must already be the will of God settled in the heavenlies – the binding or loosing must be nothing more and nothing less than a working out of the will of God through His people. But there is another essential factor here that goes beyond some THING we might do. It is our motives for doing it. If we are to do something in, “the name of Jesus” – and surely we would bind or loose in His name – then whatever we do in Jesus’ name must be, yes, what Jesus would do, but it must also be for His glory and His interests.

One of the greatest hindrances to being used of God is a personal gain IN ministry. People have a personal interest involved – and not necessarily a financial one. For example, people minister to feel good about themselves – they feel good because they believe they have gained a validation from God. There can be a gain of spiritual and religious pride. There can be the gain of a following. There can be a gain of favor from others. In our ignorance, immaturity, and even from out of unbelief, we take what God

might have done and associate it with ourselves. OUR ministry, OUR faithfulness to God – all that God has done through US. But where this is the inward attitude and motive God cannot, and will not, do much. This is His mercy because He knows that if He would use us it would be our undoing and the undoing of others.

This is not to say that people cannot build large ministries with large followings, “in the name of Christ.” Sure they can, and have. But Jesus said, “I will build MY church.” He never promised that that He would bless what we build FOR Him, and HE never promised that we have the right to do things in His name, hand it to Him, and obligate Him to bless it. Yet the practice of doing for Christ and saying He has blessed it is so normal that the Truth that Christ must do it through us is foreign to us.

What is the difference? What is the difference between us doing something like binding and loosing FOR Christ and Christ doing it through us? The difference is found WITHIN. To be used of Jesus Christ we must ask Him to do whatever it takes to set us free from our personal interests in His use of us. We must want God’s will and only God’s will – for His glory and interests.

Can we see that if God would use us to bind or loose others that we must FIRST be set free?

There have always been people who have achieved HUGE followings, “in the name of Jesus.” This proves NOTHING. Heresy has always attracted more people than Truth.

The proof of whose interests we are after is often found in the aftermath of what we are supposedly doing for God. Do we turn the results of our ministry into a personal kingdom we must protect? Do we demand that people look to us? Do we become filled with self-importance in the lives of others? What do we teach about money?

God knows the heart. He wants to use only those in whom He has done a deep work of the Cross. He knows He can trust such ones because they are not in ministry for any other reason than HIS interests and HIS glory. He wants those who have completely set aside all personal interests and are abandoned to Him for no matter what it takes. Indeed, He wants those who are willing, if it be the Lord's will, to never be used of Him in a way that anyone else notices. That is faithfulness to Christ.

Ministry that is of Christ can emerge only from a life that is utterly abandoned to Christ. Only if we lose our lives to Jesus for whatever it takes can any ministry emerge that is built upon the Rock – and which can be used of Him in the lives of others.

### **Freed Unto Christ**

It is here that we must be perfectly clear about this matter of binding and loosing. This is not a matter of God simply setting people free FROM problems. Rather, the goal is to set people free UNTO Jesus Christ. In other words, free FROM bondage -- but free UNTO Christ. The former without the latter can actually be dangerous.

Jesus illustrated this danger to His disciples:

***When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he finds [it] empty, swept, and garnished. Then goes he, and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last [state] of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. (Matt. 12:43-45)***

Does God want to deliver people from sin and bondage by, “acting upon them” – without any conversion to Christ? What good would that do anyone? None. In fact, if God did this it would open up people to greater spiritual danger.

Jesus is illustrating a principle. The most immediate application He was making was that of Israel. But the principle itself holds – He talks about an individual. And this principle tells us that it is not sufficient to simply set people free FROM bondage – but they must be set free TO Jesus Christ. Otherwise, they might be set free from one bondage -- only to end up in another – perhaps even worse.

For a person to be truly delivered FROM sin they must be delivered UNTO faith in Christ. They must be brought face to face with their sin and unbelief – they must be brought to the reality of the Cross. Otherwise, their house might be

presently swept and garnished, but unfilled – and in a very dangerous position.

We must not miss the point here: Freedom is found ONLY in Christ. Jesus said, "You will know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free." He also said, "I AM the Truth." In short, to simply set someone free from a sin or addiction – from religious blindness -- or to deliver them from demonic influence – this is NOT real freedom. For they have not been filled with Christ – they are without His life or His Truth. In fact, they have tasted something of Christ because they are delivered – and are therefore all the more accountable.

This was the case with Israel – it is part of the principle of Truth being given by Jesus. Once a person SEES – once they experience something of Christ – they cannot go back. They are no longer fully blind. This means that if they do not go on they will indeed be all the more vulnerable to the enemy.

God knows what we cannot presently know. He knows what makes people tick – what keeps them in bondage. But the above passage does give us a possible reason why, despite much prayer and joining the Lord for the freedom of a person, there does not seem to be anything happening. They are not yet ready to be delivered. He must penetrate the darkness. He must convict them of their need. God must build a bridge in them that will enable them to hope and believe Christ as they are set free from bondage.

The notion that all we have to do is lay hands on people, or pray over them, and deliverance will immediately happen every time is not taught in scripture. There are a few instances after Pentecost in Acts 2 where this did happen – but we don't know the background or the sequel to the lives of those people. Generally, however, you do not find this taught in the epistles as a normal practice. You do not find deliverance sessions. You do not find Christians being exhorted to find deliverance from nonsense like, "generational curses." You don't find exhortations to beg God for forgiveness, or any room for depression because people cannot get free from sin. Rather, you find grace and Truth being preached – and an exhortation to repent and believe.

Everything needed for freedom in Christ is already finished IN CHRIST. But you see, that phrase, "in Christ," is easily passed over. We try to bring freedom alongside of Christ, or by invoking His name. No. People must encounter Christ – freedom is in HIS PERSON. Thus, ministry is a matter of bringing people into contact with Jesus Christ – which means He must be living in us. Then binding and loosing can happen – not necessarily through some dramatic deliverance session – but through a spiritual dynamic that God does through His people.

God can deliver people to Christ without any outward signs or wonders. That is the norm. Christ is ministered through those who have been built upon the Rock and it is Christ who does the binding and loosing through people who are extensions of Himself. Sometimes without a



word. Sometimes through fellowship. Sometimes through teaching. But it is by His spirit – NOT by our religious flesh.

God does not need any of us. But in this age He has chosen to use the ekklesia as expressions and extensions of Himself. This is ministry. It may be spoken or unspoken. It may be dramatic or seemingly casual. Yet if the ekklesia are built upon Christ Himself the gates of hell cannot prevail.

It is not our responsibility to figure out why a person is not being set free. Rather, it is our responsibility to give ourselves to Jesus Christ and let Him build us up in Himself so that binding and loosing might be in the normal course of our Christian walk. It is simply not possible for us to be in resurrection union with Jesus Christ – in the way God desires – except it have an impact upon the spiritual realm.

This will happen even if we are not given to see that impact. And very often we won't see the impact. That is not our concern. Our concern is to become expressions and extensions of Jesus Christ.

The keys of the kingdom are ALWAYS being given. They are not given as a onetime appointment unto authority. But they are present for a person to the extent that a person is under Christ as their personal Lord, and living from out of Him. In short, the keys are present wherever Jesus is present. Thus, as we walk, binding and loosing will happen – according to what is already the will of God.

Is this not ministry? To have Christ within and to be living out from Him to the extent that you bring Him into situations – even without needing to say a word? That you can – despite all of your deficiencies – be a manifestation and extension of Christ? Ministry that is of God is a matter of a person being in Christ – and then acting from out of Christ as an extension of Christ. This is ministry of LIFE – of His life.

## **Chapter 4**

### **What is the Gospel?**

***Christ in you, the hope of glory, Whom we preach. (Col. 1:27-28)***

The preaching of the PERSON of Jesus Christ is the gospel. The gospel is ultimately the revelation of the Person of God's Son. It all that Christ has done: His death, His resurrection, and His ascension. But is also includes the presence of Jesus Christ in His people today – it includes all of His purpose in His people. In short, the gospel is ALL of the Truth of the Person of Jesus Christ.

The gospel – the GOOD NEWS -- is wrapped up in a PERSON – the Person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The good news is that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to do for human beings what human beings could not do for themselves. And what was that? God sent Christ to deliver us all from sin through His death on the Cross, and He sent Christ to usher in a new creation through His resurrection. He sent Christ to die and be raised so that we could be restored back to God.

***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16-17)***

Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He left that position in heaven and became a man. Such was the sacrifice He made to even

come to this earth – Jesus was the Word of God – the only begotten Son of God – and God gave Him to us. This gift began when Jesus left the Father, and while remaining God, became a flesh and blood human being.

***Christ Jesus, who existing in nature and character as God, did not consider equality with God a prize to be grasped at and retained for Himself. But He emptied Himself, and took upon himself the state of a servant, and He as God came to be in the likeness of men. (Phil 2:6-10)***

***And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)***

So Jesus voluntarily left His place in heaven, and became a human being. This was accomplished when He was conceived by the Spirit of God through the virgin Mary through a divine miracle.

The virgin birth was essential because it means that Jesus did not begin to exist when He was conceived in Mary. No. Rather, He preexisted as God and was supernaturally transferred into Mary's womb – now as a tiny life. This is the Immaculate Conception. This miracle conception made it possible for Him to be born as a human being, yet fully as the eternal Son of God. And since Jesus was born of a virgin, and not the product of human reproduction, it means He was not born of the fallen human race. He was born without a sin nature.

When Jesus was born of the virgin Mary into this world, that BEGAN His journey. He lived a perfectly sinless life for over 33 years. The Bible calls Him, "The Lamb of God without blemish."

***For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Heb 4:15)***

***For God has made Jesus to be like sin for us, even though Christ knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor 5:21)***

## **Death and Resurrection**

At the end of His sinless life, and at the end of the three and one-half years of ministry, Jesus offered Himself up to the Cross for us all.

***And being seen and known as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:8)***

Jesus Christ did NOT die for an elect few. Jesus died for every human being that ever has, or ever will, live – and His Redemption paid for every sin that has ever been committed by every human being – except for the sin of refusing His death. Therefore, God offers Christ to ALL – no matter the sin, and no matter how old they are. "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." The good news is that Jesus died for ALL – and God invites all to come to Christ. But only those who do come and believe are saved.

Not only did Jesus win for us the forgiveness of God for all sin, but He also made possible for us to be DELIVERED from all bondage to sin. This is possible because Jesus did die FOR us – but He did die FOR US so that we could die and be raised to newness of life IN HIM.

***I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth 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)***

***Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God. Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 6:3-11)***

So through His death, Jesus delivers us from all sin. But there is even more. Jesus delivers us from all the damage sin has done. Are you a person who has been hurt by your own sin or the sins of others – damaged? Jesus died to restore you. Some of those things take time. But there is redemption for everything in His Blood.

## **Christ in You**

When a person sees the Truth of the gospel and puts their faith in Jesus Christ, God gives them the gift of eternal life – yes, but more than that - - God gives them Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ comes to dwell in those who receive Him – He becomes one with our human spirit. This is how we are, "planted into His death and resurrection," – Christ dwells at one with us in spirit. But because of that, everything He has done on the Cross, and everything He is through His resurrection, is likewise given to us in Christ. Thus, Jesus Christ in us IS our salvation – He is our life. Christianity is, "Christ in us, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27)

The good news of the gospel states that you and I do not need to do anything to be saved except, "Repent and believe on Christ." That means that we must realize we are lost sinners, and desire to forsake our lives and any sin into the hands of God through Christ. Basically, it means that we cry out to God in need for salvation. It means that we come to the Cross and commit our entire trust for salvation to Jesus Christ and what He has done. We cannot earn salvation, and there is nothing we can do to KEEP saved. In fact, according to the Bible, good works are the outcome of salvation, and not the means of earning it.

***For by grace are you saved through faith;  
and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of  
God: Not of works, lest any man should  
boast. For we are his workmanship, created  
in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God  
has before ordained that we should walk in  
them. (Eph 2:8-10)***

There are a couple of other places in the Bible where the gospel is clearly stated, either in part, or in whole:

***This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all  
acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the  
world to save sinners. (1 Tim 1:15)***

***Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the  
gospel which I preached unto you, which  
also you have received, and wherein you  
stand....for I delivered unto you first of all  
that which I also received, how that Christ  
died for our sins according to the scriptures;  
And that he was buried, and that he rose  
again the third day according to the  
scriptures: (1 Cor. 15:1-4)***

This is the simple gospel. For those who embrace it, what follows is everything that is found in Jesus Christ.



## **Chapter 5**

### **The Ministration of Life**

True Christianity is lived by faith from out of Christ as the believer's life. Thus, all ministry must likewise be from out of Christ – through the one who ministers – but nevertheless from out of Christ as the source.

From a practical standpoint, ministry does not happen through anyone by bypassing that individual. No, it happens through that individual. But that means that such an individual must have Christ within, must know Christ, and must be a person through whom Christ can minister. They must be a crucified person – crucified with Christ to all that would corrupt true life in Christ. God must do a work in that person in order to make this possible.

There is a common misunderstanding of how Christ is ministered through people. Some suggest that, "an anointing," comes and goes upon people – and when that supposed anointing is, "upon them," then the spirit of God is at work. Others suggest that if a person is called to minister that such an anointing is always upon them as a special instrument – they hear from God for the rest of us -- and that all that they preach carries this anointing. But there are no such things even suggested in scripture. Indeed, scripture teaches that Christ in EACH believer and that Christ Himself IS the anointing – and He is always present in EACH by the spirit of God.

***But the anointing which ye have received of him abides in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. (I John 2:27)***

## **First IN and Then THROUGH**

First of all, the Word of God is clear that ministry is to function from out of the spiritual GIFTS that God gives by His spirit.

***Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. (I Cor. 12:4-7)***

These gifts would not be gifts of the spirit of God if they were simply the product of natural talent and ability. In other words, there is a huge difference between natural gifts – ability to speak, preach, teach, and help people – and the spiritual gifts that come only from God. Yet today – and for the last 2000 years – we hardly know the difference. Most of us mistake the natural abilities of people for those that are of God, and consequently, the spiritual gifts are rarely evidenced.

Christ cannot be ministered except through the gifts that God gives. Otherwise, why would He give them? He could just let the talents of natural man minister Christ. But no. The

ministering of Christ – which is the ministry of life – can only come from out of Christ in people by the spirit of God. And rather than be from out of natural man, natural man must be crucified out of the way in order for Christ to be ministered.

Jesus Christ will only be ministered through any individual in spirit and in Truth to the extent that such an individual has given themselves to Him – and has come under the work of the personal Cross. And if that individual has given themselves to Christ then the ministry of Christ will happen. It will emerge from out of their personal experience and knowledge of Christ.

So what we see is that despite the fact that there are different callings and functions in the body of Christ – they are all of Christ by the spirit of God. And no matter the calling no ministry will ever be fulfilled through an individual unless it is first fulfilled IN that individual – only then will Christ be able to be ministered.

If ministry were simply a matter of studying, going to seminary, or of parroting teaching, then it would be the same as learning any profession – and then none of this would matter. And unfortunately, it has been exactly that in most of the church for 2000 years. But ministry is NOT a profession to be learned. It is not something anyone decides to become. Ministry is a calling – but within that calling – ministry is LIFE in Christ that comes out from Christ through an individual who has been crucified and set free from their own interests.

Now, if you examine this, you will immediately see a problem: The natural man of the one who ministers. Even the cults have some extremely talented individuals who can give sermons and teachings – but which minister ERROR. And there are individuals everywhere who preach – not necessarily error – but who preach the dead letter. It does not minister Christ. There are also thousands who preach who were never called by God to do so – but they substitute for the gift of God with their natural ability. And there are thousands who have been given gifts from God who are never given the opening to minister simply because they have not passed through the gauntlet of the religious system that demands it.

Even after we are saved we continue to carry a natural man, a sin nature, and what we might call the SELF. These dimensions of our makeup can possibly take the place of Christ as the source of Christian ministry. Or the natural man could interfere, corrupt, or distort the Truth. The result will NOT be life, but will be a ministry that is of religious flesh, or be outright error. Thus, we see the necessity of the personal cross in the life of the one who is called to minister.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Soul vs. Spirit**

To gain an understanding of these Truths, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the makeup of a saved person. We have already seen that a Christian is a person in whom Christ dwells. But how does Christ dwell in a believer?

Well, when we received Christ we were joined to Him in spirit – His spirit became one with our human spirit.

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

That is how Christ dwells in us – we are made one with Him in SPIRIT. But take note that we are joined to the Lord ONLY in spirit -- but NOT in physical body or SOUL. What this means is that there is a separation in each believer between what is joined to the Lord – our spirit is joined to Christ through the Holy Spirit – and what is NOT joined to the Lord – our physical body and what the Bible calls, “our soul man,” or, “natural man.” These remain outside of our resurrection union with Christ – although as we grow in Christ they are to come under the governing power of His life.

Of course, resident within our natural man is the sin nature. Being joined to Christ in spirit does NOT wipe our sin nature or natural man out of existence. Rather, our resurrection union with Christ exists parallel to our natural man. As stated, each believer carries BOTH. That is why Paul states:

***For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. (Gal. 5:17)***

The same Truth is revealed in many other passages, such as Romans 7. But if you gather up all of the passages on this matter, you will discover that if we pick up our cross and follow Christ, death will work upon our natural man. And because it does, we will realize a greater release of the life of Christ – first, in us, but then through us to others.

Thus, we see the key to the ministry of LIFE:

***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 always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. (II Cor. 4:7-12)***

The crucifixion of Christ was a once-for-all historical event. And at salvation, the believer is baptized into His death – that is a one-time

event. But we have to walk with Christ carrying our Cross – this is the actual experiencing and working out of what is already finished in Christ. In short, as we experience and grow to realize Jesus Christ, we will discover by experience what it means to be crucified with Him and raised in Him.

Paul is describing this ongoing work and impact of being crucified with Christ upon the believer – and he is explaining that if, “we bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus” – which is the experiencing of the Cross – there will come a greater release of His life in and through us. This is the power behind the Christian life. But this greater lease of His life will also be MINISTRY.

### **True Spiritual Ministry**

Can we see that all ministry is of HIS LIFE as the source – not to the disregard of the believer – but THROUGH the believer? Indeed, ministry and HIS LIFE in the believer are not separate – ministry IS His life along a particular line as manifested by the gifts.

We need to see this Truth. There is not His life in the believer, and then ministry through the believer – that is – ministry is not, “added,” to His life. No. His life IS ministry and ministry IS His life. His life encompasses ALL for the believer in what we call, “the Christian life,” because Jesus Christ is ALL in the believer -- but ministry is inherent in the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. Where there is His life there is all of the potential for ministry from out of each believer – each according to the gifts and calling of God.

But Paul is showing that only if WE lose ourselves to Christ – only if WE realize the death or brokenness of the self life – can Christ be seen in and through us. Only then can there be ministry.

He says, "So then death works in us, but life in you." That is ministry – but it cannot happen if, "death is not working," in the one who would minister because in that case there would be no life emerging to others in the form of ministry.

Now, of course, all forms of ministry can be mimicked by religious flesh. There can be psychic power, the power of personality, and the persuasiveness of natural man. But it will not be the life of Christ as the source.

It is here that questions may arise as to how true ministry actually unfolds. Does a believer through whom Christ ministers go into some sort of altered state or trance such that Christ then takes them over and ministers. Not at all. Do those who minister Christ have some sort of hotline to God into which they plug in order to get messages from God? No. But of course all of these absurdities are present with us today. They are all nonsense. So how does true spiritual ministry manifest through a believer?

Read the book of Acts and the epistles. True spiritual ministry manifests in some of the most seemingly natural ways. The preaching, teaching, and the life lived by those who minister will look and sound as if they are out from the person themselves – but true spiritual ministry is out from Jesus Christ by the spirit of God.



This is why true ministry can easily be mimicked by religious flesh. It is why, unless a person has ears to hear, true ministry can easily be ignored, ridiculed, or set aside as nonsense. For even though true ministry is from out of Christ as the SOURCE – it comes through an earthen vessel – and it is easy to focus on the earthen vessel and ignore the Christ who is the source.

Jesus Christ Himself was a sinless earthen vessel and He was largely attacked, ridiculed, ignored, and discredited – and still is today. Thus, people must have an open heart to recognize Christ despite all of the deficiencies of the earthen vessel that is used. As Paul stated, "Henceforth we know no one after the flesh." (II Cor. 5:16)

Some might argue that you can recognize true ministry if it agrees with scripture. Well, certainly true ministry will always agree with scripture. But again – if I have no discernment of scripture, indeed, if I have a wrong interpretation of it, I will accept ministry that agrees with that wrong interpretation.

What we see in all of this is the fact that God Himself must be in ministry or there is no chance that religious flesh, heresy, blindness, and foolishness can be brought out and demolished. But thankfully, that is the entire point: True ministry is from out of the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. And where there are open hearts – even if saddled with religious ignorance – His life can penetrate that darkness and begin to open people's eyes.

## **Ministry is HIS LIFE**

In this passage there are Truths that ought to completely dismantle the idea most of have about ministry -- and show us what real ministry is: Ministry is LIFE – ministry is the LIFE of Jesus Christ; the Person of Jesus Christ – being manifested and brought before others through an earthen vessel. The ministry is not OF the earthen vessel. It is Christ through the earthen vessel. But again -- this is only possible if the earthen vessel “bears about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.”

The person who would be used of Christ must get it settled – they are not their own. They belong to God for whatever it takes for Him to have His will IN THEM. They, as Paul says, “are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake – that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest.”

That is LIFE through death. But it is HIS LIFE ministered – which is the only true ministry. If Christ Himself would be ministered, there would be nothing impossible. In Him is all life – resurrection life. In Him is all light. People would come alive in the Lord, and people would not only SEE – but be governed by the Person they see. That would be freedom.

## **Chapter 7**

### **His Life from Our Death**

Every believer is aware that Jesus Christ died on the Cross for the human race. Likewise, every believer knows that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and then ascended to heaven. But have we realized the personal application of these great Truths?

This is a vital issue, because it is the job of ministry to bring believers to where they can fellowship with Christ in His death, His resurrection, and His ascension. This is the ministration of LIFE. It is the core of fellowship with Christ Himself. This fellowship is to be real and practical. And it also goes without saying that it will be impossible to help others find and live in these Truths if the one who ministers has not experienced these realities.

Note that the essential here is not merely that we grasp doctrinal Truth about Jesus Christ and His Redemptive work. Doctrinal Truth will be included – but that doctrinal Truth is intended to lead us to the PERSON. And in the NT it is clear that it is the PERSON that God wants us to experience, and that fellowship with Him is to govern our lives.

### **Crucified With Christ**

Let's look at a few examples:

***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)***

Paul obviously knew that Jesus Christ was crucified FOR him. As mentioned, all believers know that doctrine; that fact. But here, Paul says that he is crucified WITH Christ. Indeed, he tells us two impacts of being crucified with Christ. First, he says that, "Christ lives in me." But then he adds, "Yet not I, but Christ." So once again we see, "HIS life from OUR death."

In II Corinthians 4 we read, "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body." (II Cor. 4:11) Can we see that Galatians 2:20 is speaking of the same reality of Christ in the believer leading to that believer becoming an expression of Christ?

That statement, "Yet not I, but Christ," summarizes a mind that has been renewed according to Christ. It shows the freedom from self that comes from knowing and experiencing Christ. It is, in fact, the ONLY possible outcome of losing my life to Christ and finding Him as my life.

From a practical standpoint, to lose one's life to Christ – for our lives to proclaim – "Yet not I, but Christ" – would mean to live for the interests of Christ rather than our own. Regarding ministry, it would mean to minister for the interests of Christ rather than our own. Once we realize this it becomes clear as to why the work of the personal Cross is necessary. You and I could never come

to such a place in our relationship with God simply by knowing the teaching. No. There must be an actual death to our own interests – because we have seen the Truth, not only about ourselves, but about Christ.

It is simply not possible – if we have truly repented, given ourselves to Christ, and are picking up our personal Cross – to continue to live for, or minister to others – under the motivation of our own interests. Our minds will be renewed and our motivation changed. This will actually be an incredible freedom. Only then shall we realize how self-serving we have been to live for ourselves. We will rejoice in the fact that God has set us free – and will know that it was necessary to release us to minister to others.

So once again we find Paul describing an ongoing, deepening experience of Christ in His death. But the result is HIS LIFE being released and having greater freedom to move in and through us. We lose ourselves to Him – for whatever it takes for Him to get His will in us. Usually, this requires trials of faith – that which will bring us to relinquishing our self-possession, self-interest, and self-righteousness. This death will clear us out of the way so that we can be vessels through whom Christ can live.

You will note that for Christ to live in and through a believer is NOT the same as what we hear today: That the believer needs, “to look like Jesus.” No. This work of God goes far deeper than appearance. It is out from Christ Himself through our spiritual union with Him.

Christ lives through a believer when that believer lets go of himself and lives by faith in Christ. Or, to put it another way, "Yet not I, but Christ," needs to become NORMAL for the believer – as the mind, intent, and consciousness of that believer. Conduct will follow – but it won't be forced or under the law. It will simply be the NEW NORMAL outcome of living from out of Christ in resurrection union.

All of this requires a work of God by His spirit in Christ. We cannot do that work. We cannot change ourselves down into the depths of our being. But we can believe and abide in Christ to the disregard of ourselves – and if we do the life of Christ will be made manifest. Our minds will be renewed. We will become expressions and extensions of Him.

### **His Strength from Our Weakness**

***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)***

In this passage we see the outcome of the work of the Cross in a life, as well as the outcome of knowing Jesus Christ. If we are to become expressions and extensions of Christ all of our weakness must be exposed so that we will all the more rely on Christ. He must become our only strength and power.

In this passage, Paul is describing the condition of anyone that God is able to use. It is not a matter of God giving us a **THING** called power. No. It is a matter of God reducing us to weakness so that the power who **IS** Christ might live through us.

### **Not Things, But Christ**

Paul takes care to explain that the life of the believer is **NOT** a matter of God giving us a **THING** called, "eternal life." No. It is a matter of God giving us Christ – Who **IS** the life.

It is so vital to see this distinction: God never gives us **THINGS** because of Christ. Rather, He gives us Christ in Whom are all things! (see Rom. 8:32) This means that **ALL** that God has to give is given solely in Christ, and nothing God has to give is outside of Him. And this likewise shows that Christ within is the only possible source of true ministry.

So, we state again: True ministry is **HIS LIFE** – being released in us through the work of the Cross – and then flowing through us out to others. But it is not merely information. It is not religion. It is Christ.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Losing to Find**

Those who would minister to others **MUST** see the Truth His life from out of our weakness – from out of our death in Him. Leaders **MUST** experience being crucified with Christ and being raised with Him. That is because **ALL** believers must both see and experience this Truth. None of us will get far otherwise. So there could be nothing more important for a leader than to lay a foundation of the Person of Christ and the need for us to be baptized into His death and resurrection – and what that means as to experience.

We are born into an Adam race which is contrary to God. We are governed by the flesh – so utterly governed by the flesh that we do not know it. To us, it is normal. To simply know Christ died for us will do nothing to address that problem and bring us to where Christ is our life in a livable and practical way. The only solution is to be crucified **WITH** Christ. In other words, there has to be a **DEATH** that takes place – not a doctrinal death, and not a religious death, and not a death that is never experienced. No. We have to actually experience **DEATH** to our **SELF** – not death to our body – and not an eradication of the old nature – but a crucifixion **WITH CHRIST** that will break the power of death over the person that we are.

If I am crucified with Christ in an experiential way, my **SELF** life will be broken. The old man will continue to be there – continue to try to drag



me down – but to the extent that I abide in Christ by faith, that old man will be proven to be impotent. This must be practiced. But it will prove true because it IS true. My mind will also be progressively renewed according to Christ. His life will emerge. My life will begin to proclaim, “Yet not I, but Christ!”

But none of this is possible under the power of the old life, nor within the understanding of the natural mind. Religion can fake some of this, but it will be powerless. The power of His resurrection is possible to experience only if we die to our old life and life from out of Him by faith.

We will never be perfect in any dimension of life in Christ during this age. But to the extent that we have seen Christ and have given ourselves unconditionally to Him our occupation with ourselves – personally and in ministry – will be broken by the Cross. We will not be governed by our natural man or self life. We will be living upon an entirely new basis – that of HIM.

Here we can turn to the primary passage that speaks of our need to experience the crucifixion with Christ:

***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)***

You will note the words, IF anyone would come after Me...” There are no other options here if we

want to walk with Christ. The ONLY option is, "Deny himself, take up his Cross, and follow Me." Thus, we must put God before self – we must LOSE our lives to Christ – by picking up the Cross that God brings. This is just another way of saying, "Yes, Christ was crucified FOR you. But now the impact of His death must be experienced – you must be crucified WITH Him. That happens only if you pick up the Cross that God brings into your life."

Because human beings have a WILL – that means that human beings have a SELF. And when everything is said and done, we must either put SELF before GOD or GOD before SELF. Without being crucified WITH Christ, we will never put God before self. There must come a breaking of SELF under the work of the Cross.

The, "breaking of self," is actually FREEDOM. Indeed, it is necessary to experience freedom from sin. It is futile to try to get freedom from individual SINS. The only sure way to get free from individual SINS is to lose the life in which all SINS are rooted – the old life in Adam. Lose that, and abide in Christ as your life, and you will find that what God says is true IS true: In Christ there is freedom from sin.

### **Christ Lives in the Believer**

In this passage from Matthew 16, Jesus goes on to say essentially the same thing Paul states in Gal. 2:20. He says that if we LOSE our lives to Him – if we are crucified with Him – we will find Him as our life. There will be a greater release of His life in us.

One way to describe, "losing our life to Christ," is to ask God – and we must mean it, and it must be done in faith – we must ask God, "to do whatever it takes to bring us into the fullness of His Son; to do whatever it takes to get His full will in us." That is a prayer God will always answer. And when God does do whatever it takes, we must believe and obey and follow Him.

Anyone who would minister Christ is going to have to be crucified with Christ. They are going to have to lose their lives to Christ. If you are called to ministry you are called to THIS. This is the same principle of life through death that we saw in II Cor. 4. And it is absolutely essential that this Truth be preached.

### **In Christ; With Christ**

Another place that shows we must experience Christ in His death and resurrection is Romans 6:

***Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also [in the likeness] of [his] resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [him], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with***

***Christ, we believe that we shall also live  
with him: (Rom. 6:3-8)***

Note these words: "Baptized INTO His death;" "buried WITH Him;" "Planted together (with Him);" "Crucified WITH Him;" "Dead WITH Christ;" "Live WITH Him." Do we think that these are merely LEGAL concepts accomplished by Christ – or do we realize that Paul is saying that because we are in real fellowship with Christ that we are to actually experience Him in His Redemptive work?

Note that when Paul wrote that, "the body of sin" would be, "destroyed," he used a Greek word that does NOT mean what the English word, "destroyed," means. The Greek word does not mean to wipe out of existence. Rather, it means, "to render impotent."

Does this mean a person in Christ CANNOT sin? No. If we read the rest of the passage we find that to the extent that a believer abides in Christ by faith – yields to Christ – that believer will find that the power of sin and self are impotent. That which belongs to the old nature cannot govern someone who is being governed by Christ.

## **Chapter 9**

### **The Travail of the Lord**

In the previous chapters, we saw that Christianity, at the core, is, "Christ in you." Christ in His people is what God wants to build up through ministry.

***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 work in me mightily.***  
***(Col. 1:27-29)***

#### **Paul's Heart Cry**

Another way of describing the building up of Christ in believers – or the building up of believers in Christ – is stated by Paul in Galatians. In fact, it was the travail of his heart. But since these passages are part of the inspired Word of God, we can be sure that the heart cry of Paul represents the heart cry of God Himself.

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

This declaration by Paul certainly agrees with his statement in Colossians 1 – shown at the beginning of this chapter. God reveals through Paul that it is His desire that Christ be, "formed," in believers. The Greek word translated, "formed," means, "to be inwardly realized and

expressed.” This is God’s desire, and it is the purpose of all ministry – to bring believers into an inward realization and expression of Christ.

To the degree that believers embrace and realize Christ, it will result in Christian maturity.

In Ephesians 1, we find another heart cry of Paul, which is actually his prayer – and as such, represents the desire of God for believers:

***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....(Eph. 1:15-18)***

This epistle of Paul to the Ephesians is filled with doctrinal teaching and exhortation. But what does Paul say is his prayer? That the Ephesians come to know his doctrine? That they memorize and parrot the teaching? No – despite the fact that what Paul wrote is the inspired Word of God. Rather, Paul wants them to have a living experience of the One about Whom his doctrine teaches: Jesus Christ. Paul wants them to come into an inward realization and expression of Jesus Christ; to have, “the eyes of their understanding enlightened,” that they might know HIM – and His eternal purpose.

This was the heart cry of Paul throughout his ministry. But that being the case, it brings us face to face with this question: Is it OUR heart cry? Is it OUR prayer?

This heart cry of Paul represents the heart cry of Jesus Christ. Thus, it is the mind of Christ. Is it OUR mind? And if not, then why not? Why is this not central to ministry in the body of Christ?

Do we seriously believe that we can dismiss what God has clearly expressed as HIS desire for His people? Should it not convict us -- and suggest to us that we may have been blind to the Person of Jesus Christ; blind to His plan and purpose for the church? These words of Paul ought to not only convict us personally, but they ought to completely revolutionize the purpose and goals of ministry.

### **Blinded to Christ**

The great mystery of CHRIST IN YOU – which fulfills the Word of God – the mystery that was hidden from generations past, but NOW is revealed – this was Paul's passion. But Paul was not merely passionate about it as a message. Rather, Paul was passionate about the PERSON. God desires that all believers know His Son – realize His Son – experience His Son -- and that Jesus Christ would become the very LIFE of the church.

Christ is normally preached in God's church as Savior. He is usually preached as the One in Whom we must trust. That is good. But where do we hear that believers are actually one with

Jesus Christ in resurrection union – and that He is to be ALL to each of us? More importantly, where is this actually experienced?

Where is it preached that God wants to bring us into a realization of the Living Christ – and that the realization of Christ in believers is the goal of ministry that is of God?

I would submit that most believers are BLIND to this great Truth. Instead, we have a Christianity that is focused on other matters.

Today, many believers are more preoccupied with SELF than we are preoccupied with Christ. We want to feel good about ourselves – or to make sure that God feels good about us. We want to figure out how to get God to give us what we want out of life. The Christian world is littered with teaching as to how to garner the blessing of God.

Many believers spend their lives serving at church or in ministry. Their focus is to get others into church. Many churches are more occupied with keeping people in the pews and offerings in the bank than they are with ministry. Churches are run like a business is run. Few question it.

Many believers simply follow along in a belief system, equipped with a statement of faith and rules to follow – thinking that this is Christianity. Others spend their lives seeking emotional experiences that they think are the Holy Spirit. Still others live in an intellectual world of Christian philosophy and reasoning. Churches



have become social clubs. They have become religious centers. Where is the Living Christ?

The church today has simply continued on the same course that the church has followed for the last two thousand years – to one extent or another. The church is more and more a religious corporation or institution, rather than a living organism. Christ has been compromised in favor of what is socially acceptable. Some churches today have normalized sexual perversion. The doctrines that ought to point us to Christ have been discarded for the sake of, “love and tolerance.” The list could go on.

What is the solution? The solution is NOT a new statement of faith, or a new strategy for saving the lost, or to pray that God will act upon churches and revive them. The ONLY solution is the one that was the heart cry of the apostle Paul to the Galatians:

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

If believers would come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ then our minds would be renewed according to the Truth in Christ. EVERYTHING would change – ministry, worship, obedience, and our goals for living.

But this MUST begin with those who would be leaders. You and I have NO business being in leadership unless we are willing to be the first in line for God’s work of the Cross. For only then can we truly lead. Any calling to Christ is a

calling to the Cross – but all more this is the case regarding any calling to leadership.

## **The Need for a Great Shaking**

Read again the prayers of Paul – read again the desire of Paul for the body of Christ. That represents the desire of God. There is simply no other purpose that God has, or that God is going to bring to pass, except that people might come into an inward realization and knowledge of His Son – and become governed by Him; that believers might come to experience Jesus Christ as ALL.

Believers must ask God to bring this to pass no matter what it takes. But ask: What WILL it take? Well, it will take the CROSS. It will take a drastic upheaval. It will take a great shaking. It will take a great exposure of the present church system as being a religious façade. But alongside of that, it will take a crisis that will press believers to Jesus Christ. It will take a crisis that will open the eyes of believers to the reality of Jesus Christ IN THEM – to the reality that Jesus Christ is their LIFE.

Such a crisis IS going to come upon the body of Christ – thank God. We read of it in Hebrews:

***See that ye refuse not him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more [shall not] we [escape], if we turn away from him that [speaks] from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth***

***only, but also heaven. And this [word], Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God [is] a consuming fire. (Heb. 12:25-29)***

God promised that He is going to shake the HEAVENLY realm – the spiritual realm. He promises that by the time He is finished that only that which is of Jesus Christ will remain.

What will cause this shaking? Initially a great revelation of Christ – a manifestation of Christ against which all that is religious cannot stand and cannot ignore. This will likely not happen in the form of a big movement or through only one ministry. Rather, it will be a spontaneous birthing that God is already doing – which will eventually burst forth here and there. Right now there are individuals in whom God is revealing Christ. Maybe some small groups. Most are unknown. They don't even know each other. But there is a spiritual reality in Christ. When this begins to have an impact, it will not be able to be accounted for through natural means.

Truth in Christ will always divide and shake – that will be the case whenever Christ is manifested. And then human beings will have the opportunity to choose. Whenever Christ is manifested, He will begin to divide and demolish all that is not truly

united in Himself. This is going to happen on a larger scale than ever before.

We are not suggesting that there is going to be a great end time revival that is going to turn the course of history for Christ. No. That is not what the Bible teaches. Rather, this is going to be a living witness to Christ that will be evident enough and clear enough that those who really want Christ will recognize and embrace. But because it IS that, we can be sure than on the heels of such a witness will come a greater apostasy – it will be the end time apostasy that is prophesied in scripture.

Apostasy requires Truth to reject. Presently, there is NOT widespread Truth to reject. At best, there is only widespread religion. But God is going to give a great witness to His Son. THEN the end time apostasy will happen.

God is always shaking individuals. But what is spoken in this passage from Hebrews CANNOT have already happened on a widespread scale. Why? Because the end result that is promised in this passage has not yet happened. God promises that only that which is of Christ will remain. Today we see anything BUT that which is of Christ. Thus, we can look to God and rejoice that what He has promised will yet come to pass.

### **The Ministry of the Church**

The witness of Christ that God desires is not merely a doctrinal witness – of course there must be doctrine based in scripture. But a true witness of Christ – the true evidence of Christ – is the

Living Christ IN His people being ministered THROUGH His people. But in order for this to happen WE must be crucified out of the way – so that Christ may govern. God wants to bring His people into an inward realization of His Son that will renew our minds and make His body into expressions and extensions of Jesus. This is His travail. And it is going to bring forth LIFE.

## **Chapter 10**

### **The Ministry of Grace**

If we wanted to find a single word that encapsulates the gospel of Jesus Christ, that word would be GRACE. Grace is not only a one word summary of the message of Christ, but grace needs to be the spirit by which the gospel is preached. But that might not mean what we think. What it really means is that the free gift of God needs to be offered and presented freely by those who would minister.

Almost from the start, ministry had become a profession. Christianity had become a money-maker – big business. But it is entirely contradictory to charge a price for the ministry of the free gift of grace. If we have freely received from God that which continues to belong to Him, should we withhold it from others unless we receive money for it?

When Paul stated that those who preach the gospel could, within the will of God, get their living by that preaching, he was not talking about selling the gospel. He was simply saying that it was God's will for those who freely give to freely receive – to freely receive donations. In short, the preaching ought to have no direct relationship to money. The preaching should be done regardless – free of charge. And God ought to be trusted for financial support.

Again – if I preach the gospel of grace I am preaching that God offers His Son – and all that is in His Son – to each of us solely by His grace. I am saying that I personally have received the

grace of God. But should not this ministry of grace be offered just as freely to others as it is has been received by myself?

More about this in the next chapter. But for now, we need to look at the essence of grace and its impact upon those who embrace it.

### **Definition of Grace**

Most believers have heard the most common definition of, “grace” – grace is God’s unmerited favor. That is a good definition.

Now, of course we should not think of, “grace,” as a THING that God gives – sort of like a bucket of something, or a power. It is easy to do that because sometimes vocabulary fails us. But no. GRACE is actually God’s attitude and heart towards humanity. That means that GRACE is out from God – it is the dimension of His very Person extended to humanity.

John, the apostle, wrote, “Grace and Truth came in Jesus Christ.” (John 1:16) Sure. Jesus was, “FULL of grace and Truth.” (John 1:14) Thus, Jesus not only accomplished His Redemptive work by the grace of God – but He was God’s gift of grace in a Person.

The Bible calls God, “the God of all grace.” (I Peter 5:10) It is impossible for God to act except it be in grace, and it is impossible to experience God without experiencing grace. Grace is the nature and character of God, and His Son, Jesus Christ.

## **All Grace is in Christ**

We cannot separate the Person of Jesus Christ from the grace of God – for as noted, grace and Truth were given IN Jesus Christ. Therefore, if a person wants the grace of God they will find it only in Christ. And if they come to Christ, they can find only grace and Truth. Indeed, even when God draws unsaved people to Christ it is by His grace in Christ.

Grace is never imposed. It CAN be resisted -- God Himself has made that possible. But grace is absolutely FREE – meaning there are no strings attached. But that is exactly why people who resist or refuse grace are without recourse. There is no excuse once I see that grace is free. At that point I must either believe or refuse to believe.

“By grace through faith,” is a Truth that governs all. That is not a requirement – it is simply the TRUTH. If ALL grace is found ONLY in Jesus Christ, and in Christ is found ONLY grace and Truth, then if we want to walk with Him we must walk with Him in grace and Truth. Grace and Truth in Jesus Christ is not a religious system. It is a relationship.

God has given all things FREELY in His Son. (Rom. 8:32) That includes grace. Thus, yes, the gospel of grace is offered to all. But only those who believe and receive Christ can be saved. Again, that is because all grace is given in the Son.



## **God's Purpose**

Anyone can learn the doctrine of grace. It is fundamental to Christianity. But actually receiving the grace of God is another matter. The fact is, you and I will NOT receive the grace of God – dare I say CANNOT? -- until we see that God's grace is ONLY means by which we can receive Christ and walk with Him.

We must grasp this Truth: Grace is the ONLY means by which we can receive anything from God – whether we are talking about salvation or whether we are talking about that which we need to walk with Christ. Indeed, grace is the only means by which we can receive material provision from God – grace and Truth are the ONLY means by which we can walk with Christ.

And yet we will not receive the grace of God until we are reduced down to where we actually DO realize that grace is the only basis by which we can receive anything from God. We will not believe and receive otherwise – we will remain blind to it. God has to bring us to the point where we voluntarily by faith SURRENDER to His grace.

That may sound strange. But it is a fact. We must be brought to where we surrender to the grace of Christ – which means to surrender to Christ Himself. We have to be brought to where we simply open ourselves to Him for whatever He wants and for whatever it takes for Him to be able to give to us – freely – all that He wants to give.

God cannot entrust us with the riches of His grace until we are reduced and are able to freely receive what He freely gives. Otherwise, we would corrupt His grace because we would not realize our need. In short, we must be adjusted through a work of the Cross so that we can walk with Christ in His grace and Truth.

Self-righteousness is quite subtle. And there is NO ONE who does not begin with some self-righteousness, or, if you prefer, a self-rightness. It is fundamental to the sin nature. Self-righteousness is unbelief – it is actually sin. And those who would minister the gospel of grace need to have it crucified.

### **Ministry of Grace**

Ministry that is of the spirit of God is the ministry of grace. God has freely given us all things in Christ. We are to freely receive what God has freely given. Thus, those who have freely received what God has freely given are going to freely give to others – out of what God has freely given them.

Can we see that all is of grace? Yes. ALL is of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. And certainly, that which has to do with any facet of ministry to others is always going to be freely given to others – because it is out from that which is freely given to those who would minister.

## **Chapter 11**

### **Freely Received, Freely Give**

If we wanted a prime example of how grace is to govern ministry – to govern ALL having to do with ministry – we need only turn to the gospel of Matthew. In chapter 10, Jesus said to His disciples:

***...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)***

The occasion in which Jesus spoke these words to His disciples was the very FIRST time He sent them forth to minister in His name. But there is one sentence in this passage which gathers together all of the Truth about ministry – which is an expression of what it means to be a FAITHFUL servant: FREELY you have received, FREELY give.

This is, of course, the Truth of grace. But again - here we see that GRACE is not simply the means by which God saves His people. Rather, GRACE governs ALL that is of God – and therefore GRACE governs ALL that God does IN His people and THROUGH His people. In other words, if God has given His people all things FREELY in His Son (Rom. 8:32) – then God's people MUST likewise give all things FREELY. We have received NOTHING that is of God except it is by GRACE through Jesus Christ – therefore, having FREELY received, we must FREELY give.

If believers would see this Truth in Christ, and then live out from it, it would not only revolutionize our personal lives, but it would completely alter the face of ministry. God has

given us ALL things freely in His Son – everything that God has to give is given to us, not as a supplement to Christ – but in the Person of Christ Himself. God has NOTHING to give humanity outside of what He has given in Christ. And He has given us Christ solely by His grace. But since all ministry is OF Christ, and is a matter of conveying and manifesting Christ – a faithful servant will freely give because he has freely received. Anything other than giving by grace what we have received by grace is UNFAITHFULNESS, and a misrepresentation of Jesus Christ.

This should not be a law or principle to follow, but rather, the Truth in Christ that governs us. Or, to put it another way, grace received should have the inward impact upon me such that I will desire to freely give. The grace received will so adjust and alter my inward relationship with Christ according to that same grace that I will gladly freely give.

There is simply no way to freely receive by the grace of God unless that grace does a work in me whereby I will then voluntarily and gladly freely give to others. These things are NOT passive. What God freely gives amounts to LIFE and LIGHT that is of His Son – and Christ in me by His spirit will begin a work of grace that will make me want to FREELY give what God has given me. This is the ONLY possible outcome of FREELY receiving from God.

### **The First Instructions**

As noted, the words, “Freely you have received, freely give,” were at the forefront of the instructions Jesus gave to His disciples in sending them forth to minister in His name for the

FIRST TIME. We cannot ignore this significance – and if you read the rest of the passage you will see that those words of grace were to GOVERN all that they did as they ministered in His name. Obviously, if grace and Truth were given in the Person of Jesus Christ then all that is preached in His name would be governed by that same grace and Truth – in doctrine but also in practice.

Jesus was talking about ministry. This is His description of a faithful steward – it is actually the only way to be faithful to Jesus Christ. It is a description of true MINISTRY. We freely give BECAUSE we have freely received – and what we have freely received has made us to be people who desire to freely give.

So we see that all ministry, at the root, is out from Christ – it is Life and Truth in Christ, being experienced by a person, doing a work in that person – and then as the result, being brought into the life of others. Do not separate ministry from Christ; do not separate stewardship from Him – for all Life and Truth is out from Him. It is only as a person gives themselves to Christ can such a person can be a vessel through whom Christ can be ministered.

## **A Process**

Believers are supposed to be a work of grace. Surely, those who would minister to others ought to be a work of grace. And the words of Jesus, “Freely you have received, freely give,” do summarize that work of grace.

We must say it this way. God has freely given us all things in Christ. If we believe, we have received all things freely in Christ. But that will

have an incredible impact in us. It will adjust our relationship with God. It will renew our minds according to the grace in Christ. The result will be that we will freely GIVE. Indeed, there can be NO OTHER outcome of the work of grace.

Now, just to be clear: What does the word, "FREELY," imply? It simply means, "no strings attached." Or, "no payment possible." Of course, it is possible to freely receive and then to NOT surrender to the work of grace – in which case I will NOT freely give. But that does not mean the grace of God is not freely given. It simply means that I have corrupted it and have become an unfaithful steward. But that aside, the grace of God is given with, "not strings attached." We must come under that work of grace and offer to others the Truth and the light in Christ that God has given to us – freely without strings attached.

If the body of Christ would function in grace it would completely revolutionize ministry. It would actually revolutionize fellowship in Christ. Things would be on an entirely different and higher basis – that of grace and Truth.

### **Addressing a Common Question**

We know that Jesus said, "Give and it shall be give unto you." (Luke 6:38) How often in the Christian church has this verse, and a few others like it, been used as a LAW that is imposed upon Christians? People are told, "You are to GIVE to God in order to GET from God. It says so right here!" Others say, "God will NOT give to you unless you give to Him!" And then there is this abominable teaching, "If you give to God a one hundred dollar seed, He will give to you an

uncommon harvest of one hundred dollar harvest multiplied!" Others offer a more tempered version, "God will only bless you financially to the extent that you give to others." But however it is taught, this error governs the church today with regards to money. It is found in teaching on tithing and in teaching on giving offerings. In short, God's willingness to give to you is directly related to whether you give to Him. That is what is taught. And so Christians give. And we somehow never see that every bit of this is totally contrary to the Truth of grace!

Now, as is usually the case, we must include the rest of the verse. Jesus also added, "The measure with which you measure will be the measure that is measured unto you." If you look up the word translated, "measure," you will find that it means, "the method of calculation." Or, "the standard that is used to measure." So Jesus is not talking about the AMOUNT given. He is referring instead to motive behind our giving – He is talking about WHY we are giving and HOW we came to give.

Plug this into the words of Jesus, "Freely you have received, and so freely give." Should grace not be our, "method of calculation?" Should grace not be our, "standard that is used to measure?" Yes. For the Truth is the Truth with regards to ALL.

We said that grace means, "no strings attached." Can we also see that grace gives no thought to rewards or punishments? That's right. I freely give because I have freely received. God did not give to me because He would get a reward. I should not give because I think I will get a reward. I should give to the complete disregard

of personal gain – either from God or from others. Isn't that what LOVE does?

I should give because giving is the only possible outcome of being in a true relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not a matter of following a law. It is not a matter of giving to get. It is not about earning, meriting, or losing a reward. It is about LOVE. It is about coming into the Truth and then a matter of the Truth coming out of us.

Believers ought to freely give from out of what God has freely given them – and they WILL DO SO if what they have freely received has done a work of grace in them. This is especially so with regards to those who would minister. There should be no strings attached. There should be no reward as the motive. Those who minister the Word should do it fully in grace and Truth. And those who receive the Word should be told that it is freely given to them – no obligation -- and it can be left to God as to their response.



## **Chapter 12**

### **God's Assignment to Paul**

Everything that applied to Paul with regards to ministry likewise applies in principle to each believer. If you want to know what will happen when God is at work in a personal life, or in what we call, "revival," one of the best descriptions is found in the book of Acts. There we find that Jesus gave Paul a description of ministry – Jesus tells Paul what is going to be the impact of Paul's relationship with Christ upon his ministry to others.

***Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? [it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and [from] the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:15-18)***

There are several important points given. First point: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make you a minister." Paul's journey as a minister BEGAN with Paul seeing Jesus Christ. Sure. And later, having Christ revealed

TO him, God would reveal Christ IN him. Paul would write:

***But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called [me] by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him... (Gal. 1:15-16)***

There can be no real ministry otherwise. A person must at least be in the process of having Christ revealed WITHIN – be in the process of coming into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. And then as the outcome of seeing Christ, a person must be under the work of the Cross which makes it possible to live out from the life of Christ – which, in turn, makes true ministry possible.

Anyone can study theology and convey that to others – and call that ministry. But the best that an intellectual, theological knowledge can produce in others is the same theological knowledge. There is value in that if what we convey is true Biblical doctrine. But it is not yet LIFE. It is not the same as God revealing the Living Christ IN US. Indeed, the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. Biblical theology itself tells us exactly that – see II Corinthians 3:6 -- and teaches us that Christ must be revealed in us.

Now, if a person has Christ revealed in them, and allows the work of the Cross in their life -- which will release the life of Christ through them -- then any preaching they do will be OF that same life. Sure. If we are living in His life, then preaching, teaching, fellowship, or any other ministry will BE of His life.

But without seeing Jesus and living in Him, how can we bring the presence of Jesus into the lives of others? We cannot. Preaching and teaching the Word is absolutely necessary in the body of Christ – Paul did that all of the time. But again -- note exactly what Paul said, "To reveal His Son in me, that I might PREACH HIM." The inward revelation of Christ was so that Paul could outwardly preach Christ. That means that even though Paul used the necessary words, and Bible verses, for preaching – those words were spirit and life. They were out from Christ. Those words were merely vehicles wherein LIFE was carried.

It is essential that the church have teachers who can tell believers the Truth about Jesus Christ, and give instruction as to how God works, and how we can work with Him. There needs to be teaching as to the eternal purpose of God that Christ has accomplished through the Redemption. But mere FACTS will not get us far. The presence of Jesus Christ through the spirit of God must be both the source and the goal. And that cannot happen unless Christ freely lives in the preacher. Otherwise, Christians will be nothing more than theologians.

Take time to read Acts 2. Peter preached the first sermon after he and the others received Christ through the giving of the Spirit of God. Three thousand were converted. But there was nothing in that sermon that you cannot hear today in any number of places. Peter's WORDS were not what converted those people. No. Those people turned to Christ that day because through the words of Peter the presence of Christ was brought to them. In a way that they,

themselves, could probably not explain, they saw Jesus – not a vision – but they realized Him at least in an elementary way that made them realize that they were lost and that He was the answer.

So there MUST be teaching in the Body of Christ. But even the Bible itself will be a dead, theological book, unless we are brought into contact with Christ Himself. So again, ministry is a matter of having Christ brought in. That is God's ministry to anyone who would preach, and it is the ministry of anyone who would preach to others. Christ within ministered to others through preaching, teaching, fellowship, prayer, or simply suffering for Jesus' sake unto the edification of the Body.

Back to Paul on the Damascus road -- Jesus then elaborated on His assignment to Paul by saying, "to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in which I will appear to you." Thus, before Paul could be a WITNESS unto others he needed to see Jesus for himself – otherwise how could he be a witness unto Christ to others?

Can we see the necessity of having an inward revelation of Jesus Christ? It is the absence of this that is the reason why so much preaching and teaching today, even if it is true as to words, carries very little life. It is not out from Christ. Rather, it is out from natural, religious humanity. But as sincere and well-intended as that might be – it carries no life, and no power.

As difficult as it might be to accept, most of the body of Christ is blind to the reality of the Living and ever-present Christ. We don't even know

that God wants to reveal Christ in us. It is not talked about or preached about, let alone known as God's goal, and God's means. That is why the ministry of HIS LIFE is not at work in the body.

### **The Travail of God**

Paul's heart cry for the body of Christ is found in his epistle to the Galatians:

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

We must ask: Is it OUR heart cry? Or perhaps an even more searching question is: Do we even know what this means? Do we know that it is supposed to be the goal of all ministry?

God inspired these words of Paul. Therefore, we can be sure that Paul's travail is a reflection of God's travail. It needs to become the travail and goal of ministry in the body of Christ.

## **Chapter 13**

### **The Essential of True Doctrine**

Jesus Christ is a Living Person. He is not a doctrine. Neither are we saved by the doctrine of faith in Christ. No. We are saved by Jesus Himself -- and to be saved we must believe and trust HIM with a living faith. The letter kills, but the spirit gives LIFE.

Now, what are we to conclude from all of this? That doctrine does not matter? Not at all. Doctrine is essential – and it MUST be Biblical.

Why? Well, think about it: The Bible is the written Truth. But Jesus Christ is the Living Truth. Yet there is only ONE Truth. Thus, the Truth found in the Living Christ must be the ONE Truth that is also found in the Bible -- in written form. Therefore, the doctrines that I state in verbal or written form MUST rightly represent the Living Truth.

All doctrine is a representation of Jesus Christ. In one way or another, my doctrine and teaching – which must be found in the Bible – is a proclamation of the nature, character, plan and purpose that God has in Christ. And because it is all of that, my doctrine is also instruction as to how to walk and live with God through His Son.

So we conclude this: True doctrine rightly represents God and His Son, Jesus Christ. False doctrine misrepresents Him. This is so whether that representation is direct or indirect.

From this we can see that doctrine is far more important than just rightly interpreting Bible

verses. Absolutely. For doctrine tells us what we need to believe, how we need to live, and most of all, tells the Truth about the One to whom we belong.

### **Knowing What the Bible Means**

Those in ministry **MUST** teach sound doctrine. But doing so is not merely dependent upon being a Bible scholar. No – although if we are going to teach Truth based on the Bible we do need to know the Bible. But teaching sound doctrine – which is an expression of the Truth who is a Person – is more dependent upon a person's personal faith, and the personal realization which they have of Christ.

Anyone can **READ** the Bible and tell you what it says. But only the spirit of God – the spirit of God that reveals Christ **IN US** – only the spirit of God can make us to know what the Bible means by what it says. An inward realization and knowledge of the Living Word is ultimately necessary to discern the meaning of the written Word. And the written Word will always agree with what God reveals.

If I have grasped the true doctrine of the Bible, then I need to go on to experience the Christ Whom it represents. But if I have experienced the Christ of the Bible, then I need to affirm my experience in the Bible. Why? Because again – there is **ONE** Truth.

### **The Place of Doctrine**

***You have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think***

***ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. (John 5:38-40)***

In this passage, Jesus tells us the important place of scripture, and thus, of doctrine. The scriptures TESTIFY to Christ. Those scriptures identify Christ, tell us who He is, and tell us that we must, "Repent and believe," upon Him. But then He says, "but you will not COME TO ME." In other words, He is telling them that, yes, they spent their life studying the scriptures – but they don't believe what those scriptures tell them they must believe, and they don't do what the scriptures tell them they must do. They search the written Word for eternal life, but they will not come to the Living Word, who is LIFE HIMSELF.

Most Christians know the words, "Repent and believe." Most can quote book and verse. But the question is, have we repented and believed? Not unless we have had a spiritual encounter with Jesus Christ. Otherwise, this is just a doctrine to us.

When the God talks about DOCTRINE in His Word, He is talking about more than just a theological tenet. What God means by DOCTRINE is LIVING TRUTH. He means, yes, the written Word and spoken teaching, but He is talking about the LIVING PERSON who is the embodiment of that teaching. AND – He speaks of the essential of actually living in and experiencing the reality behind the DOCTRINE.

I could actually intellectually hold to the doctrine of faith in Christ, and yet NOT believe. I could preach and teach the Truth of salvation in Christ, and yet not be saved. God wants us to hold to



true doctrine and teaching – but He wants us to experience the Christ about Whom the doctrine speaks.

For example, note the words of John in his second epistle:

***Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into [your] house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (I John 1:9)***

“The doctrine of Christ,” is the TRUTH of Jesus Christ. But do we think that John is simply exhorting people to hold to a written doctrine – as a bit of theology – and nothing more? Is THAT Christianity? No. John is talking about, “abiding” -- living IN and OUT FROM Christ Himself. He is talking about the necessity of abiding in Christ by faith – yes, for salvation – but for ALL.

Doing so will NOT negate the doctrine. Doing so will NOT minimize the written Word. Rather, it will bring the believer into an experiencing of the One of Whom the written Word speaks.

In fact, this shows all the more why holding to true Biblical doctrine is essential – Biblical doctrine tells the Truth about the Truth Himself – and tells us that we need to believe Him – and tells us how to walk with Him. As we have noted, true doctrine is a true representation of Jesus Christ.

All of this really ought to be basic stuff for us. We practice the principle behind it in everyday life. If we say that we believe something -- then THAT is our doctrine – and our life will reflect that we believe it. If we believe that 2 plus 2 equals four, then we will build all of our math upon that. But if we say we believe that 2 plus 2 equals four, and hold that ONLY as a doctrine but not practiced, how far will that take us. How much more, with eternal ramifications, does this apply to our walk with Jesus Christ.

It is quite possible to have multiple degrees in theology and yet to remain an unbeliever. We are capable of deceiving ourselves into thinking that if we believe all of the, “right doctrines,” that our faith is in Christ. But just as was the need for the Pharisees, we need to COME TO HIM. We need to believe and trust the PERSON – not only the doctrine.

On the other side of things, there are many believers who have difficulty grasping Bible doctrine – from an academic or theological point of view. Does this mean they cannot believe and trust Jesus Christ? Not at all. Read the account of the early church. The Gentiles to whom Paul preached did not know the Bible – at least not a first. Yet they had encounters with Christ and put their faith in Him.

Paul said it best to Timothy:

***And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for***

***instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (II Tim. 3:15-17)***

There it is. The scriptures are able to, “make us wise unto salvation.” But the scripture cannot save us. No. That salvation is through faith in the PERSON, Jesus Christ. What good is it to merely know the doctrine of salvation by faith alone – right out of the Bible – if we do not actually put our faith in Christ?

God will NEVER do anything, or reveal anything, that is not based upon scripture. Doctrine represents Jesus Christ – one way or another – His nature, character, attitude, purpose, and intent. Thus, we MUST teach the ONE TRUTH that is in scripture if we are to rightly represent the ONE TRUTH who is a Living Person. With this there can be NO compromise.

## **Chapter 13**

### **The Need to See the Living Christ**

One of the impacts of ministry that is of the spirit of God -- which Jesus promised to Paul -- was that eyes of the spiritually blind would be opened, and many would turn from darkness to light. In order for people to be set free – or order to walk with Christ – this is certainly essential.

But if we are to see the eyes of the blind opened we must understand the MEANS. The only way in which the eyes of the spiritually blind can be opened is if they see Jesus Christ.

What does that mean – to SEE Jesus Christ? It isn't to see with the physical eyes. It isn't even a spiritual vision. It isn't intellectual and it isn't emotional. Rather, it is an inward knowing; an inward realization – by the spirit of God. Of course, many of us try to muster this up out from ourselves, but it is not of ourselves. Just as Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 16, this is an inward revelation that has to initially come INTO us from the OUTSIDE of us. And it must come to renew our minds and govern us.

To NOT be able to see Jesus Christ is spiritual blindness. To see Jesus Christ is spiritual sight. That is because Jesus Christ is THE LIGHT. Indeed, once we begin to see Jesus we will be able to see the Truth about all things – in His light.

If people must see Jesus, then obviously, Christ needs to be preached. He needs to be preached in Truth and in power.

### **Christ in the Individual**

God wants to reveal Christ to each individual believer. The revelation of Christ cannot come by proxy. Even if God speaks or bears witness to Christ through another member of the Body, it is unto the end that each individual learn Christ for themselves. This is what it means to edify each other in Christ. Ministry is LIFE – ministry is Christ. It must be real and must be personal.

The personal knowledge of Jesus Christ is an inward matter – it is an inward realization. As noted -- it is not emotional or intellectual – although the mind will be renewed according to Christ and be thoroughly engaged. A person will begin to be governed by their relationship with, and knowledge of, Jesus Christ.

This is absolutely essential. It is what is really means to see Jesus – we come into an inward realization of Him. This is a Truth stated everywhere in the NT:

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

***And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee,***

***That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Mat 16:16-18)***

***But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: (Gal 1:15-16)***

***That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; (Phil 3:10)***

***And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. (1 John 5:20)***

***And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)***

This is so essential that it was actually the heart cry of the apostle Paul, and was the object of his prayer for the body of Christ:

***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 fullness of him that fills all in all. (Eph. 1:15-23)***

If you read this passage you will see that the core of Paul's prayer is that believers would be given, "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the KNOWLEDGE OF HIM." But it is that knowledge of Christ that is the basis for "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened." In other words, the inward knowledge of Christ OPENS THE EYES – enables spiritual sight. And then, based on the knowing of Christ opening the eyes spiritually, Paul says, "that you may KNOW." He then goes through what we WILL know: Those Truths that constitute the plan and purpose of God.

Now ask: Why didn't Paul simply tell them all about the plan of God and be done with it? Well, he did tell them about it – it is all through his epistle to them. Paul talks much about it in this

letter. Or why didn't Paul tell them that they simply needed to gather up all the facts they had about Jesus Christ? Wouldn't that be how they could know Him? No. Despite the fact that it was the cry of Paul that the body of Christ could see – he did not mention study, facts, or theology. Neither did he point them to the rest of what he wrote in this epistle. Instead, he said, "I pray that God would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ."

We are being told again: We have no spiritual sight unless we see Jesus. All discernment is the outcome of seeing and knowing HIM. And without this spiritual sight, we cannot get far in this Christian walk.

The great prayer of the apostle Paul and his great travail was that the church would have the eyes of their understanding opened by a revelation of Jesus Christ – so that we could KNOW. But we must once again ask: Is that our travail? Is this the goal of ministry? If not, then why not? These are searching questions.

### **The New Birth**

Jesus said, "Unless you are born from above you cannot see." (John 3:6) That ought to be a given. But just as a new born babe has the capacity to see – has the ability to see – it takes time for that babe to actually open their eyes and to start seeing. Furthermore, even once a babe does see, they do not know what they are seeing. There is no understanding.

The problem with many professing Christians is that they are not born from above. And if that is



the case, they CANNOT see. The best they can do is grasp certain Christian truths from an intellectual or theological standpoint. But if they are born from above and have the capacity to see then ministry needs to teach them what they ought to be seeing. Ministry ought to be a vehicle whereby believers can begin to see HIM.

If Paul prayed that God would open their eyes, does that not show us that NOTHING else will? His prayer would otherwise be pointless. No. This must come by revelation. That spiritual sight is not accomplished through the efforts of religion. It is not something that any of us can bring to pass. All that any of us can do is bring Jesus Christ into the presence of others. HE is the LIGHT. But then they will have the possibility of believing and obeying.

John, the apostle, in his gospel, makes this statement:

***In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. (John 1:4)***

This tells us that unless we are indwelt with HIS LIFE there is no possibility of seeing – for LIGHT is of HIS LIFE. This is just another way of saying that you must be born from above. But it also tells us that before God can open the eyes of the spiritually blind, they must take their place at the Cross and put their faith in the Risen Christ. Our death -- through being crucified with Christ – will result in His life in us – which will make it possible for us to see, for His life is our light.

## **Chapter 15**

### **The Impact of True Ministry**

God called Paul for the purpose Jesus stated to him on the Damascus road – and it really is His purpose in calling the each believer – it is His purpose for the church. God has not called the church to a mission. No. He has called the church to Christ. God has called believers into a relationship with Christ wherein we must SEE JESUS, and allow God to make us to be a witness and a testimony unto Christ.

This witness and testimony is not about merely spreading a message. More than that, it is about carrying HIS LIFE unto others through whatever means God makes possible. It is about becoming those through whom there is a ministry of LIFE and LIGHT in Christ Jesus.

So, on the Damascus road, Paul saw Jesus Christ. Jesus promised to make Paul a minister and a witness. In addition, Jesus told Paul about the impact that the ministry of light and life ought to produce:

***To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.***

How does this happen? As noted, it cannot happen through argument, emotionalism, or intellectualism. Neither does it happen because a minister claims to have some special anointed power to, “act upon,” or, “lay hands upon,”

another person to make it happen. No. It has to be a work of God by His spirit. Yes, it will most often happen using other believers. But it can happen only if those other believers have the Living Christ within – and are vessels through whom the Living Christ can flow by His spirit. Only Christ – only seeing Christ -- can open eyes and have these eternal impacts.

Gather all of this up and what it means is that all ministry – no matter the form and no matter the gift – ought to have the impact of getting others into business with the Living Christ with a personal faith. People ought to encounter Christ and begin to walk with Him – and of course, ministry ought to help people walk with Christ in Truth.

Emancipation and freedom from the old man in Adam unto new life in Christ – life that is governed by an inward realization of Jesus – this is the goal of God in ministry. It is really the impact of resurrection life over death.

If you read those descriptions given by Christ of what the impact of Paul's ministry would be you see this – you see people set free through a personal, ongoing, and growing experiencing of Christ. Ministry either introduces people to Christ or edifies them in that personal experiencing of Christ. Again – true ministry is Christ Himself being ministered.

People turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, for only one reason – the presence of the Living Christ has been brought in. His presence opens their eyes and has those impacts. Those through whom this may happen are simply those who make themselves available,

as faithful servants, to be extensions of Christ for what He wants to do.

## **Preaching the Person of Christ**

Ministry is Christ – it is Christ being ministered – it is Christ being brought into other lives. But we have seen the necessity of the believer who would minister having the life and light of Christ within themselves. But let's examine a little more how that happens – how is Christ formed in the minister? Well, it is the same way in which Christ is formed in all believers. Life in Christ is released and experienced through the work of the Cross.

It is here that the principle of life from death comes into play. If I am in Christ then I am one with Him in both His death and resurrection. The Christian life is a matter of experiencing both. In short, in order to fellowship with Christ in His life, my natural life must be crucified with Him.

Paul said of himself:

***Being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. (Phil. 3:11)***

Paul was obviously aware that he was already saved by the death and resurrection of Christ. But here he speaks of the impact and experiencing of Christ in His death and resurrection. For if we are one in spirit with Christ, there will be a continual work in us of the Cross – but out of that will come a greater release and realization of Christ as our life.

But this isn't just for a few Christians. Nor is it just for a minister. We are talking about LIFE –

ministry is of the same Christ, and the same life of Christ, as is our salvation, and all else that God has given. Thus, any possible ministry must be the result of death and resurrection at work in the believer.

It is vital to see this Truth. Christ is all. And in Christ God has given all. Therefore all that is of God must be of Christ; must be of HIS LIFE.

There may be various manifestations through spiritual gifts, and spiritual fruit. But it is all of Christ. Thus, ministry is not something added to Christ, or added to life. Ministry is Christ. It is Christ in His life brought to others through other members of His body.

II Corinthians 3 and 4 are the primary passages that show this Truth. We begin in II Cor. 3:

***And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; our sufficiency [is] of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. (II Cor. 3:45-6)***

## **Chapter 16**

### **For Jesus' Sake**

Paul says at the beginning of II Corinthians 4, "We have THIS ministry." (II Cor. 4:1) Then, as we have seen, later in the chapter, he describes the MEANS by which THIS MINISTRY is made possible:

***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. So then death works in us, but life in you. (II Cor. 4:11-12)***

"Death in us, but life in you;" "Bearing in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." THAT is the means which makes LIFE possible – which is to say that it is the means which make the ministry of HIS LIFE through us possible. But you will notice a crucial phrase in this description of death: FOR JESUS' SAKE.

This points us to something that is not often preached in the church. It is a Truth that those who would be in the ministry don't seem to know much about; don't even KNOW TO KNOW. Jesus Christ is doing a work in you and I personally and individually. This is not only essential for ministry, but it is essential for walking with Christ. But that work that He is doing in us is not just for US. No. God is creating in EACH believer some in Christ that will contribute to the spiritual life of all other believers. And this is not merely

for here, in this age – but even more so for the eternal ages.

Obviously, what God does in the individual is for His purpose in that individual. That is primary. But we are members of one another. And so what God does in one member of the body of Christ is going to INDIRECTLY be a contribution to the rest of the body of Christ. It will have a spiritual impact on other who are in Christ. This is true whether that contribution is presently seen or not in this age.

Is this not ministry – perhaps unseen – but nevertheless the ministry of life? If I lose MY life to Jesus by picking up my cross daily, and suffer for HIS sake, then HIS life will emerge -- and will impact the entire body with the life and light of Christ. Thus, through the death of one, the life of Christ is ministered to others.

Don't think of, "His life ministered," as being limited to sermons, teachings, and what is commonly thought of as public ministry. No. True ministry is all that edifies others in Christ. Much of that may be invisible – it may be a contribution in the spirit, but which nevertheless is having an impact, at first perhaps unseen, but one that will eventually change lives.

Of course, I'm not suggesting that whatever God does in you and I will be magically imposed on others in the body of Christ. No. Others will still have to embrace the Truth, and lose their own life for the sake of Jesus Christ. Nobody can do that for another person. But I'm simply saying that what God is doing in individuals will

contribute to the greater life of the body. And that life will be there for others to experience if they do embrace Christ. To the extent that the individual allows God to have His way in them, there is a release of life to the entire body – even if it cannot presently be seen. This is a fact because all believers are ONE in Christ.

### **The Eternal Ages**

Now, notice what I just stated about the eternal purposes of God: What God is doing in individuals is going to impact His body – but the greatest manifestation of this is not going to be seen in THIS age. No. Much of it is for the NEXT age.

The body of Christ is comprised of ALL who have even been in Christ – those who are alive and those who are dead in Jesus are ALL ONE in Him. But only a small part of His body is physically alive at any one time. Consequently, if the entire body is to benefit from the life of Christ formed in one member then the full manifestation of this will have to be, not in this age, but in the age to come. In short, all that God is doing in individuals will only be fully realized when the entire body is gathered up and assembled together in Christ at His second coming.

This explains much about what God is doing in this age. For example, suppose I am going through a trial and I lose my life for the sake of Jesus Christ, such that I find Him as my life to a greater degree. But what if I never have an opportunity to minister to others? What if I



remain isolated? What if all of my suffering seems to be for nothing? Does that negate what God has done?

Have you ever been discouraged because God has not used you? Have you wondered whether this is because you are out of His will, or deceived? Well, that may not be the reason why God has not used you. In fact, if God has isolated you -- it may be because you can be trusted with isolation. It may be because isolation is what is required in order for Him to bring you into His fullness. And if that is the case, then what God is doing IS ministry – and you ARE being a faithful steward. It is your contribution to His body. And it will find full release in the eternal ages even if nothing seems to come of it here in this age.

Am I willing to bear the Cross of isolation? Am I willing to bear the Cross of NOT being used of God? Am I willing to have my life wasted – as might be suggested by natural thinking – so that God may have His will in and through me?

How we answer these questions will reveal whether we are serving God for our own interests or for His interests. Ask God to expose the Truth about this in yourself. It is vital.

If we suffer for Jesus' sake – not our own sake, but for Jesus' sake – then His life is being formed in us. And we ARE ministering to His body.

There is a mistaken notion that whatever is of God must garner a big following. And that what is not of God will be insignificant. We tend to

think that the blessing of God is seen by SIZE. But have we read the history of the church? The biggest movements and biggest churches have been the most Satanic. Indeed, you cannot find - - in the written history of the visible and most influential Christian church -- much evidence of the life of Christ in His people. But Christ was indeed in His people – His greatest workings in His people were simply not a part of WRITTEN history. It wasn't in the limelight. It wasn't reflected in the writings of most authors who wrote books and became famous in the outward history of the church. No. But God was getting His way in folks whose name we will never know in this age. He was contributing life to the body of Christ through those who suffered for Christ, and lived for Christ – but who are not even a footnote in written history.

In the end, it is going to be as Jesus said: "Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first." The bottom line is that we need to STOP judging as men judge, and need to allow God to renew our minds on these matters. For when Christ returns, everything is going to be revealed for exactly what it is – and by the time God is finished, only that which is of Christ will remain.

God can bring people into the fullness of Christ without the fanfare of a great movement or a big church. He can do so in the lives of people who simply give themselves to Him – even if no one else knows about it. History has proven that even most of what were considered big revivals had no impact of ministering HIS LIFE. That is because only that which is of Christ is eternal and can

remain. All else, no matter how religious – no matter how sincere – will either fade away, or, in some cases, eventually grow into something all the more contrary to the spirit of Christ. Yet it all will be burnt up when Christ returns.

The bottom line is this: Christianity is CHRIST IN US. The Christian life is a continual discover of Christ; a growing realization of Christ. That is accomplished, not by being in a movement or attending church. It is accomplished by losing our lives under the Cross by faith.

The real proof of ministry is ultimately the victory of HIS LIFE over DEATH. That means freedom from the old unto a living relationship with Christ. This is what ought to be happening through ministry. But not merely on paper. It ought to be happening because people are actually experiencing the Person of Jesus Christ.

If you are part of a church this Truth ought to be what you are taught -- and it ought to be the purpose of the ministry of that church. What matters is not numbers, not movements, and not whether I feel useful to God. What matter is the life of Jesus Christ in His people.

### **Through His Body**

Someone once said that those who are used by God the most are the ones who are the least aware of it. Perhaps this is not a hard fast rule, but the thought is that those who are used by God the most have the least self-interest in it. They are not serving God for what they will get out of it. They are not keeping score. They

aren't imposing themselves upon anyone. They are simply walking with Christ and many times ministry happens – the life of Christ is ministered.

Since the beginning it has been the practice of churches to hold services wherein people sit in pews and watch others, "do church." There is a place for sermons, choir, etc. But that should not be all that there is. Believers ought to be living out from Christ, and if they are, then His life will minister one to another – seen or unseen – but there will be a spiritual impact.

## **Chapter 17**

### **Ministry to the Body**

If a person allows God to have His way with them, then the LIFE of Christ will be released to the rest of the body of Christ. This is TRUE MINISTRY. It is often HIDDEN ministry. It can happen without a word being spoken or without a work being seen. And the fruits of it may not be seen much in this age. But it is ministry none the less. The real fruitage and real value may be realized in the next age.

When Christ returns at the end of the age, what God has accomplished in an individual in Christ is not going to be erased. No. It will be released to fullness. And because I am joined to other Christians in spiritual oneness, then what God has wrought of Christ in one is a contribution to the spiritual life of the body as a whole.

Now, of course the opposite is true. If I am not walking in the light then I may disrupt the spiritual life of the church. The question here, of course, is whether I am truly baptized into Christ, and thus, into His body, and whether any others in question are as well. But the principle holds – we are members of one another and there is going to be an impact from one upon the body as a whole.

Paul talks about this in many different places in the New Testament. He talks about the fact that if one member suffers -- that all suffer; if one member is benefiting -- then all benefit. Remember that? Thus, what God is

accomplishing in you contributes to the greater body, but what God is working in other Christians likewise contributes to you.

Paul spoke of himself as suffering for the sake of the body of Christ. But as we are seeing, that suffering must first do a primarily work in Paul, because unless God gets a work done in the individual there can be no contribution to the body THROUGH them.

So Paul's suffering was not merely for Paul. Rather, it was for Christ's sake – indeed, Paul says it was for the sake of the body of Christ; for the sake of Christ's purpose in His body:

***Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church. (Col. 1:24)***

Paul is saying that yes, Christ finished all the work that needs to be done for the believer. But now the individual believer, and by extension, the body of Christ, must grow to experience Christ. We must fellowship with Him IN what He has done. The finished work of Christ must be worked out in His people. That begins personally, as Christ possesses and does a work in the individual. But then, because all individual believers are members of the same body – Paul says that this is also is a work that benefits the entire body.

Paul says to the Colossians that, “my sufferings are for YOU.” He says that these sufferings do a

work that, “fills up that which is behind” – that is, they bring to fullness in Christ that which has not yet been brought into fullness.” He says that his sufferings are for – not merely his OWN sake – but for, “His body’s sake, the church.”

And so here we see that what the individual experiences in this age is not merely for that individual’s personal growth. Rather, what Jesus Christ forms of Himself in the individual has an impact of life for the entire body of Christ.

### **For His Sake**

Many times in Scripture we read that the saints suffer for, “the sake of Jesus.” Why is this for HIS SAKE? The reason is because we are HIS inheritance just as HE is our inheritance. Christ wants individual believers through whom He can live and move and be manifested. And if He gets individuals, then He will have a corporate body. Thus, all of the sufferings of the saints are ultimately FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST – for the sake of His purpose in individuals, and for the sake of His purpose in His body. In other words, what is for the sake of Christ is indirectly for the sake of His body.

Jesus Christ obviously does not need any of us. But He has ordained that He wants a body through which He can live and move. This will benefit those through whom He lives and moves. And it will be part of an eternal purpose.

## **God's Ultimate Purpose**

Each believer is individually IN Christ. But it is because EACH believer is individually in Christ that Christ is our COMMON life – He is our, “communion.” And likewise, because EACH believer is in Christ, ALL believers are ONE with each other in Christ -- members of each other. This is a fact regarding believers who are alive in this age at any point in time. But it is also a fact regarding all believers – both those physically alive and those who are asleep in Christ.

Don't misunderstand. We cannot have conscious fellowship with those who have died in Christ. But we are nevertheless one with them spiritually. For the communion we have in Christ with each other in resurrection union cannot be broken by physical death.

A good example of the spiritual oneness with each other in the Body of Christ are the gifts of the spirit. God gives these gifts to His people. But by definition, they are NOT just for the person to whom the gift is given. No. The gifts are given as the means of ministering to one another. They are given to individuals for the sake of the body of Christ. If you and I allow Jesus Christ to have his way in us, then whatever that gift is; whatever that revelation is, is now a part of the body because we are part of the body. And God would like to use that gift to minister to His body through us.

But note: If that individual never had the opportunity to minister to the body of Christ;



never had the opportunity to preach and teach – in the church as it functions today, and that is so often the case – it is nevertheless a fact that Christ can have His way in that individual to whom the spiritual gift is given. And there can be a spiritual release of life FOR the body – even if it is unseen.

Is the ONLY way to function in a spiritual gift during a church service? Is the only way in which Christ lives through us, and ministers through us, within a congregation of believers?

You and I encounter needy people every day. We live among both believers and unbelievers. If Christ is in us we can minister – it may not be in some recognized way. We may not garner any attention at all. It may not always be apparent that ministry is even happening at all. No one may see what we are doing. Our scope of ministry may be no bigger than our family, friends, or workplace. Does that make it of any less value to God? Jesus said, “The last shall be first and the first shall be last.” Maybe we ought to stop thinking in terms of results we can see, or that others can see, and start thinking about the interests of God instead of the interests of man.

### **True Ministry**

Once we catch a glimpse of the Truth of the body of Christ – and see the purpose of God in the individuals that comprise it -- we will likewise see that we suffer not only for the sake of what God is doing in us personally -- but we also suffer for Jesus’ sake; for His purpose in HIS BODY. In fact, I would boldly proclaim that it is not

possible to suffer simply for yourself. It just it doesn't work that way. If we are suffering, it IS for Jesus' sake – He is getting His will in us. And we are likewise suffering for His purpose in His body -- we are members of one another – that is what the body of Christ IS -- by definition. Therefore, whatever you do; whatever you become in Christ -- that is either adding to or subtracting to what God wants to do in His body.

### **Baptized for the Dead?**

***Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantages it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. (I Cor. 15:29-32)***

This unusual passage can be understood once we grasp these truths about the body of Christ. Paul writes about being, "baptized for the dead." There are those who take this literally and actually perform water baptism for the dead. No. If we read the entire passage we see that Paul is talking about being baptized into a death through trials which contributes greater life to the entire body – including those who have passed away. Sure. That is why he points to the resurrection as being the point of benefit and realization. We are all baptized into a greater experience of death to the old life in order that through our oneness with the rest of the body there may be a greater release of HIS LIFE.

## **Chapter 18**

### **The Edification of His Body**

***And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: (Eph. 4:11-13)***

"Edification," or, "to edify," in the Bible comes from a word which means, "to build," or, "to build a house." As it pertains to ministry, God gave ministry in the body of Christ to build the body of Christ into a HOME or DWELLING place for Christ Himself – so that the body of Christ might be both an expression of Christ, and an extension of Christ.

You will note that edification is the building up of Christ in people. The people who comprise the body are not to become great. In fact, God builds up the body into a home for Christ – He makes room for Christ -- by reducing our occupation with ourselves. Less of us, and more of Christ – "Yet not I, but Christ." (Gal. 2:20) That is spiritual maturity, and it is the result of edification.

Ministry that is of God will be in the process of doing this for God's purposes now, but also in preparation for the purposes of God throughout the eternal ages.

## **Unto the Fullness of Christ**

Paul lists various ministries in the passage above. Of course, there are no longer apostles or prophets – for in another place he says that the church, “is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” (Eph. 2:20) God is not going to continue to lay that foundation -- otherwise nothing else could yet be built. But there does continue to be leadership in the capacity of pastor/teachers and evangelists. And the purpose for which God gave these is to edify the body. This edification is unto the end of unity of the faith, and the knowledge of Jesus Christ – and unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

What does that mean? It means that it is the purpose of God that the body of Christ becomes an expression and extension of Christ. This outcome begins here, in this age, but will find full release in the ages yet to come.

## **God Has Given**

Paul says that, “God GAVE.....,” and he lists the various ministries. But it is easy to pass by that simple phrase and miss the point. Can we see that if such ministries are those that GOD GIVES that they are not the outcome of what people decide to become -- as a profession? That these ministries are NOT merely the product of study or of natural talents? No. These ministries are of God – and GIVEN to the body of Christ through the individuals God appoints.

Of course, this is Truth that has either been completely ignored today, or is redefined according to the religious traditions and systems of churches. It is assumed that if a person goes to seminary, or if they are ordained, that they are called of God and have been given a spiritual gift. Yet this is completely outside of the revelation we have in God's Word.

### **Not Everyone Has Every Gift**

We have seen that this means that EACH believer – anyone with Christ within – can minister Christ to others. But that being said, Paul nevertheless makes it clear that there are those who are assigned the responsibility of being a pastor/teacher – it is ONE word in the Greek – and others who are assigned to be evangelists. And since Paul specifically mentions these, it is clear that even though all believers can minister Christ – it is clear that these are functions and gifts that not all believers are given.

This brings up an important question. How does a person know they are to be a pastor/teacher or evangelist? How does the body of Christ know that God has given this assignment to specific individuals? We have already seen that a person is not a pastor simply because they want to be a pastor. Neither is a person a pastor simply because they have certain natural gifts that are often associated with being a pastor. Neither does going to a seminary for training in how to minister, or to get a degree in theology, make someone into a pastor. No. So what does make a person to be a pastor?

God does. But don't think that I am merely speaking here of what we often describe as, "the call to ministry." The way in which this is usually thought of is that at some point a person will feel the calling of God into ministry – and they will answer that call -- and then get whatever training they need to do the job – and then find a position in which to fulfill that call.

The trouble with this idea is that if a person WANTS to be a pastor – and it is all their idea and not of God -- they are more than likely going to believe that they want to be a pastor because God is calling them to be a pastor. And then they will take the necessary steps to make that happen. But what you end up with are people in pastor positions who were never intended to be there by God.

No. If GOD GIVES a pastor to the body of Christ then you can be sure that God is the one who makes a pastor out of that person. Did Jesus not say to Paul that he would be MADE a minister and a witness? Sure. And the way in which God MAKES anyone to be a pastor is the same way – in principle – as he made Paul to be a minister. God brings that person to where they SEE JESUS, and to where Jesus Christ is their life. And as Christ is formed in that person, ministry as a pastor is formed -- what emerges is the assignment and the capacity to minister Christ.

What this means is that God does not first call someone to be a pastor – He calls them to Christ. But then, out of that call to Christ, there is a manifestation of ministry called, "pastor." A pastor is who that person is IN Christ. Or, to put

it another way, a call to be a pastor is imbedded into that person's call to Christ.

Practically speaking, this means that as a person grows to realize Christ, the gift of being a pastor will emerge. But the focus will NOT be upon being a pastor – the focus will be upon Christ.

How could any of us minister Christ unless Christ is in us, and has possession of us? How could we be used of God to teach others unless we ourselves have learned Christ? We could not. But if we are growing to realize Christ, ministry will be there – regardless of whether we occupy some official capacity, or hold a position in a church.

### **Each Member Under the Head**

Paul goes on in Ephesians 4 to elaborate upon the impact that ministry that is of God ought to have:

***But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [even] Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (Eph. 4:15-16)***

Pay close attention to exactly what Paul says in this passage. He says it is the will of God – and the intended impact of ministry -- that we may grow up INTO HIM in all things, which is the Head, Christ. To, "grow up," into Christ is equal to being, "edified in Christ." And the key here is

that we are to grow up INTO Him, that is, be those in whom Christ can dwell, and through whom Christ can move. The body of Christ is intended by God to be an expression of the living Christ and an extension of Him – just as the body is an extension of the thoughts and intents of the mind or head.

We find here a description of what would happen if EACH member of the body of Christ had a personal and individual relationship with Christ as their personal Head – the whole body would be fitly joined together and there would be an effectual working in each part towards each other – resulting in the increase of Christ in all.

If such a thing would actually happen, then the desire of God, as Paul describes at the end of Ephesians 1 would come to pass:

***And gave him (Christ) [to be] the head over all [things] to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (Eph. 1:22-23)***

All of these incredible purposes of God are to be the outcome of true ministry. They are the purpose for which the body is to be edified – which is the function of ministry that is of Christ.



## **Chapter 19**

### **The Unity of the Faith**

***Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man...***

Our passage from Ephesians 4, where Paul described the various ministry functions, gave us a number of impacts that ministry that is of Christ will have. Of course, all of them can be gathered into one: That the body come to be mature in Christ. Paul's proclamation, "Yet not I, but Christ," is a good description of spiritual maturity.

Included here as a goal of ministry is, "the unity of the faith." What is, "unity of the faith?" Is it simply that we believe all of the same doctrines? Well, that would be included. But, "unity of the faith," is really much more. The only way in which the unity of the faith can be accomplished across the entire body of Christ is if EACH INDIVIDUAL member has the same faith in Christ and the same mind of Christ. In other words, unity is not the result of the members adopting each other's faith or mind. Rather, unity is the result of EACH member having HIS MIND – which would result in the members have the SAME mind.

To illustrate, each member of the body must have a personal and independent VERTICAL relationship with Jesus Christ. But if many members have the same faith and same mind as Christ in that vertical relationship, then they will have unity with each other IN HIM. They will have a HORIZONTAL relationship with each other that is governed by the ONE HEAD -- they will be

the spokes of the wheel, but He will be the center of all.

Now, if you examine this you will see that the unity of the Body is fully dependent upon the communion that each individual has personally with Jesus Christ. This is the opposite of what many Christians believe and what many churches and groups practice. Many groups believe that unity is achieved first on the horizontal level by being IMPOSED through law. Then it is often taught that it is possible to have a personal vertical relationship with Jesus Christ. In effect, Jesus is not preached as the one Mediator between the believer and God – but unity, or submission, to the group or church becomes the mediator.

This is, of course, usually quite subtle. Often it is practiced through peer pressure. Believers are made to feel that they cannot be right with God, or live in God's will, or have God's highest, unless they are first rightly related to the group or leader – as defined by that very same group or leader.

We need to be clear on this matter: It does not matter how much you, "submit," to authority, nor, "sign off," on a statement of faith, or intellectually agree with doctrines – it does not matter how much you hop aboard the, "band wagon," of your local church or a ministry – it does not matter how much verbal assent you give, or how much physical service you contribute – your unity with other members of the Body of Christ is directly dependent upon your personal and individual communion with Christ Himself.

This may be shocking to some, but unity is NOT the first goal of ministry. Christ is the goal of ministry – Christ living as Lord of each person. But if that happens, then unity will happen.

### **The Vine and the Branches**

The picture that Jesus gave of Himself as the Vine and we as the branches illustrates this Truth. Jesus said, "I am the Vine, and you are the branches.....abide in ME." He did NOT say that we were to abide in EACH OTHER – no -- He said that communion among branches is the result of first abiding in Him. Communion among the branches is secondary. It is the result. Again, the vertical relationship with Jesus Christ governs the horizontal relationship with others.

Jesus also said, "If a branch is not abiding in the Vine it will die." He did not say, "If a branch is not abiding in the other branches, it will die." This is not to minimize the value of fellowship among believers. But imagine if the branches were all abiding in each other, but not in the Vine. They would ALL die.

It is actually possible for all of the branches of a church or group to abide in each other – but for none of them to be abiding in Christ. Sure. You can have groups of professing Christians in full agreement and in full communion with each other – but their agreement is in some error; their communion is not in Christ, but in something instead of Christ. They will have unity. But it will NOT be unity in Christ. It will be unity is something instead of Christ.

What is the core problem here? Not unity. They have unity. Cults have unity. Boy, do they have unity! But their unity is not in Christ. It is unity, yes, in a list of false teaching. But really, their unity is in their blindness and unbelief – regardless of the false teaching that emerges. And you do not need to be in an official cult to have such false unity. You could have a group of Christian people all of whom are under the same deception and the same spirit of unbelief – they could actually be celebrating their unity – but none may be in Christ.

How many realize that unity among any group of people can achieve much? How about Nazi Germany? They had great unity – but through it they achieved much evil. Thus, UNITY MEANS NOTHING – unity does not prove the Truth. In fact, it is the will of God to utterly and completely destroy all unity that is not in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ said:

***Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (Matt. 10:34-36)***

Jesus Christ is clearly stating that there is only ONE UNITY that is of God – it is unity IN THE SON. Not just unity in doctrines or facts ABOUT Jesus. That is good. But true unity is more. It is a unity that is the result of individuals who

share in common the Person of Jesus Christ. It is for all, by grace through faith, to be living in and out of Christ as their LIFE. If Jesus Christ is in me, He is to BE MY LIFE. If Jesus Christ is in you, He is to BE YOUR LIFE. Then we are EACH partakers of Christ. But that makes us partakers of each other; that means we are in communion with each other. This is communion IN CHRIST.

Every other unity is outside of God's will, and ultimately destructive. Jesus said, "I am come".....to bring division to all of these other kinds of unity; "I am come," to destroy unity in all else by MYSELF. Notice the words, "I am come." If Jesus COMES to dwell in a person, or if the Truth and life of Jesus is introduced into a group, that is a great thing. But one of the first things Jesus Christ does when, "He comes," is to begin to break apart all that is not of Himself. He will break apart all unity that is not in Himself so that, once this is broken, there can come to pass a true unity in Himself.

So again, we see this Truth: The ministry of the Body of Christ is to edify each other in Christ. God wants to use ministry as a vehicle by which individuals can personally come to know and realize Jesus Christ for themselves. But if individuals are growing in Christ, then the Body as a whole is growing in Christ, and can, in turn, help the individuals grow.

God has never said, "create unity." Rather, He said, "KEEP the unity." (Eph. 4:3) How do we do that? Minister Christ. Help individuals to know Christ for themselves. Do that and unity will happen among those who believe and obey Christ.

The foundation of Christianity is, "Christ in YOU." Christ dwells in His Body – not in some unidentifiable, nebulous way, but Christ dwells in His Body by dwelling in the members of His Body, individually and personally. This is the basis of unity: We are all one IN JESUS CHRIST – the "all" becomes "the one" only because the "we" – the individuals -- are first IN CHRIST personally. The Body of Christ is mature only to the degree that, "each person is mature in Christ."

### **One Mediator**

One of the best verses in the Bible that describes God's will for unity is found in I Timothy:

***For there is one God, and one mediator  
between God and men, the man Christ  
Jesus. (I Tim. 2:5)***

A MEDIATOR is the One through Whom we go to connect to another. Jesus Christ is the One through Whom we go to connect to God. But the better way to say it is that Jesus Christ in us is the means through Whom we abide in the Father. Thus, if we abide in Christ – if we live in Him and out from Him – we are abiding in the Father. This is COMMUNION. Be a partaker of Christ and you are a partaker of the Father.

Now you will note: There is only ONE Mediator between EACH person and God – Jesus Christ. What this means is that you are not required, indeed, you cannot and must not, try to abide in God through any other mediator. You cannot abide in Christ, or in God, through any part of the BODY of Christ. Mechanically, you are

not, "plugged into," God or Christ because you are, "plugged into," a church, or a leader. In short, you are a member of the body of Christ because you are first in Christ. You are NOT in Christ because you are first a member of His body.

As we have stated, our VERTICAL relationship with God, personally and individually, comes first, and will govern all HORIZONTAL relationships with other Christians. It is going to do that even if we don't realize it. Walk with Christ in spirit and in Truth and this will result in a walk with other Christians in spirit and in Truth. But try to walk with other Christians in spirit and in Truth first, to keep some law or principle of submission to authority -- or some principle of unity -- and you will ALL end up in error. You will not have Jesus Christ in common -- not be in communion with Christ -- but you will have only communion with each other because you practice the same religion about Him.

How many see the essential for each of us to come into a personal realization of Jesus Christ? To have Christ revealed WITHIN us? This not only governs all else, but the ministry of the Body is supposed to be unto that end. Thus, the lack of knowing Jesus Christ in this way is the reason why there is no real unity in the Body of Christ. If we do not personally know Him, there can be no basis for unity that is supposed to be IN HIM.

Jesus Christ is the sole Mediator unto God. For you and I, it means that we each have personal and individual access to God through Him. Sure. He dwells in us. We don't have to go

through anyone else or through any group. This is Christianity: Christ in YOU -- Jesus having come to dwell in YOU.

***But the anointing which ye have received of him abides in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. (I John 2:27)***

If we come into a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, it is not going to result in any kind of prideful, superior attitude. To the contrary, we are going to desire to fellowship with other Christians – and even if God does not make that possible, the desire will be there. It would seem that today God is not on a campaign to create many local gatherings of Christian people who display great unity. Rather, many are scattered. But there is UNITY IN SPIRIT.

NT leadership that teaches the TRUTH is going to teach us exactly what John is teaching us in the above passage – that the Jesus Christ who dwells in us is our life, our Truth, and our teacher. The goal of all true ministry that is of God will be to teach this to individuals – and be a vehicle unto that end. This will serve, not only God's purpose in individuals, but it will keep the unity of the Body of Christ.

Again, the purpose of all ministry:

***Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man.***



## **Chapter 20**

### **Spiritual Authority**

We could easily argue that the early church era ended in 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed. Paul and Peter were gone by then through martyrdom. And although we have little record – only tradition – of what became of the other apostles, we do know that John lived almost until the end of the first century. We also know that what emerged late in the third century as the church bore little resemblance to the mind of God. That aberration eventually became the Roman Catholic Church.

The Catholics continue today to claim that they can trace their history back to the apostles. That is not true – except through revisionist history. But it does not matter. Jesus did not create an organization. He did not create a papal run religion. Christianity is Christ in you – and the church is therefore those in whom Christ dwells. Even today you can find Christian ministries being handed down to the children of famous preachers – as if some sort of mantle or anointing can be inherited in that way. It is all nonsense. Each believer must be born from above individually. And any calling that actually is of God cannot be transferred or received by proxy.

Yet once the apostolic age ended the decent from the spiritual down into dead religion was swift. Bishops began to be take charge over churches. Religious systems began to be set up – equipped with rituals and laws. If we read some of the earlier, “church fathers,” we can find the seeds, if

not the outright promotion, of grave error. Augustine of Hippo is a good example. He is perhaps responsible for originating some of the most damaging error – originating in the sense of making it popular through his writings. Many of his errors are today preached and practiced in the Catholic church and in Calvinism.

### **Error Regarding Spiritual Authority**

In most cases, error was able to become normalized in the visible church – if we dare call it, “the church” -- through leadership – leadership that claimed authority from God Himself. People were taught that if a person occupied a position of leadership in the church that they did so because they were appointed by God. It was likewise assumed that their position gave them, “a hot line,” to God – they would hear from God for the rest of the church. In effect, leadership became a mediator unto God or to Christ. You had to SUBMIT to leadership in order to be right with God – and you refused to do so at the peril of your eternal soul. Such a system is maintained by fear and religious control. But behind it is the father of lies.

The abuse of spiritual authority, which is common in cults, but is likewise practiced in many other groups and churches, is a violation of the very basis of Christianity. Christianity is CHRIST IN YOU – a personal, individual, and one-on-one relationship with God solely through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the ONE Mediator between God and the human race. (I Tim. 2:5) But when, “another mediator,” is introduced – someone or something we must belong to, submit to, or go through – in

order to find Christ in fullness – then Satan is at work. And the replacement for Christ as our only Mediator is, by definition, going to eventually result in the abuse of spiritual authority.

Today we find this abuse everywhere. Indeed, sometimes people are quite comfortable in it. It rears its ugly head every so often in various forms. The Shepherding Movement of the 1970s and 1980s is an example. Heretic Bill Gothard's umbrella of protection and authority teaching is another example. But even where this error regarding spiritual authority is not preached as doctrine, the spirit of it controls many groups and churches.

There continues to be a subtle belief among many believers that ministers have special access to God – again, because they occupy a POSITION of leadership. And once that error is embraced, spiritual abuse is easily established. People will wrongly think that God backs up those who claim authority in His name, and that these leaders must be obeyed – simply because they have this authority. This is the same error as it was in the beginning – usually recycled with different terms and practices. But this is a lie.

### **What is Spiritual Authority?**

There are many individuals who occupy positions in the church today who have never been called by God to those positions. Many have never been given a spiritual gift of ministry. But they are in those positions as part of the religious system established by human beings. But such ones have NO authority at all from God. How could they?

They are not chosen by God or given gifts by God. Thus, He is NOT affirming them or blessing what they do.

That might seem shocking but it is true. But if someone has taken upon themselves a position and authority for which God never gifted them – do we think that God throws up His hands and resigns Himself to simply going along with such a one? No. Just as the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, so it is that if God has not given a gift or a calling – that too is without repentance. They have no authority from God.

But the problem here, and the confusion, is that within the church today we have created a religious system of education and ordination that conveys to people authority. But it is not God's authority – it is the religious authority of man. God does not back it up. This is practiced everywhere to the extent where it is normal – few question it. Indeed, the religious systems that people have created, and which have existed for centuries, have blinded believers to the possibility that there could be any other Truth.

But for a moment, let's put aside all of the religious positions and authority given, not by God, but by man. Instead, let's limit the discussion to those whom God HAS appointed, and to those whom God HAS given gifts. What is their authority in the body of Christ?

Paul was an apostle, and so he could have, as it were, "thrown his weight around." But notice his words on this matter of authority:

***For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed. (II Cor. 10:8)***

***Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction. (II Cor. 13:10)***

Paul said the only authority he had was to EDIFY. But this is NOT an imposed edification. No. God has not given ministers, "authority to edify," in the sense of force feeding people the Truth, "for their own good." Neither will anyone who speaks the Truth give the impression that disobedience to them will bring upon them the disfavor or curse of God. That might seem like a silly possibility, but it actually does go on. It is one version of spiritual abuse. But no. "Authority to edify," is not authority to impose Truth on others, but it is an appointment and the power to minister Christ. In other words, if a person is truly called of God to minister Christ, then inherent in that calling is the freedom, responsibility, and authority FROM GOD to preach and teach in Jesus' name. It is that simple – a God ordained authority to preach the Person of Christ. There needs to be no apology for doing so. And those who hear will be edified in Christ if they embrace the Truth.

What we see in these words, "authority to edify," is simply the authority to preach and teach in Jesus' name because a person has been both called and gifted to do so. And as we have been

seeing, anyone called to preach is likewise going to be dealt with by Jesus Christ so that He might be manifested through them unto others. This is the work of the Cross and is built into any calling to minister Christ. In short, authority emerges through a minister because that minister is under Jesus as personal Lord. This authority that God gives does NOT need an official position for verification. No. What it needs is the life of Jesus manifested through a person unto others.

But that is much different from authority that is claimed because a position is occupied. It is completely different from authority that is given by man. The only authority is Jesus Christ and the Truth.

Spiritual authority is Christ. Practically speaking, spiritual authority in the church is present and active where Christ is working through people.

Now, of course, all of this can be faked. People can claim that Christ is working through them. An entire church, indeed, an entire movement, can be caught up in deception on this matter. But the Truth on this matter of spiritual authority nevertheless stands.

### **Stewards of the Truth**

***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. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. (1 Cor. 4:1-3)***

It is a fact that God does give gifts to some that He does not give to others. There are callings to some that others do not have. But this has NOTHING to do with the inherent merits of any person. It has to do with God's calling.

Herein we see election and those who are chosen. It has nothing to do with salvation. It has only to do with God's purpose for a person once they are saved – such as a calling to ministry.

But what is the responsibility of those who are chosen by God to minister? It is to get the other members of the body of Christ into business with Jesus Christ for themselves. Thus, rather than to maintain the illusion of spiritual superiority, those in ministry ought to smash it by freely giving to others what they have received – and by revealing to all that the ground is level at the foot of the Cross.

The apostle John taught this responsibility and practiced it:

***Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, [even] eternal life. These [things] have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and***

***is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. (I John 2:24-27)***

John is directly stating in this passage that EACH believer can experience Christ for themselves. As noted, this is the essence of Christianity. It is the result of Christ in us as the ONE Mediator between God and the believer.

John was an apostle. But as an apostle, in this passage he is illustrating exactly what someone who is a true teacher of God will do. He is teaching people that they can experience Christ for themselves – and he likewise teaches them how. He is available to help – but not that believers might come to more and more rely upon him – but that believers might come to more and more rely on Christ.

This is what true spiritual authority IS: It is the authority – not vested in a position but vested in the Truth – it is the right and responsibility to preach the Person of Christ in Truth. It is the right to edify others in the name of Christ. Of course, ALL believers have that authority to a greater or lesser extent, but God has given certain ones gifts for this purpose.

As Paul states, he was merely a STEWARD of the mysteries of God – a steward of the Truth. This required him to be personally FAITHFUL to Jesus Christ – to allow Jesus Christ to have him personally, and then from out of what He experienced of Christ, to minister to others.



## **Chapter 21**

### **Spiritual Responsibility**

In the NT we do not find anyone choosing to be a minister. Ministry, in the NT, is not a career choice. There are no seminaries, no training courses, no church buildings, no denominations, no committees, and no religious system that produces ministers. There is only Christ and the people in whom He dwells – and the purposes that emerge from this resurrection union.

Ministry that is of God emerges from spiritual union with Christ. That is the ONLY source from which ministry that is of God CAN emerge. Or, to use more familiar language, the spiritual gifts of ministry emerge from Christ Himself – by His spirit -- in and through a person whom God has chosen for ministry.

If a believer is chosen by God to be a leader – to be a steward of the mysteries of God – then if that person walks with Christ then that is the only possible outcome. They will become in Christ what God intended. Of course, they can walk out of God's will and not fulfill the purpose for which God intended. And it is also possible for a person to try to force their way into being a minister. But the point is – God is not making this up as He goes along. When God calls someone to Christ they are already chosen to be a minister or they are not. They ARE that in Christ, or they are NOT that in Christ. And if they walk in the light the outcome will be according to the gifts and calling that God desires.

Someone may ask, "But what of the requirements for ministry as outlined by Paul to Timothy and Titus? That sounds like men must qualify to BE ministers." No. Those are traits that emerge in a person who is walking by faith with Christ – traits that show that they may already have been chosen of God for leadership. They are not traits that a person tries to develop because they WANT to be a minister.

Now, of course, whether God chooses someone for leadership or not has NOTHING to do with merits or personal righteousness. It has to do with God's choosing. And ALL believers have been called and given some gifts. Thus, the same principle holds: Walk with Christ in His will and you will fulfill whatever ministry, with whatever gifts, He has given to you.

There is no competition here. We saw that in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Those chosen by God in any primary function of leadership will, "bear the heat of the day," for the rest of the body. They will receive a full reward – but no more than anyone else. Indeed, what it means to be a leader is that you are making it possible for others to receive an equal reward through your suffering.

Can we see that leadership is a great responsibility? It is a responsibility to be a faithful steward. If I am called to leadership then I will be given LIGHT and TRUTH. I am responsible for allowing God to crucify me so that Christ can be revealed in me. And then I am responsible for being faithful to preach, teach, and live that light and Truth unto the edification

of others. The greater the light the greater is the accountability.

Again – this principle applies to ALL callings in Christ. You are responsible for the light God gives you – and for the opportunities that God opens for you. There is no need to fuss about it.

If God has given little in the way of opportunity to minister – be faithful in little. If God has given much in the way of opportunity – be faithful in much. How many realize that faithfulness over little and faithfulness over much are equal in the eyes of God? For it is NOT the little, or the much, that matters – but what matters is the faithfulness!

If God has chosen any of us for leadership there will be a way it will emerge. It may not emerge in a large, public fashion. It may emerge only within a circle of friends. In fact, it may not emerge much at all in this age. But if not, it will emerge in the next age because God has put it there.

Read the parable of the talents – if the person was faithful in a little during this age, then because they were a faithful steward in this age they could be entrusted to be faithful over much in the next age.

### **Chosen by God**

The apostles were always intended by God to BE apostles. This is what Jesus meant when He said:

***Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit. (John 15:16)***

Jesus was not referring to salvation. He was referring to the ministry for which they apostles were chosen. Read the context. It is clear.

Much confusion and false teaching has taken root in the church over this matter of election or the choosing of God. But again – this is never about salvation. It is always about the gifts and calling of God within salvation -- for those who are already in Christ.

### **The Job of Leadership**

If we assume that the leadership in a church does know Jesus Christ and does teach the Truth, there are other responsibilities. First, the pastor must stand for Truth – meaning they must live, preach, and teach the Truth without compromise. But on the other side of the same responsibility, it means that heresy in teaching or heresy in conduct cannot be affirmed or allowed.

***I charge [thee] therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (II Tim. 4:1-2)***

***For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses,***

***teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake...Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.  
(Titus 1:10-13)***

***These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.  
(Titus 2:15)***

Secondly, practiced immorality, and certainly celebrated immorality, cannot be tolerated.

***But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. (I Cor. 5:11)***

Why are these matters so important? First, we cannot help others destroy themselves – and we cannot open others to their perversion. We cannot even seem to affirm sin. We can only stand in the Truth. All of these matters MUST be dealt with – redemptively. In other words, these things must be brought out to the individuals involved and those involved must be given a chance to repent. If they refuse, they must be removed.

It must be a grief to Jesus Christ that we have a church system today that makes it difficult, if not impossible, for a pastor to take responsibility over such matters – because if he does he might be fired. No such concept of ministry exists in scripture.

## **Chapter 22**

### **Expressions and Extensions**

Each member of the body of Christ is to be an **EXPRESSION** of Jesus Christ. In other words, we are to be evidence of the Risen Christ. We are to be those who rightly represent Him. As we have seen, this is not a matter of acting religious. Rather, it is the outcome of, "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus – so that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body." (II Cor. 4:10) This is core of all ministry – Christ in us, living through us; ministering life through us.

But there is more. We are not only to be an **EXPRESSION** of Christ – but we are to be **EXTENSIONS** of Christ. That is what members of a body are to the head – extensions of the head.

Christ does not normally manifest Himself by bypassing His people and just making things happen. Despite the fact that He does not need us to manifest Himself, He has chosen in this age to manifest Himself through His people – there is faith, obedience, relationships, and ministry involved. But there is no possible way that any of us could be an **EXPRESSION** of Jesus unless two things are true of us. First, we must have crucified out of us all of our personal agenda. This is especially true in ministry. We cannot be used of God if we are walking with Him for our own agenda – for our own personal gain. Secondly, we must **KNOW HIM**. For how could we be an **EXTENSION** of Christ if we have not begun to come into an inward realization of Him? We would be clueless.

## Expressions of Christ

***But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)***

***I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (Rev. 19:10)***

In the NT, the same Greek word is translated using three different English words: Witness, testimony, and evidence.

Thus, in Acts 1:8, Jesus told His disciples that they were to BECOME HIS WITNESSES. They were to BECOME HIS EVIDENCE. They were to BECOME HIS TESTIMONY. Can we see what this means? It means MORE than to just tell people about Christ. Rather, it means for them to be defined by their relationship with Him. It means that they were to become a living EXPRESSION of the Living Christ.

To be defined by our relationship with Christ means that our lives point to HIM. Our lives manifest the fact that we belong to Him. Our faith is in Him and it shows. Even when we fail – even when our conduct is less than it ought to be – we manifest the fact that we stand by grace alone.

A witness or a testimony is a matter of telling the truth about someone or something. But a witness for Christ is a matter of having experienced Christ

Himself – and then manifesting Him to others. Words will be included. This can be done through ministry, but ought to happen in the everyday walk of believers.

Certainly, this is what Paul was getting at when he wrote:

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

Within this passage, there is one phrase which aptly describes what a life that is expressing Christ ought to proclaim: “Yet not I, but Christ!” That is a witness UNTO Christ. That life is an expression of Christ.

But here we must again quote a primary passage that shows that believers, and those who would be ministers, are to manifest Christ – and it likewise shows the means by which this is made possible by God:

***For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to [give] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us...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. So then death works in us, but life in you. (II Cor. 4:5-12)***

Each believer is to become an expression of Jesus Christ. But it is nevertheless a fact that God has chosen individuals to be leaders in His body. This does not need to happen in any, "official" capacity. Those who are chosen are not necessarily those that have achieved position through a religious system of ministry. Neither is it necessarily the result of the recognition of other people. Those whom God has chosen to be leaders will be those who, "bear the heat," of the day on behalf of others – they will be called into an expression of Christ through suffering. The ministry that emerges will be that of HIS LIFE.

It is vital that we see that leadership in the body of Christ is simply the gift that emerges from out of the life they have received in Christ. It is the expression of Christ in and through them – and the only one that God intended. Of course, this can be refused, limited, or misunderstood. But such a calling can also be artificially created out of any religious system. There are thousands of members of the body of Christ whose gifts are stifled because of the religious system they are in, and there are likewise thousands who have no gift from God to be a leader who have nevertheless passed through those religious systems and taken upon themselves a position for which God has never given any gift. The result is

exactly what we see as we look at 2000 years of Christian history.

No one can take upon themselves any calling of God. In fact, God calls long before we realize it. He prepares people, just as He did Saul of Tarsus. And then things begin to unfold and the gift and calling emerges. But none of this will happen according to the will of God unless the person in question is walking with Jesus Christ. Our death must work His life – and in His life are all the calling and gifts for ministry.

Certainly, there is a principle here that applies to all of the members of the body. God calls ALL into a fellowship with Christ that will involve experiences – primary to which is suffering. This will be death in all – death to their natural pride, self-righteousness, and religious agenda. And yet it is that personal dealing of the Cross unto death that will result in HIS LIFE being expressed.

### **Extensions of Christ**

How do we become expressions or extensions of Christ? Is there a, “how to,” technique? Is it the product of human effort?

We become expressions or extensions of Christ by relinquishing ourselves to Him and abiding in Him by faith. Or, to use a picture given by Jesus, He is the Vine and we are the branches. Branches are the extensions of the Vine. Members of the body are an extension of the Head.

The fact that Christ wants members of His body to be extension of Himself is an awesome

thought. But it requires that we be absolutely at one with Him in His purposes. It requires that we know Him and are given fully over to Him. To be an extension of Christ means that He uses us to do what He would do, and be what He would be.

Often when we think of being an extension of Christ we imagine that He gives us orders and we carry them out. But this is beyond that. Being an extension of Christ means that He lives in and through us.

A Christian is a person who is joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him. That is how Christ dwells in believers. But then the Christian life is a matter of discovering the Christ with Whom we are one in spirit. We grow to know Him and have our minds renewed according to the Truth. We experience death so that His life may come to govern. It is from out of this oneness and fellowship that we can live as expressions and extensions of Him.

## **Chapter 23**

### **The Ministry of Intercession**

Believers do not usually think of INTERCESSION as ministry. We tend to think of ministry in terms of preaching, teaching, and edification. But intercession IS ministry. It is, in fact – if we might use the expression – one of, “the keys of the kingdom.” It is through intercession that we join the Lord and function as extensions of Him. In fact, it is a hidden ministry that carries as much, if not more, spiritual impact for the purpose and glory of Jesus Christ.

True ministry is LIFE – it is the life of Christ in one member of His body being ministered to another member of His Body. This is how the Body of Christ is edified – built up in Christ. This ministry of the life of Christ can take many forms. We have our teaching and preaching, etc. But intercession – if it is real – is just as much the life of Christ in one member of the Body being ministered to another.

The reason this is possible is because EACH member of the Body of Christ is ONE with Christ Himself. A believer is a person who is, “joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him.” (I Cor. 6:17) And because EACH member is joined to the Lord in spirit, then each of the members of His Body are joined in spirit to each other. We are, “by one spirit we are baptized into one body.” (I Cor. 12:13-26)

The NT – certainly in this passage from I Cor. 12 -- lays great emphasis upon this great Truth that

believers are all spiritually one in Christ. We are told that if one member suffers then all suffer. We are told that we are all connected to each other – through our oneness in Christ. Thus, ministry is out from Christ in the individual unto the other members of the Body.

The NT makes it clear that the spiritual gifts are for the edification of the body. (Eph. 4:12:16) Do we think that this means that if a person has a spiritual gift that the gift they have from God is merely for their own edification? No. It is likewise for the edification of the rest of the body.

There is, however, a general misunderstanding on this matter of spiritual gifts and ministry. Many feel that unless they are out preaching and teaching; an active part of a church; involved in some movement – many feel that unless they are in ministry in that way that they are falling short of God's purpose for them. But that is not necessarily so. Ministry begins by each member giving themselves to Jesus Christ – by each member losing their life to Jesus. If each member would do that then each would experience the fullness of His life in themselves personally. And that fullness of Christ – before any preaching and teaching was ever done – would be a tremendous contribution to the life of the Body of Christ.

To the degree that Christ is manifested in us there is benefit to the Body. We may not see it. But it will be there. HIS LIFE forms the basis of the life of the Body. Without that basis all the preaching and teaching in the world will be DEAD.

Thus, in one sense of the word, behind all who preach and teach there needs to be those who may never preach or teach – but whose life in Christ builds up and forms a foundation of life that upholds all who do preach and teach. Thus, the preaching and teaching is NOT more important in God's eyes.

There are many in the Body of Christ who are called to simply allow Christ to live in them – in everyday ways that do not seem to be dramatic. Their lives may seem no different that the lives of anyone else. But there is a great INWARD purpose of God being accomplished IN THEM. They are being brought into an inward realization of Jesus Christ – the life of Jesus is being manifested TO them and IN them – and then THROUGH them. And one of the primary ways in which the life of Jesus is manifested THROUGH a member of His Body is through INTERCESSION.

Scripture says that Jesus Christ, “ever lives to make intercession for the saints.” (Heb. 7:25) But don't think of this as Jesus pleading with the Father on our behalf. That is nonsense. Rather, Christ in us – Christ living in us – is a living intercession. His very presence in us is a living intercession on our behalf. It is Christ in us who makes us one with the Father – it is Christ in us who brings all of the value that makes it possible for us to walk with God. Jesus Christ is the one and only Mediator between God and humanity.

Now, if Jesus Christ ever lives to BE our intercession, and ever lives to MAKE intercession for the saints -- then if believers are ONE with Him, with HIS mind, and with HIS heart – does

that not indicate that an eventual outcome of walking with Christ in spiritual fellowship is going to be that WE will join Him in His intercession? Sure. If we are HIS BODY we are going to do what HE is doing in concert with Him.

The Christian experience is a continual discovery of the Person of Jesus Christ – a growing realization of the Christ who dwells in each of us. But as we discover Him we will more and more be brought into oneness with Him in purpose and function. Thus, we will learn to join Him in intercession. It is what He is BEING and DOING.

You will note – and this is important to see – that we do NOT, “do for Christ.” No. Rather, we are to JOIN Him in what He is doing. For example, Christ through His spirit is always seeking to bring people into the Truth. He is always seeking to set people free. We can do nothing to bring that to pass. But we can join Him by standing by faith unto that end for another. We may never preach or teach. But we can pray and intercede for others unto that end.

Is prayer and intercession LESS of a ministry than preaching or teaching? How could it be? If it is real, prayer and intercession is out from Jesus Christ by the spirit. Indeed, if preaching and teaching is not backed by prayer and intercession by the one preaching, and by many who don’t preach, then it may be nothing but the words of religious man.

So what we see is that intercession isn’t merely a prayer that WE SAY. Rather, it is a position WITH CHRIST that we TAKE. By faith, we stand with

Christ FOR His will, and AGAINST all that would oppose it. Indeed, to stand with Christ by faith in intercession is going to be the eventual outcome of fellowship with Christ.

### **Standing in Christ**

***Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. (Eph. 6:10-18)***

Note the phrase: Stand by faith. That Truth is all through this passage from Ephesians. That sounds passive. It sounds as if we do nothing because Christ has done it all.



Well, Christ HAS done it all. Christ has won ALL victory. That is the basis for everything, not only in this passage, but for life in Christ. But does that mean we do nothing? Does it mean that we sit back and assume that, "whatever will be, will be?"

No. For if Christ HAS done it all – and again, He HAS; it is finished – then if Christ has done it all then believers must live upon the basis that He has done it all! At the core, this means that we must STAND BY FAITH upon that very Truth – that in Christ it is finished. That in Christ the enemy is defeated. We must stand upon that basis for ourselves, and for the purpose of God in His church.

Practically speaking, this means that we stand by faith in Christ for the will and purpose of God – no matter what it takes and no matter the cost. Often this simply requires a spiritual stand in intercession. But in every sense of the word, that is a warfare.

Each day you and I encounter, first, in ourselves, and then, in the Body of Christ, and then, in the world, opportunities to live in, and out from, the reality that in Christ there is all victory. We encounter contradictions to Jesus Christ. What are we supposed to do? Are we to say, "Well, God will get around to these things. I need not involve myself."? Is that what CHRIST who is in us would do?

I am not suggesting that we take it upon ourselves to try to fix the world. No. But what I am saying is that if Christ is our very life then at

some point when we come up against that which is contrary to Him that there is going to be a reaction in us – simply by virtue of Christ in us. That does not necessarily mean that we will DO something in the outward. No. But it does mean that we will pray and intercede – indeed, by the very presence of Christ in us and our fellowship with Him we will be motivated to do so. The more we know Christ the more we will be caught up into His interests.

Frankly, the entire discussion as to whether we should be caught up into the interests of Christ is moot – if we are walking with Christ we WILL BE; we ALREADY are. Read the above passage from Ephesians again. There is no MAYBE – Paul is describing, “business as usual,” for the believer. The enemy is going to be allowed access to us. We are going to encounter the enemy in many situations that may not directly involve us, but in which we will get involved because Jesus is involved. And the call of God upon us is to STAND by faith. We are to stand by faith against all contradiction – against all spiritual opposition – unto the end that God will have His will and glory.

### **The Victory of Jesus**

The victory of Jesus Christ over all of the forces of evil is finished. But how much of this victory do we presently see? We don't see much of it at all in the church. We really do not. Instead, we see that the enemy is occupying more territory than ever before. Instead of the life of Jesus being manifested, what we more often see is the

disease of heresy and spiritual corruption is spreading like a cancer.

Why is this the case? Isn't the victory of Jesus finished? So should this not automatically translate into a church that lives in that victory?

Well, it WOULD automatically translate into a church that lives in victory if all we needed to do was sit back, be passive, and suppose that, "God is going to do it all." But it is precisely because God has called us in Christ to be those who join Him in His will – and precisely because the church has failed to do so – it is precisely because of the church's failure to be those through whom Christ can minister that the spiritual conditions today are so corrupt.

Can we see that because -- to a certain degree -- that Jesus Christ has limited Himself – has bound Himself up to His people – can we see that this means that where the church refuses to join Christ in His purpose that this purpose of God will be suspended? Sure. Otherwise, we must blame God for the terrible condition of His church for the last two-thousand years. No. The church is in the condition it is in because the church has refused to be the vessel through which Jesus Christ wants to be manifested. The end result is that Jesus Christ is NOT manifested.

If people refuse the purpose of God then the purpose of God will not come to pass for those people. If people refuse the finished work of Jesus Christ then the finished work of Jesus Christ remains finished – but those people will not experience Him. If people will not stand by faith

upon Jesus Christ and His finished work, then those people will not only personally FALL, but there will be an overall impact of their failure to stand by faith – an overall impact in the body of Christ and the world.

Does this mean God is defeated – by the failure of His own people? No. For even though Jesus Christ has indeed limited Himself in this age to His people – even that is unto the end that it may be proven that the ways of religious flesh end in corruption. The church has failed – and there has been great consequence – yet all allowed by God to prove our own folly; to prove that Christ is all. God will have the fullness of His will in Christ in the end.

And in addition, if God does not get His will through one people He will get it through another. God does have those who stand with Him. They are not seen. But they are there. The victory and manifestation of Jesus Christ is never going to happen in this age through great movements, organizations, or ministries. Rather, God will have His testimony through many who are scattered and unknown. He will have it through people whose name will never be up in lights. The life of Christ in people is the testimony of God. God will always have some in whom Christ is manifested.

## **Chapter 24**

### **Position and Power in Christ**

Our position and power in Christ is one of complete weakness and inability to do anything of ourselves. In fact, if we have truly seen the Truth, we won't want to be strong or have any ability. As Paul, did, we will rejoice in our weakness so that the power who is Christ must work in and through us.

Intercession for other believers is based upon this reality. It is a matter of Jesus Christ drawing us into His mind, His heart, and His moving, on behalf of another. We respond by joining Christ – we stand by faith with Christ – on behalf of the one for whom we are interceding. We stand solely on the basis of Christ for only His will, His glory, and His outworking. We desire that God would do whatever it takes to get His will in the life of another. This is what Jesus Christ is doing today – it is the reason for His presence. And thus, it is unto this end that His Body will be drawn.

We have seen the essential of realizing our position in Christ. That must be settled. We must also see that there is no doubt as to the Lord's victory over the enemy. Herein we find a essential basis for intercession. To intercede by joining the Lord in His purpose for another, we have to be absolutely certain of our personal position in Christ. For unless we are certain of our position, how can we stand for another? We must know the enemy is defeated. Only then will we realize we are fighting a WINNING battle.

Note that I am NOT talking about some sort of doctrinal position. Neither am I saying that unless we are certain of our position in Christ that God will not ALLOW us to intercede. No. Rather, I am saying that we CANNOT intercede. For in order to join the Lord in what He is doing we must be certain that we are already joined to Him – and that it is a position that is finished, settled, and beyond dispute. For how can we stand by faith for another if we cannot stand by faith for ourselves?

So this is an essential. We must realize that our position – that our relationship in Christ – is based solely upon HIM; solely upon HIS finished work FOR US. It is not based upon anything whatsoever about US. Neither our sin nor our obedience has anything to do with the free gift of God's grace in Jesus Christ. We must get this settled. He must be the ground upon which we stand by faith.

But – can we see that we will not realize any of these realities unless we are brought into an utter weakness in ourselves through the work of the Cross? Until that happens, we may know all of the doctrines but we will not realize or experience the Person. It is one thing to know you need to be weak, but it is another to actually be weak.

Now, if our relationship position in Christ is settled, then we will begin to realize that Christ wants to use us as an extension of Himself; as a member of His Body. And we will realize that this is NOT maybe. If we are a member of His body then His use of us is a certain outcome.

Intercession is always included – if we are used by God in no other way we can be sure that we are to pray and intercede for others according to the will of God.

But once we are sure of our relationship position in Christ, there is also the necessity of seeing that in Christ we have authority and power to intercede. We have the authority and power of Christ as those who are seated IN Christ in heavenly places.

***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 heavenlies, 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 under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all. (Eph. 1:19-23)***

***Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (Eph. 2:5)***

The big question here is whether these great Truths MEAN something or not. Does it MEAN something to be seated in Christ? To be seated in Him far above all evil powers? Not only that, but does it MEAN something when Paul says that

the body of Christ is, “the fullness of Him that fills all in all.”? Or are these dead words; merely doctrines to state and teach?

We can be certain that what Paul is stating does mean something – something that is living, true, and real. These are Truths that God wants believers to live in and experience.

If we are seated IN CHRIST far above all wicked and evil powers, then IN CHRIST we have authority over those powers. That is inescapable. And if all of that is the Truth, then within the Christian life, that authority and power ought to be used and manifested – from out of Christ in us.

This ought not to be in question. The NT brings us back again and again to the fact that the enemy is going to continually oppose Christ – both in our personal lives and in the life of the Body of Christ. Do we think that we are supposed to just sit back and assume that God is going to do it all – and that we need never stand against the enemy by faith – either regarding ourselves or for others?

Paul clearly indicated otherwise. He states that spiritual warfare is going to be continual – and that it will increase as we grow in Christ. Here we repeat his words in this same epistle of Ephesians:

***Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we***



***wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.***  
***(Eph. 6:10-18)***

Here is see that, yes, Jesus Christ HAS done it all. Jesus Christ has already won ALL victory. But we do not see a picture of the enemy having been driven out with no access to believers. No. Rather, we see that the enemy is allowed access – but that we must, by faith, stand in our position and in the power of CHRIST.

Why must we do this if the victory is finished for us? We must do it so that the victory might be realized and experienced IN US. And then, along side of that, we must do it as those who are extensions of Christ – as those who are seated in Him.

Everything that is true in Christ must be lived out and experienced by the believer. This is how we learn and grow. It is how we decrease that He might increase. The more than we stand by faith in Christ as the power of God, the more we will realize how empty we are in ourselves. And the more we will grow in faith in Him.

Thus, if we are seated in Christ in the heavenlies, we need to operate from there if God draws us into intercession. But you will note that this is not a matter of the believer, "taking authority," or, "declaring victory," or, "speaking victory," or of attacking the enemy. No. ALL of this is from out of Jesus Christ in us. Unless there has been a work of the Cross within – exposing us as utterly weak in ourselves -- and unless we are living from out of Christ as our life, none of this is going to work. It will just be words and a bunch of theatrics.

## **Chapter 25**

### **Christ is the Power**

#### ***Christ, the power of God. (1 Cor. 1:24)***

We are seeing that it is CHRIST WITHIN the believer Who is the power of God. Christ must be able to flow through the believer – the believer must be made weak so that the believer might be an expression and extension of Jesus Christ – the power of God.

But so often believers do not function as extensions of Jesus Christ. They are not using, “the keys of the kingdom,” to do only that which is settled as the will of God. Rather, they take authority and power upon themselves – using the name of Jesus – to try to do things for God.

Sometimes this is done in ignorance. People are taught error on this matter and they simply follow a religious pattern. Other times the motives are to put on a show and to raise money. But we have to get it settled: Jesus Christ – the Person – is the power of God. He is NOT at our disposal. We are to be at His disposal. And we will never grasp this reality until we are made weak enough in ourselves under the work of the Cross.

#### **The Sons of Sceva**

In the book of Acts, we have an example of some people who tried to use the name of Jesus to cast out demons – even though they personally did not have Christ within.

***Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon themselves to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." And these were seven sons of Sceva, a Jew, chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. (Acts 19:13-15)***

Here we see the seven sons of Sceva attempting to cast out demons, "in the name of Jesus." Was that enough? No. First of all, it says that they, "took upon themselves," to do this. They were not in Christ, and they were not doing this by the will of God. But their own words betrayed the Truth. They said, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." Can we see that they had NO personal knowledge of Jesus Christ? No. To them, Jesus was a name Paul preached, and not a Person they knew. And lastly, the evil spirit itself mocked their attempt by saying that it knew both Jesus and Paul, but not them – in other words, these seven sons had NO authority over this evil spirit. The end result certainly verified that.

## **The Disciples**

Even in the gospels, were we find Jesus giving his disciples delegated authority over evil spirits, there was that instance where they could not cast out a demon. Jesus said they could not cast it out because to do so required, "prayer and

fasting.” In other words, even for those disciples there came a point where simply using the name of Jesus did not get them far. This required something beyond that – wrought through prayer and fasting – fasting from one’s own flesh; fasting from one’s own personal goals in the matter. That is the true fasting they needed – for Jesus later rebuked them for bragging about their power over evil spirits. These disciples needed a personal inward work in Christ – for it was only through Christ living and working through them that this victory could be realized. How much more this was the case with these seven sons of Sceva.

So even though believers who are in Christ are seated in Christ in the heavenlies – equipped with His power that is above all other power – even though that is our position – His power is only possible from out of that very same spiritual union. His power only works where HE is working. His power only works according to His mind. In short, yes, the Body of Christ will be doing what Christ is doing as extension of Him. But the Body of Christ cannot do anything He is not doing.

How many see that before Christ can live and move through us that He must live and move in us? Before we can bring anyone or anything under the authority of Jesus as Lord we must ourselves be under the authority of Jesus as Lord. This is a certain principle. And ignorance of it stands behind why the body of Christ has been so weak for the last two thousand years.

We saw in Matthew 16 the absolute necessity of a personal, inward revelation of Jesus Christ –

given by the Father to the individual. He is THE ROCK upon which all who constitute the church will be built. Unless He is being revealed as the foundation nothing else stated by Jesus Christ can happen. But if people are being built upon Christ as their Rock then Jesus says that the gates of hell cannot prevail against that revelation of Himself in people. Binding and loosing can only happen through God's people from out of the One who is the personification of all power and Truth.

Believers have no authority over the enemy except the power of Christ. And the power of Christ must first be over THEM. Our certainty of our position in Christ is only possible if Jesus Christ is our personal Lord – and we stand solely by faith in Him. And it is out from that position – out from His authority over us personally – that His authority can work through us.

I say again – this is why there is little power in the church today. It is why there has been little for the last two thousand years. Instead, there is heresy and soul power.

If believers are supposed to sit back and assume that Christ is going to do it all – and that we have no participation – then why would Jesus promise to give US the keys to the kingdom? If we have no participation as extensions of Christ then why is there the possibility of warfare? Indeed, if Jesus even intended to do it all apart from us, instead of through us, then why has the church been in such terrible shape almost from the beginning? For if Christ is doing it all then is not that terrible result HIS DOING? No. Christ always intended to do a work IN HIS PEOPLE so

that He might work through His people. But people have not allowed Him. THAT is why the church has fallen short of God's purpose for this age.

Don't misunderstand. God is GOING to get His purpose. But He is also going to allow many in the church to miss that purpose, indeed, to corrupt His purpose. Allowing that will prove to all that without Christ as the power of God corruption is the only outcome.

### **Intercession**

Back to intercession from out of union with Christ -- what form ought intercession to take? Is intercession a continual pleading to the Father than He should help those for whom we pray? Does that sound like how Jesus intercedes?

Can we see a problem with that kind of understanding of intercession? If intercession is a continual pleading with the Father that He should help someone then this suggests that He isn't willing to do so in the first place – we have to beg Him to do so. That cannot be the Truth. So intercession is not a matter of trying to get God to act.

Intercession is a joining with Jesus Christ for what is already the will of God. It is a standing by faith with Christ that Jesus Christ might be personal Lord of those for whom we pray. It is a stand against the powers of darkness FOR and WITH Christ in this world.

There are many people, including professing believers, who don't know to pray for themselves, cannot pray for themselves, or maybe even will not pray for themselves. Does God just leave them to themselves until they get things figured out? No. He is always seeking to bring us to know Christ. But as part of our training as members of the Body of Christ God will draw us into a specific communion with Christ regarding them. We will be drawn into intercession and will join Christ in His stand FOR THEM.

As stated earlier, Christ does not need our help. We have nothing in ourselves by which we can bring to pass the will of God. But Christ does want us to be those through whom His power and Lordship can be executed. This is a fundamental function of the Body of Christ starting in this age, and extending into the ages to come.

## **The Enemy**

The enemy is a defeated foe – defeated fully by Jesus Christ. But despite this fact, God allows this defeated enemy to try to bring corruption to believers and to the church. But since the enemy cannot simply attack believers at random, the real power of the enemy – as a defeated foe – is found in DECEPTION.

Deception is the only condition possible where Christ is not known. There are many people who are blind and ignorant to the Truth. There are others who have refused the Truth. Either way, both blindness and deception are the tools of the enemy.



The enemy can only blind or deceive a person if he has the ground upon which to work.

## **Ministry**

As mentioned, we do not normally think of intercession as ministry. But we are seeing that it is as much ministry as is preaching or teaching. And if a person is a member of the Body of Christ they will certainly be drawn into the ministry of intercession by virtue of the fact that they are already one with Christ. Intercession is what Christ is doing. Thus, it is what we will all do to one degree or another.

Each member of the Body of Christ encounters people and situations that call for prayer and intercession. As ambassador of Christ in this world – as those who have Christ within – we ought to seek God’s mind on these matters. And if we are walking with Christ that will happen more and more – and we may be drawn into the intercession of Christ regarding those situations. That is ministry.

Intercession is how we may contribute to the life of the Body of Christ. Not that we have life in ourselves to contribute, but to the extent that we are giving ourselves to the Lord for His will, we are becoming a channel to the rest of the Body through whom the Lord can minister. It is good to know that a person does not need to be significant in ministry, or have a position of ministry, to be a living extension of Jesus Christ.

## **Chapter 26**

### **Serious Business**

True ministry is CHRIST BEING MINISTERED – and that cannot happen unless the one doing the ministry is walking in resurrection union with Christ. True ministry can happen only if Christ has the freedom to live and move through a person. To simply, “go through the motions,” of ministry is like beating the air. It can minister RELIGION – but not life.

Now, of course, this is almost universally ignored. For the last two-thousand years ministry has largely been the result of theological education and ordination. Because the church has been blind to the Person of the living Christ – Who is IN believers – it has resulted in blindness to Christ as the MEANS of ministry through any individual.

ALL believers are supposed to be both expressions of Christ and extensions of Christ. This is not some otherworldly, mystical, weirdness. It is quite practical. It is a matter of earthen vessels being the means through which the Treasure can be conveyed.

We have seen that when Paul said, “death in us, life in you,” that he was referring to the necessity of death through the work of the Cross upon the natural man -- but the life that emerges through resurrection union with Christ. That is a statement of Truth regarding TRUE ministry. But in this we can also see that where there is no death upon the natural man in ministry, that

natural man will take over – but what is produced will likewise be natural. That which is born of flesh IS flesh. The principle holds. Thus, we have the reason why so much of Christianity is nothing more than the religious of natural man.

Paul knew that he had to offer from out of himself only that which he had experienced of Christ within.

***I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. (Rom. 15:17-19)***

This is a principle of ministry that goes all the way back to the words of Christ Himself:

***A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (Luke 6:45)***

What does it mean for a person who would be a minister to come under the work of the Cross? Of course, all believers must carry their Cross if they want to follow Christ. But this is especially so if

a person is to minister in the life of Jesus. So what exactly does that mean – how does it look?

Well, once we get out of the way the obvious – deliberate sin and unbelief – being under the work of the Cross will mean that the power of personal pride, ambition, and gain must be broken. But note: A person will surely agree that these must be broken – but they must be at least in the process of being broken. In short, a person must not be governed, motivated, controlled – even if unconsciously – by these aspects of the flesh.

If these are not broken – but instead one who would minister is governed by them – then even if the teaching is doctrinally correct there will be limitation as to power in Christ. The reason is that the letter might be spoken, but the life of Christ not fully ministered. And eventually, if a person is governed by religious flesh, it is going to come out in the teaching.

There really isn't anything static or passive about these matters. If I am governed by my religious flesh then even then – if my heart is open – God will bring me into situations wherein that fact will be exposed, and I will have light enough to see and confess and forsake that to Christ. In other words, I will have light enough to pick up that Cross; take my place in His death. I can at least say, "Lord, do whatever it takes to bring me to the end of this terrible thing." And then as the Lord does do whatever it takes, I will pay whatever price is necessary.

But if I will not allow the Lord to deal with me through the Cross, then I will progressively become hardened. That hardness will eventually become a hardness in self-deception – there will be very little that God can do to make an impression upon me. I may move ahead preaching and teaching – but it will come from out of myself, rather than out from Jesus Christ.

We have to get it settled that it really does matter as to the spiritual condition of the one who ministers – otherwise the ministry of life could occur out from one who is spiritually dead or corrupt.

No one is perfect and all are learning. But God is likewise always pruning the branches. Thus, this is a matter of keeping oneself open to Christ and a matter of walking in His light.

Paul knew of his own weakness on this matter of pride and religiosity in ministry. Of course he did. The more we see Jesus, the more we will realize that we must decrease so that He might increase. This is not merely a formula: It is the TRUTH.

Paul shared:

***For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but [now] I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he sees me [to be], or [that] he hears of me. 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. 12:6-10)***

Paul, as do we all, had the potential of spiritual pride in himself – a spiritual pride that would take hold of the things of God and use them to bolster that pride, gain a following, gain position and power, and garner the admiration of people. Indeed, Paul tells us that it was because of the tremendous revelation God had given him that this danger existed.

Note: In his pride, Paul could have taken the revelation of God to him as God's affirmation that PAUL was great, special, and deserving. And you can be sure that as a former Pharisee that it would have come natural for Paul to have used even the revelation of God's grace as a tool to bolster his self-righteousness. This is the possibility of self-deception in each of us.

But no. God brought the Cross into Paul's personal life. Paul calls it, "a thorn in the flesh" – the Greek actually speaks of a stake driven through his flesh or natural man. It pressed Paul continually to God. It kept him weak in himself,

but because he kept faith in Christ, the strength and power of Christ was able to live in and through him.

Paul could have refused. He could have turned bitter. Or he could have used his suffering to turn himself into a martyr and used THAT to bolster his spiritual pride. But instead, Paul allowed God to do what was necessary to bring an exposure and death to those dimensions of religious flesh that could have otherwise governed Paul.

Thus, what we see is that to the degree that we are emptied of ourselves – and thus dependent upon Christ – the life of Christ can find release both IN US and then THROUGH US for ministry.

### **Possessing What We Teach**

***I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air: But I keep under my body, and bring [it] into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. (I Cor. 9:24-27)***

This is one of the passages in the KJV that is rather poorly translated. For example, if you read verse 27 you could easily get the impression that the Christian life is one of asceticism. You might also conclude that it is possible to lose one's salvation. But a simple look at the Greek – along with an understanding of the context – clears up any confusion.

In this chapter, Paul is talking about his ministry as an apostle. But as is always the case, what Paul applies to himself and his responsibility in ministry, applies to all believers – for all believers have a responsibility for what they have received. Spiritual principles are TRUTH – and even though situations and outworking might vary – the Truth nevertheless applies to all.

Paul compares his life in Christ, and the ministry that has emerged, to an athletic endeavor. His emphasis is upon the CROWN – which represents the victory of Jesus Christ.

Now, as we have seen, Jesus must have victory IN us and OVER us personally or we cannot manifest His victory. Indeed, wherever the presence of Christ is brought in through a member of His body – the possibility of victory is present. Thus, when Paul talks about running a race, or about fighting a fight, he is talking about the battle of FAITH. Win that battle and everything else falls into place under Jesus Christ.

Paul's faith in Christ is why he is able to say that he does not run with uncertainty; he does not fight as one beating the air – hoping to score a lucky punch and hit his mark. He knows the Truth and is preaching the Truth. But there is another aspect to this that is easy to miss. Paul is declaring that HE HIMSELF has experienced the reality of what He preaches.

A person who runs with uncertainty and who punches the air has no experiential knowledge of the race he is running or of the fight he is fighting. He has perhaps read in a book what he



needs to do in his athletic contest in order to win. But other than that, he is one who is simply, "going through the motions."

Is this not a picture of much ministry? We read in the Bible how we ought to minister, and what we ought to minister – we study and get degrees – and spend years going through the motions – but the question remains: Is Jesus Christ in us? Is Christ our life? Have we personally come under the Cross? Is the life and power of Jesus Christ working IN US, and then THROUGH us?

Paul knew of the possibility that a person could go through the motions of living a Christian life, and even of being a minister, and yet for ALL of it to be empty. They can remain blind to the Person of Jesus Christ and spend years in a religious delusion – thinking that what they are doing is what Christ is doing.

Paul was given revelation of great Truth. But this was not merely information. Rather, it was to be revelation in Christ that Paul needed to actually experience.

This is the same necessity for all who would minister. People are not called to merely preach in the sense of dispensing information about Christ. They are call to minister Christ Himself. This requires a personal experiencing of Christ – it requires that a person come into an inward realization of Jesus, and come under the power of the personal Cross. In other words, what we preach must be REAL IN US.

This principle is found in this passage from I Corinthians 9. It is awkwardly translated in the KJV, but the Truth therein is best understood in context. The KJV says:

***But I keep under my body, and bring [it] into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.***

But this could rightly be paraphrased:

***But I punch myself and bring myself under my own teaching, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be proven to be a fake.***

Paul is saying that true ministry must come from WITHIN – it must be from out of the Person of Jesus Christ through the one who would minister. But that is not possible unless the person through whom Christ would minister has himself experienced Christ; has himself experienced the Truth he is teaching.

The phrase, “I keep under,” is from a phrase meaning, “to strike under the eye.” Thus, in context, Paul is saying, “I do not punch as one who is simply going through the motions; punching into the air. No. I fight with absolute certainty. Indeed, I punch myself – I am myself under the very Truth I preach. Otherwise, I am a fake. I am not genuine.”

Right now there are Christians by the millions – many in leadership – who are walking in blindness to Christ. Many are walking and teaching error.

Their blindness and error is all that they know. They are certain that they are right. Some have taught error, defended error, and built ministries and entire careers upon error. There are even colleges and seminaries that teach error and graduate ministers to preach the same error. There are entire pastoral staffs, college administrations, denominations and organizations that unwittingly promote blindness and teach error. There are large religious systems built – not upon the Person of Christ – but upon dead religion, or worse, upon another gospel and a false Christianity.

Certainly the Roman Catholic Church is a prime example of such a religious system. The cults, like Mormonism are a religious system of deception. But there are also many seminaries, churches, and ministries within what might be considered mainstream Christianity. It might seem extreme to question these organizations, but what has been produced? Are people coming into an inward realization of Christ, or are they simply becoming products of the religious system? Have people been emancipated into a living experiencing of Christ?

If we gather up all of this Truth about ministry, we are brought back to the Person of Jesus Christ as the source of all, the means of all, and the goal of all that God is doing. We are brought back to CHRIST IN YOU as the basis for ministry, and as the goal of ministry. HE IS the Alpha and the Omega.

## **Chapter 27**

### **Angels of Light**

***For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore [it is] no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (II Cor. 11:13-15)***

An, “angel of light,” is anything that appears as light but is actually darkness. It appears to be of God but is not. This could be any person who claims to speak for God, or it could be the message itself.

Note that, “angel of light,” will seem to illuminate. It will seem to offer answers and solutions. But it will not be of the Person of Christ.

This can be subtle. For example, there is much error today within the church. There are likewise individuals who continually preach against such error. But they do not lead people out of error into a personal experience with Christ. Rather, they lead people out of error into another error – the error they promote. They appear to be an angle of light that offers people Truth. But they are just as bad, or worse, than those against whom they preach.

For example, the heresies of the Word of Faith movement are obvious to many people. Many Calvinists preach against these errors. This gains them traction and a following among those who agree with them about those errors. But Calvinism is likewise error. Yet it appears as an angel of light to those who reject the Word of Faith heresy.

It is a dangerous thing to preach against error but to not lead people into the Truth in Christ. It is dangerous to bring people out of error, only to bring them into another error, or worse error. Freedom is the result of seeing and experiencing the Person of Jesus Christ. ANYTHING else is error.

Now, while true ministry will preach the Person of Christ, it is certainly necessary to preach what is NOT of Christ – so that believers might be warned and gain discernment. The Bible does this. But the Truth is NOT defined by what it is against. It is defined by Christ. Thus, in preaching Christ, and exposing error, the primary impact is that Christ will become known. And as a result, all else will become obvious.

Cults condemn, and are against, orthodox Christianity. Orthodox Christianity preaches against the cults. The Calvinists preach against the charismatics. The charismatics preach against non-charismatics. We could go on, but can we see that it is possible for all of this to go on completely OUTSIDE of the life of Christ? Can we see that this nonsense continues because each group is operating from their own human perspective, their own religious bias, and their

own traditions of man? Everything ends up being defined by them, rather than Christ. And all of it is so normalized that most have no clue that they are deceived by an angel of light.

The point is, there is not ONE true church. Rather, there is only ONE TRUE CHRIST. And all who are of God are going to preach HIM. All else will be defined by Christ, Who is the Light and the Truth.

It is a fact that some of the most prominent preachers – with huge and prosperous churches – are some of the biggest heretics. Yet they are absolutely hardened in what they teach. They have heard all of the objections to what they teach, and have all of their answers in place – usually fully supported by their peers. But none of this proves a thing. It is as old as the tower of Babel. Numbers, money, success, visibility, and influence mean NOTHING. It can ALL be of an angel of light.

Have we realized that if a false teacher converts thousands over to his or her false teaching that it is going to appear to be OF GOD? There may even be miracles – financial miracles and otherwise – that seem to prove that God is behind such ministries. Many will say, “This could never happen unless God were behind it.” But the fact is, yes it could happen – supposed miracles and all – completely outside of the will of God. Jesus Christ may not have a thing to do with it.

Look at the Roman Catholic Church. How about the Mormons? The Jehovah Witnesses? And then there is Islam. All of the false religions of the

Asian world. Not one of them is of God. The life of Christ is not in those churches and movements. If people within those churches would begin to turn to Christ then the result would be that He would bring them OUT. But most of the people in those churches – certainly the leadership – are convinced that they have the Truth and that others do not. It is ALL deception.

Jesus Christ said, "I AM the Light of the world." And yet Paul said that Satan Himself would appear as an angel of light. This is a false Christ and, "another gospel." These have always been everywhere.

The preaching of Christ will not try to convert people to a theology, a philosophy, a movement, or to a specific church organization. The preaching of Christ will be unto the end that believers come into a personal realization of Jesus Christ. But when that happens, all of the rest will be defined according to Christ.

### **The Only True Foundation**

***For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (I Cor. 3:11)***

Paul is not saying that it is impossible to lay a false foundation upon a false Christ, a false gospel, or false teachings. Of course not. It is commonly done – and Paul discusses it all through his epistles. What he is saying is that there is no other TRUE foundation except Jesus Christ.

But this matter of a false foundation needs to be discussed because where there is a false foundation there is always great deception.

One of the greatest ploys of the enemy is to deceive people into trying to fix what is built upon a false foundation – all the while maintaining the false foundation upon which all is built. There are many churches and movements where the entire foundation must be uprooted and demolished – because it is of a false Christ, a false gospel, and another spirit – but people, not realizing this, or not being willing to admit it, try to do a better job of building upon that false foundation, or try to repair what is already built. This simply maintains deception. This is like trying to correct spelling in a book that teaches heresy, all the while never getting to the fact that it IS heresy.

This is practiced all the time. For example, there are churches that teach heresy but will point to the scripture from Hebrews that says that believers should not neglect to assemble together. Will following that verse solve the problem? No. In fact, it will simply maintain it.

Every false church and false movement takes the Bible and applies it to themselves. They take the true words of God and use them to build or maintain upon a false foundation. Does this fix the problem? No. It maintains it.

Another example has to do with leadership. Every church and denomination has ordained ministers. Even the cults do. But does that fact change the heresy being taught by those who are ordained?



No. Is the solution better ministers within that false system? No. The entire false system itself must be shaken down to the ground.

What we must realize that for the last two thousand years there has arisen a religious system that at best is dead religion, and at worse is deception. NOTHING is going to fix this except a revelation of Jesus Christ that will completely overturn the tables in this house made with religious hands. Nothing. And in many cases, even that will be rejected. But some will respond to the Truth.

## **Chapter 28**

### **A Great Shaking**

Now, it is here that we can get back to the passages quoted at the beginning of this article. Read again what God intends to do, from Ephesians 1. And then face squarely the fact that we have seen very little of this come to pass during the church age. It HAS come to pass in the lives of individuals here and there, down through history. But it has NOT come to pass in any way that has stopped the progress of evil, heresy, and apathy, in the Body of Christ. The question is therefore clear: What must happen if God is going to see His will brought to pass? Well, there has got to be a great shaking. It has to be a great shaking of God's own people.

I believe that for anyone who is, or who will, or who has, come into the purpose of God, that those people who have come into the purposes of God have had their own personal shaking. They have, if you will, had their own personal great tribulation. In one sense of the word, the entire Christian life, and the entire Christian age, is a great tribulation. It is conflict, adversity, and spiritual warfare. Thus, if any of what God intends is to be real, livable, or practical, it must be brought to pass, not through some catastrophic world event, but in the personal hearts of individual people. But on a larger scale, and in fulfillment of God's wider purpose, there is to be a consummation to things. Just as the individual must have a shaking and a tribulation – and this is primarily SPIRITUAL – so must the

entire realm and the entire church be shaken in a collective way.

God must give a witness to Himself. He must be shown and seen. This is not for HIM as much as it is for US. Thus, before the end of the age, God is going to deal with everything in a universal way. He is going to shake the very powers of the heavens, and shake the spiritual realms. I would submit that if we would go through our PERSONAL shaking and PERSONAL spiritual tribulation that we would be ready for such a thing, should it happen before we die. For we would be firm in Christ.

God is going to see worked out and brought to fullness the fact that His Son is Lord of all. But since Jesus is NOT Lord of most people, including those who profess Him, God has to deal with this. And that is the shaking. The shaking will shake loose all that is NOT of God, and will leave only that which is of God. Then Jesus will be Lord.

## **Judgment**

We often think of JUDGMENT as punishment. But it really is not that. Now, if you want to resist or rebel against the judgment of God it won't go well with you. Yet this is not a matter of God punishing you. It is matter of you reaping what you sow. God isn't going to change for you, or accommodate you. So resist Him if you will and you will lose out – by your own choice.

The JUDGMENT of God is nothing more than God setting things in perfect order, according to who people are to Him. Judgment always begins with LIGHT or TRUTH. God exposes people for who

they are to Him. When God judges, all the games are over, all the masks come off, and all of the facades fall down. At that point, people will either turn to Him, or people will fall away. It all depends on whether they are willing to step into the Light – it depends upon whether they want the Truth. Consequently, when God judges, yes, He is going to set everything and everyone in order. But how we respond to the judgment of God will depend upon where we end up in that order.

It is a fact that the judgment of God is really the outcome of the fact that He has been judging all along. When God brings a visitation and a judgment, it is usually the climax to many dealings of God, and to many times that God has sought to bring the Truth. Thus, even though it is never too late to turn to God, it is often a fact that when God judges He already knows people have made their choices. His judgment is often nothing more than a matter of Him exposes those choices. We might say that people always grow up to be what they are to God. God spends much time seeking to get people to turn to Him. But in the end, they are going to be exposed for who they are, one way or another. This can happen many times along the way in the Christian life. But it is going to happen in the ultimate, eternal sense. Who are you to Christ, and who is Christ to you? Not in theory. But really? That is the question.

Now, what we see in this is that a great shaking is a great judgment. If God is going to shake the heavens, or spiritual realm, to the point where only that which is of God will remain, then all

things will be exposed for what they are. Every building that is built upon Christ will stand. Every building that is not will fall. Every person who is truly devoted to, and dependent upon, Jesus Christ, will be exposed as such. But everyone who is false, and has merely appeared to be Christian, is going to be uncovered.

As I stated, this is all going to happen at the last judgment anyways. But if you want to walk with Jesus Christ, and come into the purposes of God, you must go through this personally. Sure. Peter said, "Judgment must begin with the household of God." Paul said, "If you would judge ourselves, we would not be judged." Thus, the key here is to open yourself to God on a continual basis. Get all of the secrets exposed, and all of the hidden motives dealt with. Hand yourself over to God for this shaking and dealing -- because you cannot do it. It is another work of the Cross. Yet if you do this, any subsequent shaking of God will only find you genuine. There will be nothing to shake loose from you because you will have already been shaken in a personal way.

Now, if we really understand, we will see that JUDGMENT is all positive. If we open ourselves to the judgment of God, the result will be that the Truth will set us free. He will shake loose all that binds us. All that was judged in Christ on the Cross will shake loose from us. But if we refuse, then the same judgment that God intends for our good, will be – to us – a terrible thing. Make no question about it – God is going to have His will and purpose. Christ is going to be Lord of all, and is going to fill all in all. If I will not submit to

this, then God has no alternative to the Light He offers me except the darkness that I have loved.

### **There Must Be Heresies**

***For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. (1 Cor. 11:19)***

If we limit HERESY to merely theological error, we will miss the point. Heresy usually includes wrong theology and doctrine. But ultimately, heresy is a matter of the HEART towards God. When the heart is not right with God, you have the ingredients for a heretic. The theology will in some way follow.

This is why you could be a person who knows tons of doctrine and theology, and be basically sound in those things, and yet perhaps your attitude towards God is terrible. Maybe you live in unbelief. Maybe you aren't even converted to Christ. In that case you are a contradiction. You are in danger of being a heretic.

In contrast, you could be someone who has been deceived by false doctrine, or one who simply doesn't understand that he believes error – and yet you could have a heart that truly desires Christ. In this case, you believe error, but you aren't a heretic. God has something to work with.

God is not pleased with unbelief, even if our doctrine is right. He looks at the heart, and not so much at our theology. I'm not saying the theology is unimportant. What God would want is a person who has a heart for Him, and who believes true doctrine. Indeed, if I do have a

heart for Him, I will eventually come to believe true doctrine, because an open heart to God results in an unfolding of Christ and the understanding of true doctrine. And it is a fact that usually people who have an unbelieving heart towards God end up believing and teaching false doctrine, or they teach true doctrine in the wrong spirit, and thus, completely misrepresent God. This is heresy.

The fact is, God uses even heresy to JUDGE, and to prove those who really want the Truth. When faced with heresy, if we truly want the Truth, we will seek God for a revelation of Christ. And we will become stronger in faith.

But if you analyze this, it is really God using the Truth to judge. Sure. If you are faced with heresy, you may not know the Truth. But nothing is resolved until you know it. And once you do, what happens? Well, the heresy is shaken off. God has judged the heresy, and any place in you where it might have found a home.

When Paul said that there MUST be heresies, he gave the reason – so that those who were genuine would be proven, or exposed as such. Heresy is intended to hurt our relationship to God. But if we keep walking in faith despite the heresy, or if we turn to God in reaction to the heresy, then we will be exposed as those who really want the Truth. The heresy will have afforded us the opportunity to learn Christ. In contrast, if we buy into the heresy, and STAY UNDER IT despite God's continual conviction, we will be exposed as those who did not want the Truth.

I'm not talking here about mistakes, or ignorance, or not knowing any better. I'm talking about those cases where GOD Himself judges. God will judge by allowing heresy, so that people will turn to Him for Truth, and He will judge by bringing Truth so people can turn from heresy. The two are usually side by side. God doesn't leave us without the resource of Truth. But this is about God judging. It is not about theology. When God judges and shakes, we know enough to turn.

All of this leads us to the possibility that the great end-time shaking will, in fact, be directly tied to the end-time APOSTASY. It is entirely possible that God will allow great deception to come upon the people of God – but along side of that a clear and unprecedented presentation of the Truth. Those who want the Truth will turn to God. Those who don't will be deceived. The turning to God will be REVIVAL. The coming under deception will be great APOSTASY. And according to the Bible, most will be deceived. The Bible promises the Truth will always be preached. But it says there is going to be a great end-time apostasy.

This will all be a great shaking. We don't know exactly how it will work out as to practical events and people. But evidently, there is going to come a tremendous spiritual crisis and shaking upon the Body of Christ such that only that which is OF CHRIST will remain. Everything else, and the people who really don't want Christ, will be exposed, and fall away to something less. That, "something less," will likely be an alternative to Christ, and look like Christ. But it won't be.



Imagine this. Imagine that something happens so that Christ really has to be your life. Perhaps events in the material world will push this necessity. But even more so, there will be such deception afoot, that you will no longer be able to be passive or apathetic – if you really want Christ, that is. Those around you, in your church, you really don't want Christ, will come under deception. Those who do want Christ will grow to know Him. Really, this is already happening. Many today are saying that Christ isn't God, and isn't the only way to God, and that the Bible isn't the Word of God. This is happening IN many mainstream churches – and it is all in the name of God. Multiply that by a thousand. Perhaps bring into it civil law. Who knows? This is all building up to a great spiritual tribulation and shaking. It is going to intensify. God is going to have only that which is of Christ.

Of course, this is where many try to bring in the mark of the beast, etc. Well, it is never going to be a matter of who receives a physical mark. It is going to come down to who actually belongs to Christ, or who doesn't belong to Him. The mark of the beast is on the forehead and on the hand – one's mind and one's works. This is spiritual – the beast being man IN ADAM. And the spiritual may be ALL that Revelation is talking about – spiritual reality. Any outworking of it in the civil law or world will be just that – an outward representation only. And it may not even happen outwardly. We don't know. What matters is whether we are genuine to God, not whether we have a physical mark.

The great shaking that God is going to bring upon heavenly places, and consequently, upon the Body of Christ, is going to involve the clear Truth of God, and it is going to involve the offer of heresy. Those who want the Truth will have everything about them shaken, so that they will be made genuine, or proven to be already genuine. Those who don't want the Truth will not let go of what God is shaking, and will therefore come under great deception. As terrifying as it seems, if I hold onto what God is shaking loose, I will be shaken loose. I will lose.

### **Christ Remains**

***For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29)***

Believers are joined to Christ in resurrection union. This happens at salvation. But the Christian life is then a matter of, "being formed together WITH Christ." That is what the word, "conformed," means in the original Greek. Thus, we are not made, "to look like Jesus." Rather, we are formed spiritually so that Jesus can be manifested through us. In short, we must decrease through the work of the Cross, so that the life of Christ might be manifested in and through us.

If the believer is being formed in such a way that Christ is manifested, then it proves that such a one had become a dwelling place for Christ. It is this reality that endures forever – it cannot be shaken and it cannot be burned. This is a fact for

this age, but also a fact for the end of this age leading into the eternal ages.

## **Chapter 29**

### **Introduction to the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard**

During His earthly ministry, Jesus had much to say to His disciples about what it would mean to follow Him, and what it would mean to be His servant. One of the best teachings on the matter is in the form of a parable. In Matthew 20, we find what is usually referred to as, "The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard." This parable gathers together much Truth about ministry.

First, let's get the setting – let's see WHY Jesus gave this parable. Jesus had just had a conversation in the hearing of the disciples with a rich, young ruler. That young ruler would not follow Jesus at personal cost. As he walked away from Jesus, Jesus said, "It is with great difficulty that a rich man enters the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 19:23)

Peter and the disciples were, "amazed. It would seem that they were somewhat shaken. Why? Because at this point of time they were following Jesus for what they believed they would get out of it – as those who would be at His side in His kingdom. The disciples mistakenly expected that Jesus was going to set up a material kingdom at any moment, and that they would be given possessions, authority, and, of course, riches. But when they heard what Jesus had to say, their confidence that this was going to happen was greatly shaken. Peter stepped to the front and

expressed the concerns of the disciples by asking this question:

***Then answered Peter and said unto him,  
Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed  
thee; what shall we have therefore? (Matt.  
19:27)***

There it is – all wrapped up in a single question. Peter and the others had indeed forsaken all and followed Christ. But at this point in their understanding, they were following Him because they thought it was going to PAY them to follow Him. They expected a reward. The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard is a teaching given by Jesus to correct their motives and attitude for following Him.

Are we following Jesus because we believe it will earn us a greater reward? Because we believe it is going to PAY us to follow Him? This is probably an attitude most of us have in the beginning. But thank God that He does not abandon us in such deception. Instead, He will begin to expose our unbelief – usually by showing us that we could never merit PAY or reward. He will reduce us to where we will walk with Christ at great COST if necessary – simply because we love Him, and love other believers.

This parable reveals that what God is after are those who will give themselves to Him to the complete disregard of personal gain or reward – He is after those who will allow God to use them as extensions of Himself for the benefit of others. He desires true stewards who will pay a great cost so that others might receive all that God has

for them – and so that God may receive HIS inheritance in the saints.

This is impossible to learn in a seminary because it is not theological. It is not a profession. It is produced by a relationship with Christ. It is the outcome of having been apprehended by Christ for His purposes – and of abandoning oneself to Him.

Of course, at this point, Peter was not yet faced with this reality – although he definitely WOULD be. But we must be clear about this: Jesus is speaking this parable to show His disciples the dangers – the sin and unbelief – of following Jesus for a reward; of following Him because we think it will PAY us to follow Him. And He is revealing that the real reward for giving ourselves to Christ is nothing less than Christ Himself.

### **The Work of the Cross**

In order for Peter and the others to be brought to the place where they can be faithful stewards who walk with Christ for His glory, it will take a work of the Cross – there must come a death in Peter and the others – with regards to their ambitions and religious flesh. All of that needs to be crucified. They must be convicted of their unbelief and repent of following Christ for what THEY think they are going to get out of it. They would do so later – but Jesus is telling them this parable to warn them as to what can happen if a person tries to serve God for what they will get out of it.

It would seem that few of us have any idea of the possibilities in our own heart on this matter. If there has been one sin of the church for the last two thousand years it is that people have taken the things of God unto themselves and used them for personal gain – financial gain, the gain of power and position, the gain of self-righteousness, or the gain of, “being someone,” in the eyes of others. The church has generally dragged down that which is spiritual into the realm of religious flesh and has corrupted it.

None of us are free from at least this possibility, and that is why any calling of Jesus Christ to ministry will ALWAYS include a calling to the Cross. This is true of any calling to Christ, but it is especially so with regards to any calling to influential ministry.

Despite the fact that this parable is a warning against following Christ for personal gain, we must keep in mind that all of God’s warnings are redemptive in nature. If we have wrong motives for following Jesus Christ in this age, God will, by His spirit, bring enough light so that we can turn and repent; so that we can get back to following Christ for HIMSELF and HIS glory. So as we examine this parable, we have to keep that in mind.

These first disciples, except for Judas, avoided the pitfalls against which Jesus warns in the parable – they did allow God to set them free from these dangers. But it is possible that those called last could fail through unbelief in the way that those called first failed in the parable. This parable, as is the case with most parables,

presents spiritual principles -- and is not intended to cover every possibility. Jesus is simply focusing upon those given the greatest Truth and responsibility – and thus are in the position of the greatest danger.

## **The Spiritual Kingdom**

Jesus begins this parable with the same words He uses to begin many parables. He says, “For the kingdom of heaven is like unto...” So this parable is not about the physical or material world. No. The vineyard is the kingdom of God – or more specifically – it is life in Christ. The working IN the vineyard is all that we might do to produce the spiritual fruit that God is after in our personal lives -- and in the lives of those whom we impact from out of our relationship with Christ. The material objects in the parable are used to convey to us spiritual Truth.

This parable is a revelation to God’s people as to the necessity of living for Jesus Christ – of living for the interests of God, rather than our own. Of course, this is the outcome of losing one’s life for Jesus’ sake. But it reveals that if we live and minister for the sake of Jesus that we will receive and value all that God has for us. But if we live or minister with self-interest in mind we will not value what God has for us – indeed, we will not value God Himself.



## Chapter 30

### The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard

***For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man [that is] an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, [that] shall ye receive.***

Jesus gives the picture of a householder calling laborers to work in this vineyard. The vineyard is not to be limited to performing ministry. The vineyard is really the Christian life – and therefore includes all that is within the Christian life that is supposed to produce fruit. This makes the parable apply to each believer.

Note a couple of important details. The laborers are pictured as being called into the vineyard – called unto Christ -- at different times of the day. None of the laborers decided when to be hired or called. But they did have a heart that was ready to be called – for they were waiting and ready.

This shows that God was already doing a work in them to draw them to Christ – such that when He does call finally call them they do come to Christ.

Again, this does not cover all possibilities. Jesus is not addressing those whom God draws to Christ but who resist. That is not the point of the parable. He is limiting His teaching to the context of those whom God draws to Christ and who come to Christ when they are called.

So, each group of laborers are called at a different time of the day – which means that each group of laborers work a different amount of time in the vineyard. This means two things: First, those called first have a greater opportunity and a greater responsibility than those called later. Second, those called first must, “bear the heat of the day,” to an extent those called later do not need to bear. All of this is decided by God. None of it is decided by us.

This is actually the real meaning of election and predestination as taught in scripture. Election is NEVER unto salvation. Rather, election is unto the calling and purpose FOR those who are already saved. God decides the specific purpose for which He has saved each of us. He decides the time and the responsibility. We decide whether to be faithful.

So far we have this: The laborers are called into the vineyard at different times -- according to the will of the master. They are given different amounts of responsibility, and thus, are called to bear different amounts of, “the heat of the day.”

But then we come to the WAGES. The householder AGREED with the first group on a set wage. Thus, this first group went into the vineyard expecting that this amount would be given to them at the end of the day. But this was not the case with the other groups. Jesus specifically says that regarding those called last that there is no wage that is agreed upon -- but the householder promises to pay them, "whatever is right."

Can we see what Jesus is getting at here? The first group enters the vineyard for an agreed to wage. That does not picture GRACE. Rather, it pictures a, "works based," relationship with Christ. The other laborers entered – trusting the household to pay them, "whatever is right" – which is a picture of GRACE and FAITH.

Here we find the first challenge: Will we walk with Christ – fully giving ourselves to Him – but do so leaving any question of wage or reward to HIM? Or must we walk with Christ under the motivation of an expected reward for doing so?

Or, to bring in a passage discussed earlier, having freely received from God, will we now freely give back to Him, and unto others? Or will we attach an expected reward?

Jesus said, "Whoever would lose his life for My sake will find it." Can we see that this applies to any thought of reward? Jesus is teaching that we must lose our reward for His sake – lose ourselves to Him to the complete disregard of reward or personal gain. But if we will do so then we will discover HIM as our reward.

## **The End of the Day**

Back to the parable -- the details given about the wage agreements are vital to see because those details flow through to the end of the day when the wages are paid. The motives behind why each laborer works in the vineyard remain their motives when they are paid at the end of the day.

But again – this does not cover all possibilities. Even though we might, in the beginning, be walking with Christ for a reward – or ministering to others for a reward -- it is a motive we can repent of. And even if we have initially served God by His grace, some do stray off course.

We have to remember that this parable is a correction and warning being given by Jesus in answer to Peter's question. Jesus is, in effect, saying, "You want to know what you are going to receive from God because you have forsaken all and followed Me? But this question, of itself, betrays an attitude that is dangerous. I am telling you this parable to illustrate that fact."

Jesus continued with the parable:

***So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them [their] hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came 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. And when they had received [it], they murmured against the goodman of the house, Saying, These last have wrought [but] one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take [that] thine [is], and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.***

Here we see a picture of not only what often happens in this life and in this age – but it is also a picture of what is possible at the judgment seat of Christ. All of the motives are exposed. The true character of our relationship with Christ is brought out.

Despite the fact that the laborers – through no choice of their own -- did different amounts of work -- bearing different amounts of the heat of the day – they ALL received the SAME wage.

This did not sit well with the group called first – who worked the most. They felt cheated. But those called first were not cheated – they were given exactly the wage to which they agreed. The fact that those called last received the same wage for doing less work did not change that fact.

This brings us to the entire point of the parable: God gives ALL the same reward regardless of the

amount of work done – regardless of how much of the heat of the day each has to bear. What this means is that those who were called first are actually called first so that those who are called last might receive equally with them. Those called first bear that responsibility – we might even call it a privilege. To be called FIRST does not mean that I have the opportunity to earn MORE from God. Rather, it means that I have the privilege of suffering for the sake of others in the body so that they might share equally.

Does that seem unfair? If it does then we are actually asking the same question as was asked by Peter, and which prompted this parable.

Those called first in this parable resented God because despite all of their suffering and work in the vineyard the others were given the same wage. God openly states that He has the right to FREELY GIVE what He pleases with what is HIS -- but those first called resented Him for it.

God says, "I have freely given and you must freely receive, and then from out of what you have freely received you must freely give." In other words, He is saying, "Walk with Me, and serve Me, with utter abandonment. Leave any rewards to ME – leave it to ME to decide, "whatever is right."

But if we walk with Christ in a spirit of entitlement we will not FREELY receive from Him – and we will not FREELY give to others. Rather, our entire Christian life and service will be upon the wrong basis. It will not be upon grace and faith. Instead of, "Yet not I, but Christ," my life

will proclaim, "Yet not Christ, but I." In the end it will come down to that.

### **Suffering for Jesus' Sake**

So here is the question for each of us: Are we willing to give ourselves fully over to God – for whatever it takes – even if it means that we must suffering the heat of the day – are we willing to do this even if it earns us nothing more than other believers who are not called to such a walk?

Another way to ask the same question: Will we serve Christ for our own interests? For our own gain? Or will we allow Him to crucify those motives out of us and serve Him for His glory, His interests, and for the spiritual benefit of others?

Remember that the vineyard is life in Christ. Thus, "bearing the heat of the day" is not limited to suffering because of ministry." Rather, it is any suffering because of Jesus Christ. And ALL who are in Christ are going to suffer – it is just that some are called to suffer more – for the sake of Christ and for the sake of others.

Are we willing to suffer for Jesus' sake – for the sake of His body – so that others may receive the same as we have received? Do we think that this means we will be cheated? No. It simply means that we will receive all that God has to give – but that we will have suffered so that others may share in the same. This is the teaching of the parable.

So you want to be called of God into ministry? Such a calling is NOT so that you can BE

SOMEBODY, or so that you can earn a greater reward. No. Such a calling is so that through your suffering others can be brought in to share equally in Christ.

### **The Called and the Chosen and the Faithful**

The final statement of Jesus in this parable of the laborers in the vineyard:

***So the last shall be first, and the first last:  
for many be called, but few chosen. (Matt.  
20:16)***

In context, the FIRST are obviously those who were called into the vineyard FIRST. Sure. And the LAST were obviously all of the others -- represented by those who worked only one hour -- they were called, "the LAST," in the parable. And when the wages were paid, the FIRST were the LAST to be paid, and the LAST were the FIRST to be paid.

In addition, it is clear that the, "MANY who are CALLED," included everyone who was CALLED into the vineyard. But, the "few CHOSEN," were those who were called FIRST -- they were called to bear the greatest responsibility -- to bear, "the heat of the day." Indeed, they were CHOSEN to bear this greater weight for the sake of all of the others; for the sake of Jesus.

Jesus was saying to the apostles, "I am going to call MANY unto Myself. But within those who are CALLED, there will be a much smaller group -- the FEW CHOSEN. The CHOSEN will be people who are called to be, "stewards of the mysteries of



God.” They will be given greater responsibility, and thus, will have greater accountability. This will NOT be because they are better people, more obedient, or are more righteous, or have greater ability. No. And they will not be given a greater reward. God is saying, “I will choose them because I want an instrument through whom I can work – unto the spiritual life and growth of others.”

Paul was a great example of someone who was CHOSEN, “to bear the heat of the day,” so that OTHERS could receive. He said of himself:

***Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you,  
and fill up that which is behind of the  
afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's  
sake, which is the church. (Col. 1:24)***

Are we willing to allow God to use us for the spiritual benefit of others? Even if it does not result in a greater reward for ourselves – but simply because we love Christ, and others? That is quite a question, isn't it? But it is love of God. Jesus said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

We are not called to Christ to try to earn a greater reward from Him. He has already given all things freely in Christ – if we would simply believe that it would stop all of this nonsense of trying to earn. We are actually called for what God can receive through His work in us – which is HIS inheritance in the saints. That may be a shocking revelation for those of us who continue to be self-occupied – following Christ for what seems to be a justifiable self-interest. But it is

the Truth – and if we understood it, we would see that it is a wonderful reality in which God wants all of His people to share. So there it is – and this is the message of this parable.

## **Chapter 31**

### **A Dwelling Place for Christ**

All of those who are in Christ are presently allowing – or not allowing -- God to build a dwelling place in them for Christ. We are doing that personally, but then by extension – by our communion with others in Christ – contributing to the building of a dwelling place for Christ in the body of Christ as a whole.

This ought not to be surprising, for Christianity at the core is, “Christ in you.” (Col. 1:27) Therefore, if am truly born from above, Christ already dwells in me – I am joined to Him in spirit through resurrection union. Thus, when we speak of building a dwelling place for Christ, we are not talking about salvation – but we are talking about what happens AFTER salvation, and because of salvation. We are really talking about spiritual growth – we are talking about increasing the dwelling place for Christ in us. We are talking about our need to decrease in order that He might increase. We are talking about becoming a person in and through whom the Christ who dwells in us can live and move and be expressed.

This fact leads us to a phrase we find a number of times in scripture: “Rewarded according to works.” What works? And what reward? We are going to discover that the work is the dwelling place in each of us for Christ. And the reward is Christ Himself at one with us in that very same dwelling place.

This is actually going on right now, although the fullness of it will be released into the eternal

ages. Right now we are a dwelling place for Christ. The purpose of God is that our capacity for Christ might be expanded – we must decrease that He might increase. To the extent that this happens, we will be able to more fully experience Christ, and be an expression and extension of Him. This can happen NOW. Thus, we do partake of what is called a “reward,” now – we can experience Christ now. But it is at the end of this age when Christ returns that there will be a full release of these realities. And Christ will dwell in and through us eternally. We will be, “rewarded” – the word is recompensed – for the WORK – the dwelling place we have built – by the eternal presence of Christ in that dwelling place. In short, “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” will become, “Christ in you, the realization of His glory.”

### **The Work and the Recompense**

In I Corinthians 3 Paul directly speaks to the idea of a reward as the outcome of ministry. But you will notice that he uses the term, “fellow laborers.” Here again we see that ministry is not only for Jesus’ sake – but within Jesus’ sake it is for others. God has chosen some to, “bear the heat of the day,” so that others may freely receive and share in what God has given them.

This does not eliminate personal responsibility. In fact, it is only if God is building a dwelling place for Christ in EACH that the body of a whole is benefited. Note verse 8 which reads, “Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.” The point Paul is making, first of all, is that despite the fact that all in the Body are fellow-laborers, the reward of EACH is based on

the, "labor," of EACH – it is based on the individual. There is no reward here by proxy.

The phrase, "rewarded according to our works," is repeated a few times in scripture. Most interpret this to mean that yes, we are saved, "by grace through faith," but we are rewarded according to our works. But does this make sense? Are we saved, "by grace through faith," only to live the Christian life – or perform Christian ministry -- on the basis of earning a reward based on works?

Does it make sense that Jesus would say, "Freely you have received, therefore free give" – to those who would minister – and then turn around and say that the same are going to be rewarded according to their works?

There are other questions about the common interpretation of, "rewarded according to our works." First of all, what works? Most limit this supposed reward to our good works, or to the good results of our ministry. But if we are going to be rewarded according to our works then ALL of our works must be taken into account – all of our outward works, inward works, thoughts, and attitudes – all of our faith and all of our unbelief. ALL of the impacts of our ministry, both good and bad, must be taken into account. ALL of this must be gathered up and tallied in order to determine the reward of each person.

So ask: If ALL of our works, and ALL of our ministry, both good and bad, are going to be taken into account to determine our reward, how much of a reward do we think we will merit?

There are some who would suggest that all of our bad works and bad ministry will be forgiven, but all of the good we have done will determine our reward. Ok, but then ask: How good is good enough?

As you can see, once we bring any part of the Christian life down to works – once we say that our eternal reward is going to be determined by our works – we are right back under the law. We may not be under the law as it pertains to salvation, but we are under the law as it pertains to our reward as saved people. And the Christian life that emerges will be essentially the SAME – that of trying to merit the things of God.

No. This cannot be. God has freely given us all things in Christ. We are to freely give all things freely to others. “Freely,” means grace. It eliminates rewards as a motivation. It eliminates the fear of the loss of rewards. We are not only, “saved by grace through faith,” but all that is of Christ is upon that same basis of GRACE.

Now, that being the case, we must still explain what God means when He says that His people will be, “rewarded according to works.” We can begin to see the Truth on this matter by turning to our passage in I Corinthians 3.

***According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. For no other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious***

***stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which [temple] ye are. (1 Cor. 3:10-17)***

If we read this entire passage it becomes clear that what is being built is a dwelling place for Jesus Christ – that dwelling place is individual believers who collectively constitute the body of Christ. That is verified by Paul's conclusion that, "You are the temple of God."

Thus, "each person's work," is not what is done TO build this dwelling place, but rather, "each person's work," is the finished dwelling place. We use this kind of language all the time. If we stand in front of a building we have constructed, we will say, "This is my work." We are referring to the building, and not to the things done TO build it.

Paul is saying that the body of Christ is a living temple of God – a dwelling place for Jesus Christ. Each of us is building out of ourselves a dwelling place for Christ, and we are likewise – through our oneness with others and through our ministry – building the same in others. That is the work that will determine the reward.

But what we are building is going to be revealed as to its true nature by fire. If what we build consists of wood, hay, or stubble – that is, temporal and corruptible materials – it is all going to be burned out of existence. But if what we are building in ourselves and others consists of eternal materials – that which is of the life of Christ – then the fire will bring that out. It will be proven eternal.

How does the reward figure into this? Well, if we are going to be rewarded according to our work, and the work is the dwelling place for Christ, then the reward is the measure of Christ that can dwell within what we have built. Sure. The reward is ACCORDING TO our work.

What could be a greater reward than Christ Himself – eternal fellowship with Him? We are building a dwelling place for Him. Or to put it another way, we are right now building an eternal relationship with Him.

### **A Dwelling Place for Christ**

Paul tells us, “let each man take heed HOW he builds.” So ask: How do we build a dwelling place for Jesus Christ?

The answer is simpler than we might expect. We build a dwelling place for Christ by abandoning ourselves to Him by faith -- for whatever it takes and for whatever He desires. This is an inward surrender before it is anything outward. And through ministry we help build a dwelling place for Christ in others by teaching this Truth and joining each other in Christ by faith.



We are already becoming a dwelling place for Jesus Christ – or we are not. To build a dwelling place for Christ, we must decrease – our old, “dwelling place,” must be torn down through the work of the Cross – so that He can increase in us. To the extent that we lose ourselves to Him we will experience Him as our life – and be for Him a dwelling place. And to the extent that we edify others in Christ we are building in them. This is about what Christ is becoming in a person.

The, “finished building” – one that will pass through into the eternal ages – is one that proclaims, “Yet not I, but Christ!” Clearly, this is NOT about how wonderful we are. Rather, it is about how wonderful He is – and whether we have unconditionally lost ourselves to Him.

Let’s gather this up: The temple, or dwelling place in each believer, is what is being built. Thus, the dwelling place that is being built determines the extent that eternal fellowship with Christ is possible. The eternal fellowship with Christ – the capacity to experience Christ Himself – IS the reward.

But Paul is also telling us that the true nature of what is being built is going to be tested by fire – and it will be revealed. If what has been built is merely religious and of natural man it will not be able to pass through the fire. Thus, there will be no dwelling place for Christ that remains. But if what is built is of Jesus Christ then the fire will prove it to be eternal.

We need not push off this testing by fire to the last judgment. Of course, that will be the ultimate. But this testing by fire is going on right

now. Our faith and relationship with Christ is right now being proven – as is anything we have built into the lives of others. Trials will expose our spiritual life as being fake or as being real. The fire will expose what we have built in others as fake or as real.

God is always redemptive. Thus, if the fire shows our faith to be fake – if the fire exposes our lives to be built of religious materials -- confess it and begin to allow God to build in us that which is eternal. For if the fire exposes that our life is built upon that which is merely religious, or built upon self interest, and we keep building back up what God wants to tear down, in the end we will own it. There will be no room in us for Christ. We might nevertheless be saved – as Paul says – but what a loss!

### **The Goal**

The goal of the Christian life is to know and experience Christ, resulting in the glory of God being made manifest in and through us. The temple is what is being built – the temple is the work -- and the fullness of Christ that is able to dwell within that temple IS the reward that corresponds TO that work. To the degree that we become a dwelling place for God's will and glory – this will be the degree to which we will be able to experience Christ and experience all of the spiritual blessings that are found in Him. Thus, our reward is Christ Himself – and all that this means by extension.

Once we gain an understanding of some of these passages having to do with rewards we should realize that God does not keep score. He is not

tallying our good works vs. our bad works. In fact, this isn't about what we DO at all – as far as serving, preaching, teaching, or any other performed works. Rather, it is about relationship with Christ. In the end, that is what is going to matter. What matters right now is our relationship with Christ in grace and Truth – in spirit and Truth – and whether we are being built into a temple in which Christ can dwell forever.

## **Chapter 32**

### **The Prayers that Paul Prayed**

In the last chapter we saw the travail of the Lord as expressed by the apostle Paul:

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

We also saw the prayer of Paul for the church, which, as noted, expresses the desire of God for His church:

***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....(Eph. 1:15-18)***

Christianity is, "Christ in you." (Col. 1:27) The means by which Christ dwells in the believer is through spiritual union – "He that is joined to the Lord is on spirit with Him." (I Cor. 6:17) The Christian life is a progressive discovery of the Christ who dwells in the believer – resulting in an inward realization of Him that will come to govern the whole person -- through the renewing of the mind according to the Truth -- unto faith and obedience. This is what these passages are talking about. It is the purpose of God and the travail of God through Paul.

We have asked the question: Are these desires of the Lord OUR desires? Are the interests of God our interests? Do we pray that God would bring to pass His will as expressed by these passages? In addition, do we teach these Truths – these desires of God – and allow God to use us to build up the body of Christ in these matters? And as a foundation, are we abandoned to Jesus Christ that He might bring us personally into these realities?

These are questions that ALL believers need to answer – but especially those who are entrusted to be leaders among God’s people. They are not trivial matters, or merely issues that are among many others in the purpose of God. They are THE WILL OF GOD. They are THE PURPOSE OF GOD. Therefore, anyone who is in a position of leadership in the body of Christ ought to have these matters as the purpose of their ministry in the name of Jesus Christ. For if we do not, we are not fulfilling the calling to which we have been called.

Does that seem to be too extreme a statement? Well, it is not. These purposes are repeated a number of times in the NT – not only in direct teaching, but also in other prayers of Paul:

***For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being***

***fruitful in every good work, and increasing  
in the knowledge of God. (Col 1:9-13)***

These prayers and travail of Paul are expressive of the teaching that is all through the NT. Sure. They represent Christianity. But let's pin this down so that there can be no misunderstanding. If these passages express the will of God for His people, then we can be certain that God wants to work these realities into His people by His spirit. Therefore, any ministry – through ANY member of the body of Christ – that is OF the spirit of God – is going to be working towards these purposes. Not maybe. But absolutely.

There are yet OTHER prayers recorded in the NT by the apostle Paul. You will note that in them we find much the SAME THEME and desire for the church:

***For this cause I bow my knees unto the  
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the  
whole family in heaven and earth is named,  
That he would grant you, according to the  
riches of his glory, to be strengthened with  
might by his Spirit in the inner man; That  
Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that  
ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May  
be able to comprehend with all saints what  
is the breadth, and length, and depth, and  
height; And to know the love of Christ,  
which passes knowledge, that ye might be  
filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph 3:14-  
19)***

***And this I pray, that your love may abound  
yet more and more in knowledge and in all***

***judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. (Phil 1:9-12)***

And then there is this prayer of Jesus Himself:

***These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:1-3)***

If the body of Christ would drop all of the nonsense and heresy of this day and age and return to Jesus Christ – not to merely doctrines about Him – but to the Living Christ that dwells in us, the church would be back on the right path. We would not only begin to know the Truth, but we would be set free.

### **Gathering Up These Truths**

If these things are what God inspired Paul to pray, then all believers ought to be praying the same – and those in leadership ought to be praying the same, and have the same Truths as the focus of their ministry.

So in brief, what do these prayers reveal would be the work of the Holy Spirit – the desire of God

for His people? Keep in mind that these impacts are to be experienced by individuals who are in the body of Christ – and then because individuals are experiencing Christ – the body as a whole will be an expression of Him.

THAT WE MIGHT SEE AND KNOW GOD IN AN INWARD WAY. "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... (Ephesians 1) "That Christ might be formed (inwardly realized) in you." (Gal. 4)

THAT WE MIGHT KNOW THE WILL OF GOD FOR US. "That you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." (Colossians 1)

THAT WE MIGHT KNOW THE ETERNAL PURPOSES FOR WHICH GOD HAS CALLED US TO CHRIST. That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. (Ephesians 1)

THAT WE MIGHT KNOW THE POWER, VICTORY, AND MEANING, OF RESURRECTION LIFE. "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." (Ephesians 1)

THAT ALL THAT CHRIST HAS DONE MIGHT RESULT IN A LIFE LIVED TO HIS GLORY. "That ye



might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." (Colossians 1)

These things are what Paul prayed that God would make possible in His people through the work of the Holy Spirit. In you will notice, they are all about SEEING and KNOWING God, and His Son, Jesus Christ. They are all about SEEING and KNOWING the eternal purposes of God. But more than that, this is about people actually coming into these realities through Jesus Christ.

This work of the Lord through His spirit is verified if we simply turn to John, chapters 14 through 16. In the words of Jesus that we find there, we are given seven purposes for which the spirit would be given – and was given in Acts 2. So again – this is what God desires to do in His people by His spirit, and therefore, it is what any ministry that is of the spirit of God will seek to do.

ABIDE IN US FOREVER. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever. Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but ye know him; for he dwells WITH you, and shall be IN you. (John 14:16-17)

TEACH YOU ALL THINGS AND APPLY WHAT HE TEACHES. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to

your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26)

REVEAL THE PERSON OF JESUS. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me." (John 15:26)

BRING CONVICTION AND ILLUMINATION OF THE TRUTH TO BOTH THE SAVED AND UNSAVED. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." (John 16:7-8)

GUIDE US INTO ALL TRUTH – THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13)

REVEAL TO US THE ETERNAL THINGS OF GOD. "For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come." (John 16:13)

REVEAL ALL THAT IS FOUND IN CHRIST. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." (John 16:14)

Now, having reviewed all of these passages, the question that MUST again be asked: Are WE interested in that which God is interested? Do we pray what Paul prayed – for ourselves and others?

In our church, are these things the goal? Do we hear messages on these matters? Do we preach messages on these matters? If not, then WHY NOT?

I would submit that God has these things recorded so that there can be no confusion or question as to what He wants to do in His church. God puts a MANDATE on them.

### **The Purpose of Ministry**

Let's add one more passage from Ephesians:

***And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: (Eph 4:11-13)***

Here we are told the purpose for ALL ministry:

1. FOR THE EDIFICATION OR BUILDING UP OF PEOPLE IN JESUS CHRIST.
2. UNTO THE UNITY OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST.
3. UNTO THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST – UNTO KNOWING HIM.
4. UNTO SPIRITUAL MATURITY AND FULLNESS IN CHRIST.

You will note that all of these impacts are individual and personal before they are corporate.

If the individuals are not experiencing Christ in these ways then the body cannot be doing so.

It should be abundantly clear at this point as to the purpose for which God sent the spirit as the means by which Christ dwells in us. That purpose is that we must KNOW HIM – which in the NT Greek means to EXPERIENCE Him; realize Him. The results will be fellowship with Him in His death – that we must be set free from the old man of sin – and fellowship with Him in resurrection union. All of this is to be unto the glory of God.

## **Chapter 33**

### **Preaching the Truth**

As we have seen, it is the calling and responsibility of those in leadership to preach the Truth without compromise. But therein lies a huge necessity: Those preaching must know the Truth for themselves. Those teaching others must themselves be in the process of coming into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. Otherwise, what will be preached is the particular version of Christian that has been learned and adopted by the preacher. Instead of the Truth in Christ, it will be the truth of the denomination or leader – which at best will be the dead letter, and at worst, error and heresy.

Some of the most adamant preachers are the biggest heretics. There are those who preach with supposed authority – with uncompromising conviction – but who are preaching error. There have always been impressive preachers of heresy. They are able to sway thousands. And once thousands begin to come under the lies of the enemy, many more will be convinced that it is of God – because they cannot imagine that so many professing Christians could be deceived.

The NT gives warnings about all of these possibilities. But even though those warnings apply to all who would HEAR preaching, those warnings are all the more applicable to those who would do the preaching. For if I am deceived, ignorant, or blind to Christ, and I have embraced a leadership position in the church, what I preach will be a product of my own faith, knowledge of

Christ, and experience. A bad tree cannot produce good fruit. Those are sobering thoughts, but they need to be taken seriously.

One of the places where Paul issues a warning if found in Colossians 2:

***And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, [so] walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. (Col. 2:4-9)***

In this passage, Paul is drawing a contrast -- and attaching a warning. But first take note that he is writing to believers – not to pagans. Thus, the context to which he is speaking is Christianity. He is addressing people whom he says have received Christ, but need to be warned about false teaching that would lead them into, “another gospel,” and a false Christianity. And as noted, this would include leaders who would likewise be deceived, and then pass it on to their congregation.

Have you ever noticed how every so many years there emerges within the church what could be

called, "a spiritual fad?" We might call such things, "movements." There is the, "word of faith," movement that has done so much damage. There is the, "purpose driven movement." There was the, "holy laughter movement." There are many others. Some of these movements are doctrinal – and some of them are perverted, such as the affirmation of same-sex marriage. But once these movements get going, leadership begins to parrot them, and the impact upon the church can be enormous.

You will note that the leadership is at fault for what is allowed in their churches. Instead of being those who know Jesus Christ in a way that can minister to others, many have become the path way into their congregation for error. Of course there are reasons for this – reasons found in unbelief, ignorance, personal gain, and peer pressure. But anyone who embraces a leadership position in the body of Christ has NO BUSINESS falling prey to such evil.

That is why Paul says BEWARE. That ought to get our attention – it is in the inspired Word of God. Then he tells us what it is that we ought to beware of: Being spoiled -- that is, of having our faith corrupted by any philosophy which is vain deceit. Philosophy which is vain deceit is any Christian tradition, line of reasoning and argument, doctrinal construct, or version of Christianity that we might embrace INSTEAD of the Person of Jesus Christ.

It is possible to embrace a Christianized philosophy that begins to alter the mind and understanding to where it not only makes sense,

but which a person begins to read INTO the Bible. It might even be contrary to scripture. But once a person becomes, "spoiled," through such teaching, they will begin to read the Bible in a way that agrees with false teaching – even though the Bible is contrary to that false teaching.

Every cult, every false movement, every false teacher, and every form of, "another gospel," points to scripture to support their errors. ALL of them do. Even the Roman Catholics – who openly admit that they believe that their church tradition is equal to scripture – they also point to the Bible as their authority for elevating their tradition to the level of scripture. Calvinists have what they claim is an air-tight doctrinal construct for the heresy they teach – and have had 500 plus years creating their cut and paste answers to what they know are objections to what they teach. Televangelists spew heresy with a Bible in their hand to back it up. And today we have abominations like homosexuality, same sex marriage, and open adultery being celebrated in churches – and in most cases supported by twisting scripture. And needless to say, there is disagreement among professing Christians about almost every single foundational doctrine of the Bible – including even the issue of salvation itself. Why has this happened, and how does it continue?

Every single false church, denomination, cult, or false movement, has their highly educated teachers and ministers. They have all studied the Bible – usually by going to a seminary, or sitting under the teaching, of the particular false church



to which they belong. They get doctorates. They perhaps have a large following and ministry. Many are nice people; sincere people; seem to project the love of God. They are able to present philosophical arguments through the use of scripture that they have learned to present – and to many, what they present makes sense. There is a great appeal in that.

Do we realize that in order for the lies and deception of the enemy to work that there must be a certain framework of Truth? Sure. For example, there will be teaching that Jesus Christ is Lord. Or that God is sovereign. Or that Jesus died for sin. Or that God has a great plan of Redemption. Few would argue with any of those statements because they are the Truth – they are what the Bible SAYS. But anyone can read the Bible and tell you what it SAYS. The question is what the Bible MEANS by what it says – and it is here that the falsehoods are introduced. For example, the Bible says, “God desire for all men to be saved and come into the knowledge of the Truth.” Calvinism agrees that the Bible says this, but then they explain what they demand it MEANS: That God desires for all KINDS of men to be saved. They have to make this verse MEAN this because they must maintain their traditional doctrine of LIMITED atonement and unconditional election. Thus, Calvinists use the same Bible as everyone else to, “prove,” what is a false Christianity and another gospel.

It is possible to, “prove,” almost any false doctrine by bringing TO the Bible a mind that has already been impacted or corrupted by religious philosophy. Every false doctrine has it’s experts

and representatives who speak with authority and passion. The average person cannot imagine that someone who is that highly educated, and that sincere, and that certain, and is able to present what they believe with such eloquence – the average person cannot imagine that such a one could be totally deceived. But they can be, and many are. The reason is that they have NOT come into a real experience and knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ.

The Mormons are great examples. They are nice people. They focus on the family and therefore most have wonderful families. But they believe horrible error. They believe that Jesus Christ was originally the angel brother of Lucifer. They believe we are to become gods as God is God – and create our own planet and do as God is doing. But if you do not know Jesus Christ you could have a vulnerability to this kind of heresy – and begin to be corrupted by it. You might begin to find “proof” in the Bible for these errors.

I once sat and listened to a supposed Christian minister teach that believers must keep the law of God, not only to be saved, but to continue to be saved. He taught this error by going through the epistle of Paul to the Galatians. Almost every verse in that epistle was contrary to what he was teaching – but because of the error that was in him, and because his mind had been corrupted, he was able to read into Galatians and make it mean what he already believed. He was a nice guy. He was practically a walking encyclopedia of the Bible – the Bible as it was made to mean by his tradition and false concepts. But there he was, fully convinced -- but fully deceived.

There is only ONE TRUTH. The Bible is the written Truth. But Jesus is the Living Truth. Therefore, the two will always agree. God wants to reveal to us His Son – and as He does so this will always agree with the Bible.

### **A False Knowledge of God**

But this brings us to what is perhaps the greatest harm of all when it comes to heresy and another gospel. That harm is not merely a wrong interpretation of scripture. The real harm is a false knowledge of God. A false knowledge of God is deception. Indeed, a false knowledge of God is often the reason why people read into the Bible their error.

Every doctrine you might mention says something about the nature and character of God. It says something about His attitude and intentions towards humanity. For example, a Jesus who died for ALL is not the same Jesus who died only for SOME. The God who elected some to heaven,, but many to hell before they were born, is not the same God who sent His Son that WHOSOEVER would believe might be saved. We are talking about a false gospel and a false Christianity – but that is because we are talking about a false God. Likewise, the God who commands that you tithe under the promise of financial blessing and under the threat of financial curse is not the God of all grace revealed in the Bible. That is ANOTHER God. The God who promises healing, salvation or a loved one, and financial prosperity, if you send a check into a TV evangelist is not the true God. The God of Mormonism, of Jehovah

Witnesses, of Christian Science – this is not the true God.

Does it matter? Jesus said, “God must be worshipped in spirit and in Truth.” Knowing the Truth sets us free – and Jesus is the Truth. If Truth sets us free then what does error do? The answer ought to be obvious. Truth matters because Truth reveals the God and the Christ in Whom we put our faith – and what we believe about God will determine how we live, how we think, and impact all that we are. It will impact relationships. And most of all, what we believe will ultimately greatly impact what we BECOME.

Each believer must decide if Truth matters to them. Do we care? I ask that because in this day and age Truth has more and more been buried beneath an avalanche of tradition, philosophy, emotional experiences, and in many cases, utter nonsense. What Paul warned against is pretty much ignored – to our own peril.

Well, as noted, if there is one common thread among ALL churches – and certainly this is the case with false churches – it is that they ALL claim to follow the Bible. They ALL do. In fact, most people in cults know what the Bible says better than people in mainstream churches. Many can express what they believe much better. But it is all deception.

What is the problem here? Are people just stupid? No. And as noted, they are NOT ignorant of what the Bible says. Do they lack sincerity? No. Some people have died for heresy. The problem is exactly what Paul said it

was: People have become deceived by Christianized philosophy which has appealed to their vulnerabilities. But this has been made possible because those folks have not experienced and come into a realization of Christ.

## **Christian Unity**

Christian unity is not possible if everyone is simply left to their brain power, upbringing, religious training, and personal bias to figure out the Bible. You cannot become born from above on the basis of any of those things – let alone achieve Christian unity. Christian unity is the result of many who personally and individually know Christ – and have experienced Him. They all know the SAME Christ. Thus, the doctrines and teachings that emerge will agree and will proclaim the Truth about Him.

Note Paul's emphasis upon the Person of Christ. He warns against being spoiled by that which is, "not after Christ." In contrast to philosophy and religious tradition, Paul declares that IN CHRIST – the Person – dwell all of the fullness of DIETY. In other words, Christ is God, and in Christ is all of the Truth. It is only through knowing Christ that the mind is renewed according to the Truth.

Many have always taught that it is through the scripture that our minds are renewed. But again – ALL false teachers read scripture. Most false Christianity exalts scripture. And they do not know the Truth – indeed, they disagree with each other. The Mormons disagree with the Jehovah Witnesses; the Calvinists disagree with the

charismatics; the Roman Catholics disagree with the Protestants – and on and on it goes. Is the solution to debate? Has that ever solved anything? Is the solution to set up more seminaries for our particular version of the gospel? Has that ever solved anything? Is the solution to study harder, preach louder, and grow bigger churches? Nope. All that has been done, is being done, and will continue to be done. It is all vain deceit. The only solution is to personally know Christ – to come into what the Bible calls an inward realization of Him. (this is the meaning of the Greek word translated, "formed," in Gal.4:19)

But you see, the visible Christian church has been so corrupted by tradition, philosophy, money, the desire for prestige, supposed growth, and intellectual pride – so corrupted that for the most part we do not even know what it means to come to realize or know Christ. We think it is about knowing doctrines. Or about knowing the Bible. But again – if we bring to the Bible a mind that has already been spoiled by philosophy and tradition we are likely going to find what we bring IN the Bible. Something has to break this pattern. Something has to shatter it. And only a personal encounter with Christ can do that – which will include the work of the personal Cross. And of course, this is exactly what the Bible itself states. It is exactly what Paul is exhorting the church to do.

### **The Only Solution**

Where do we get started in this matter? How do we come into a personal experience of Christ? Well, we do what the Bible tells us to

do: Lose ourselves to Him. We can begin to lose ourselves to Him by asking Him to do whatever it takes to bring us into this personal experience of His Son. Then when God does do whatever it takes, we do whatever it takes to continue to lose ourselves to Him. There is nothing new about this. It is the unconditional surrender of faith. This should be standard teaching for the believer.

Come into a realization and revelation of Christ, Who is the Living Truth, and the Bible will come alive -- for it is the SAME Truth in written form. And the Biblical Truth you believe will be affirmed and enlarged. And any errors will be corrected.

The reason we believe error is because of the error in us -- because of the ignorance in us. Thus, we must not only know Christ, but lose ourselves to Him. We lose our lives to find Him as our life, and in His life is the LIGHT. (Jn. 1:4) If we lose our lives by picking up our cross daily the error in us will be exposed and we will be set free into a relationship with Christ that is Truth.

## **Chapter 34**

### **Christ in You**

What is Christianity?

Have you ever asked that question? Have you ever discovered the answer? In discussing this question we will both review and bring together all that is within the pages of this book.

We are going to see that when you gather it all up and bring it down to its most simple answer, that the answer to the question, "What is Christianity?" is simply this:

***Christ in you, the hope of glory.***

Now, that is a quote from Colossians 1:27, of course, and there are many other verses in the Bible which we could pull out and perhaps use as the answer to the question, "What is Christianity?" I happen to think that Col. 1:27 is the best answer. I believe it is the best answer in one sentence which can be found in the Bible. In the end, Christianity is, "Christ in us, the hope of glory."

If you are a Christian, it is because you are in Christ and Christ is in you. There is a great deal which goes into that -- and a lot that comes out of it. We have to include in this Truth how you come to be a Christian -- and we certainly have to look into what the impact is of having Christ in you. What is the meaning of Christianity -- and what does it result in? I would actually submit that most of the New Testament is an explanation



to believers of what Christianity is. Isn't that true?

In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, John is going to talk about this. He is going to talk about what Christianity is based on -- and will even get into the fact that it is, "Christ in us, the hope of glory."

I want to discuss verses 1 through 18, and skip the ones about the Baptist. John writes in John 1:1:

***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.***

So right away, John sets the tone or the theme for the rest of the gospel: The Person and identity of Jesus Christ -- who He is. Then of course, he is going to talk a lot about who He is IN US.

John goes on to say:

***The same was in the beginning with God.***

There you have a foundational Christian doctrine that Jesus is God, and that He existed before He became a man.

Verse 3 says:

***All things were made by Him. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.***

How many understand that Jesus is the creator -- because the Father created all things THROUGH Him -- as it is stated in Colossians 1:16-17? He is that.

Verse 4 continues:

***In Him was life and the life was the light of men.***

John is telling us that Jesus Christ is the personification of all life, light, and truth for the believer. He doesn't say it outright here -- though he does later -- but Jesus is life, light, and Truth IN US. It would be of no value to us unless He dwells in us. So, he is beginning to get to that here.

John then states:

***And the light shined in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. (John 1:5)***

Now, skipping verses 6-8, we return to Jesus in verses 9 and 10. John says:

***He was the true light which lights every man -- (Jesus is He) Who comes into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not.***

"The true light who lights every man," is clearly CHRIST IN US, the hope of glory. In fact, the next couple of verses speak directly to the fact

that Christianity is, "Christ in us the hope of glory." John writes:

***But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on His name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)***

Note the wording here very carefully, "For as many as RECEIVED Him..." Sometimes I think that when people say they have, "received Christ," they simply mean that they assented to the fact that He is the Savior. No. "Received," means exactly what the word, "received," indicates. To RECEIVE Christ means that you open yourself to Him and His grace -- such that now He comes and DWELLS IN YOU -- you are UNITED with Him and made one with Him in spirit. (I Cor. 6:17) This is what it means to RECEIVE Christ -- and if you hear what I am saying -- this is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

John is also saying that if we receive Him, we have, "the right," at that point -- as we begin our journey -- to come into full sonship. All of this is dependent upon that initial faith, as John says, "on His Name."

So right here in verse 12, not to mention verse 13, you have a description of, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." This is the new birth. It is what happens when you believe on Christ: You become indwelt by Him. This is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." You become born from above.

John goes on to write in verse 14:

***And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.***

Even though he is speaking of Jesus becoming man, there is also a principle here: Today when we receive Christ, He comes to dwell in OUR flesh. This Truth is also found in 1 John, chapter four, where it says, "Jesus having come in the flesh." "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," He lived, he died, He was raised, He ascended to heaven. But because of all of that, today this very same Word, who is a Person, comes to dwell in OUR flesh and blood -- by being united with us in spirit. Again, Christianity is "Christ in us, the hope of glory."

Then after mentioning John the Baptist again, we read in 16:

***And of His fullness have we all received, grace for grace.***

And again, HOW do we receive Him? Well, we are united with Him in spirit as he comes to DWELL IN US.

Then, he says in verse 17:

***For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.***

And, we might add, "came by Jesus Christ," TO BE IN US.

John concludes the introduction to his gospel by writing:

***No man has seen God at any time, the Only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.***

So if we gather together all of these verses here in John 1 we have the meaning Christianity. Christianity is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27)

We are also going to read, in Colossians 1, what Paul wrote next: WHOM we preach. Again, the gospel is more than a message about a Person. It is a PERSON revealed. It is a PERSON ministered. When everything is said and done, true ministry is CHRIST MINISTERED.

### **The Great Mystery**

Christianity is, "Christ in us, the hope of glory." Let's turn to Colossians 1 and see the emphasis that the apostle Paul puts on the fact that Christ dwells in the believer. Begin reading there in Colossians 1:25. In this verse, Paul is going to give a description of his ministry. The statement which he makes in verse 25 is quite an immense and incredible statement and we need to take note of it. Paul says there:

***I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you.***

So Paul is saying that he was made a minister according to the will and purpose of God. He says that the ministry and message that he was given -- the Truth which he was given -- was given to him from God for the Body of Christ.

But in the latter half of verse twenty-five, he also says that his ministry -- and the revelation therein -- FULFILLS the Word of God. This is an immense statement and is in full agreement with much of what we have been seeing out of John 1, as we compared John the Baptist -- as the last prophet of the Old Covenant -- over and against the New Covenant -- which is brought in and personified in Jesus Christ. The Old Covenant was a type and a shadow of Jesus Christ. (And thus, did not completely fulfill the Word of God.) But the New Covenant is Christ Himself, and by fulfillment -- "Christ in us, the hope of glory." (He is the complete fulfillment of the Word of God.)

How many see that once we understand the differences between the covenants, we easily see that even though the Old Covenant was the word of God, it did not fulfill completely the Word of God which God has for man. No, it was a type and a shadow. The Old Covenant, as was John its representative, was as a voice crying in the wilderness. It sufficed; it fulfilled a purpose -- but it was not the complete fulfillment of God's purpose. It was not the complete fulfillment of God's redemptive purpose in His Son. It simply paved the way for that.

Well, Paul is saying much the same thing here. He is stating that the Old Covenant did NOT completely fulfill the word of God -- but that it just paved the way for that fulfillment in Christ. Then he says, "the revelation which God gave to me and which I now share with you", DOES fulfill the Word of God. So, we are talking here, through the apostle Paul, of a revelation and a Truth that brings to fulfillment everything that God has wanted to do from the beginning -- going all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

Now, this is an incredible statement. I think verse 25 is usually overlooked and we just read right past it -- and do not understand that what Paul is about to announce here as his ministry is THE MESSAGE that GOD has given to FULFILL the Word and the purpose of God in mankind. What could be more important?

We need to keep this in mind as we go on. So, let's again read verse 25 and move forward. He says:

***I am made a minister according to the purpose and dispensation of God which is given to me, for you, to fulfill the word of God, even the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations but now is made manifest to His saints.***

So again -- take note: This tremendous revelation and Truth fulfills completely the word of God. Therefore, it fulfills completely the purpose of God from humanity.

You will also note that Paul now speaks of this as the MYSTERY which has been, "hidden from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to the saints." In other words, these Truths; these revelations, were NOT fully revealed under the Old Covenant. They were there in type and shadow. Indeed, everything Paul taught in the New Testament is in the Old Covenant in type and shadow -- one way or another. That is a fact, but because it was there in type and shadow it was like a mystery. It was a great Truth and revelation that God had for mankind -- but which had not yet been fully revealed. So Paul says, "THIS is the mystery" -- this message which he has been given -- this revelation that fulfills the word of God IS this mystery which had been hidden from ages and generations -- but NOW is made manifest to the saints.

So what is this mystery which was hidden -- and was only in the Old Covenant in type and shadow -- but now in the New Covenant fulfills the word of God? What is this mystery that NOW -- in the New Covenant -- is fully revealed and made manifest? Paul answers in verse 27 -- and I am going to skip right to the sentence. This mystery and this Truth which fulfills the word of God is:

***Christ in you, the hope of glory.***

Now, can we see why the answer to the question, "What is Christianity," is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory?" It is because everything is dependent upon CHRIST IN US. You cannot be a Christian unless Christ is in you. You aren't born again unless Christ is in you. You don't have life at all unless Christ is in you. There is no way to know



Truth unless you know the Christ who is in you. The purpose of God in this age is to form Christ in us -- and to bring us to an inward realization of Him. Yes, we can attach other descriptions and definitions, bring in lots of other verses -- and we ought to -- but in the final analysis: "What is Christianity?" At the core, Christianity is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Paul, in this passage, is saying that CHRIST IN YOU is the revelation which fulfills the word of God. This is the mystery which was hid from ages and generations -- but now is made manifest to the saints: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

### **Hidden, But Now Revealed**

Paul says in verse 26 that this great mystery -- this great revelation of, "Christ in you" -- was hidden from ages and generations past. We can see from that statement why, for example, when we talked about the covenants, I was able to clearly state that under the Old Covenant no one was born again. Under the Old Covenant, no one had Christ dwelling in them. The Spirit of God was IN no one. Yes, Jesus Christ was, by His spirit, WITH people before Acts 2. It was only after Acts 2 that Christ, by the Spirit, dwelt IN people. (see also John 14:17) Paul is affirming that right here.

The Truth which God has given me -- Paul is saying -- fulfills the Word of God. It only makes sense that, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," fulfills the word of God. Everything God has been doing throughout all of these centuries was toward that goal -- to have a people in whom

Christ dwells. To have a people through whom, and in whom, God could work and reveal Himself in this age -- and then throughout the eternal ages. This was, "the mystery," which was revealed to the saints -- only through the New Covenant once Jesus Christ was ascended, and then came to dwell in His people by His spirit.

So, Christ in you, the hope of glory IS Christianity -- and summarizes the purpose of God. Jesus Christ IN US is the New Covenant.

Paul writes here, in Colossians 1, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," and then goes on to say:

***Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man mature in Christ Jesus.***

So Paul preached the PERSON. And you will note that he includes in the core Truth of, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," the fact that it is the purpose of God to form Christ in people -- through our coming into a knowledge of Him. Sure. It is the purpose of God that we may grow up in Jesus and be mature in Jesus Christ.

He says:

***This is what I labor unto, striving according to His working, which works in me mightily. (John 1:29)***

Should those who minister Christ do less? Should those in ministry have another focus than that of Paul? Read his words.

Paul is saying in verse 29 that God is doing a work in him, so that through that work in him, he can minister to the body of Christ. This is how the body of Christ is supposed to function. He says it a different way in II Corinthians 4, where he says, "The work of the cross produces death in me -- so out of that ministry -- life can flow unto you." (see II Cor. 4:10-12) It is the same thought.

### **Made One Spirit With Him**

How does Christ dwell in the believer? We saw in an earlier chapter HOW. Obviously, this is not a physical indwelling. It is a spiritual indwelling. Indeed, we have our answer as to how Christ dwells in the believer in 1 Corinthians 6:17:

***He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.***

Now, that word, "joined," in 1 Corinthians 6:17, in the New Testament Greek, means, "to be glued or cemented." We can see from this that there is a tremendous ONENESS being described here -- howbeit a oneness IN SPIRIT -- not a physical oneness. This is how Jesus Christ dwells in us -- or if you prefer the other terminology which Paul uses -- this is how the believer dwells IN Christ. Ourselves in Christ, or Christ in us -- it is the same Truth from two different perspectives: We are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him. This is how we are in Christ.

When we put our faith in Jesus, solely by His grace He joins us to Himself in spirit -- and we, at that point, are one with Him. The ramifications of this are eternal and mean everything. For example, "Christ in us, the hope of glory," is our life. When we are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him, we are joined to the One who said, "I am the life;" "I am the resurrection and the life." How many understand therefore, that we are alive eternally only because we are joined to the Lord? In other words, eternal life is not a THING God gives to us. It is not some kind of a legal classification that God pins on us. No. Eternal life is a Person -- and we are joined and made one with him in spirit. This is why we are alive and have eternal life. We have it IN HIM.

Note that we are joined to the Lord in spirit ONLY in this age. We are not joined to Him physically. Neither is our soul or natural man joined to Him. These dimensions remain outside of resurrection union with Christ – although it is the will of God that they become governed by Christ. We call this SANCTIFICATION.

### **All Given in Christ**

God Almighty does not give to us a bunch of THINGS because we put our faith in Christ. What God does is give to us CHRIST HIMSELF -- in Whom are all things that God has to give. Jesus Christ IS the alpha and the omega. Jesus Christ is all that God has to give — "I AM the life...I AM the truth...I AM the light...I AM the Good Shepherd...I AM the door...and the list goes on and on and on. The Bible shows that Jesus Christ

-- His very Person -- is ALL that God has for man. God has placed in Jesus Christ everything which God Almighty has to give to humanity. ALL is in Him -- and there is nothing God has for us which is outside of Him. Period!

Romans 8:32 says, "God has freely given us ALL THINGS in His Son." Even here, in Colossians, if we read down through chapter two, we would see that once Paul establishes the Truth of, "Christ in us, the hope of glory," he goes on in chapter 2 to absolutely emphasize that ALL is given in Christ -- indeed, he WARNS Christians against seeking or thinking that we can find anything of God outside of the Person of Christ who dwells in us.

For example, in Colossians 2:3, speaking of Christ, Paul writes, "In Whom are hid ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." In Christ, are ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. You don't go somewhere else to find the treasure; to find knowledge, or to find wisdom. They are in a Person -- and if you are a believer, that Person is IN YOU. Therefore, if you want knowledge -- if you want wisdom -- you have to come into an inward knowledge of Jesus. Christ has to be unfolded in you, and to you, and then all that is IN HIM -- including wisdom and knowledge -- will be unfolded as He is unfolded.

You can't cut right to THINGS that you believe God has for you. You have to get into business with Jesus Christ because everything God has for you is IN HIM. Paul actually warns throughout Colossians 2 against departing from this Truth --

he warns against departing from the Truth that Christ in us is the source of all. He says:

***In Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say LEST any man should beguile you with enticing words. (Col. 2:3-4)***

Yet isn't this what is happening on a wide-spread scale today? People are being offered the things of God, help and gifts, through every other imaginable gimmick and religious ritual except through the Person -- who supposedly dwells in them. Paul makes it perfectly clear that if you and I are not coming to know Jesus Christ -- and coming into an inward realization of Him -- then we will not come into the things of God which are IN Christ. We are going to get deceived trying to find those things elsewhere.

I absolutely believe that the reason there is so much deception in the church today is because this one Truth -- which had been hidden but now is revealed: Christ in you -- continues to be hidden because of false teaching and false teachers. It is also because of our own ignorance. God has preached this from cover to cover in the scriptures..."Christ in you, the hope of glory"...and the fact that He is all that God has given to humanity. But we've ignored this -- and we are blinded to Him -- and once we neglect this Truth of Christ in us, Satan is going to offer us other options and substitutes for Him. This is where Christianity, in large part, is off today: Substitutes for Jesus; substitutes for the cross of Christ; substitutes for the purpose of God. These abound.

## **The Fullness of God**

Paul goes on in Colossians 2 to show what is made possible because we are united with Christ and made one with Him in spirit. He says in verse 9:

***For in Christ dwells all the fullness of God bodily... all the fullness of Deity bodily."***

So again -- just as Romans 8:32 says that we are freely given all things in Jesus Christ -- here we see that stated another way: "In Christ dwells all the fullness of God." How many understand that you cannot get any more full than that? How many understand that if all the fullness of God dwells in Christ, then there is no more of God that Jesus Christ needs to get, or to seek.

Now, it should be no surprise that in Christ dwells all the fullness of God; that all the fullness of Deity dwelt in Him bodily. But then Paul says, "Christ is IN US -- and that we are complete IN HIM." Notice: Paul is saying that we are complete in Christ -- but has already stated that in Christ dwells all the fullness of God. Therefore, he is telling us that if Christ is in us -- that we have in us THROUGH Christ everything that God has to give -- everything that God has to give of Himself.

Again, don't think about this in terms of THINGS. Think about it in terms of being united in spirit with the Person in Whom are all things.

I don't know about you, but when I consider that all the fullness of God Almighty dwelt in Christ -- and then this same Christ dwells in me -- it is an awesome thought. This makes me to understand why Paul is able to say without apology, "You are complete in Christ." In fact, we read in John 1:16, "Of His fullness have we received and grace for grace." So, there it is again. We receive the fullness of Christ, and Christ is the fullness of God. Thus, you cannot get any more complete, or filled to the full, than you are if Christ is in you.

If we really believed this -- that we are complete in Christ -- it would revolutionize our thinking about the Christian life. For example, we would no longer be out there seeking God for other things, or for other experiences, so that we can supposedly have all that He has for us. We wouldn't be doing that because we would realize that we already have all in Christ. So, instead of seeking God for secondary experiences, subsequent experiences to salvation -- such as those taught in the charismatic or Pentecostal churches today -- we would realize that God has already given us all He has to give in His Son.

Note: The Christian life is never you and I trying to get MORE of Christ from God, or a matter of us trying to get more of the Spirit of God from God. No. The Christian life is a matter of being brought into a discovery, revelation, and experience of the Christ who ALREADY dwells in the believer -- and in Whom are ALL things. Again, God has wrapped up everything in His Son.



I boil it down to a basic component: Jesus Christ said, "I am the life." How many understand that there is nothing outside of life? There is nothing outside of life except DEATH. Thus, if Christ is The Life, and you want to be alive, you must find it all in Jesus. That one statement, "I am THE LIFE," says it all -- as does His claim to be the, "Alpha and the Omega." So, all the fullness of God dwelt in Christ, and Christ dwells in us -- and therefore, we have all that God has to give -- namely Himself. This is why Paul is able to say that if you are joined to the Lord and made one Spirit with Him, you are complete in Him.

Notice something here: You are not made into a complete independent creature. No, you are only complete IN HIM. In other words, when you are joined to Christ, you are made complete SOLELY by virtue of the fact that you are joined TO HIM. I think we get this false idea that, yes, Jesus Christ is complete -- but if we put our faith in Him, then God also makes us complete, not IN HIM, but separately, "because of Him." And so under this false idea, God has a whole bunch of people who are standing as separate individuals -- all of whom are made complete in themselves because they put their faith in Christ.

I hope we can see that this is NOT the case. We are members of His body and are never complete except that we are joined to Him. In fact, we can put it this way: HE IS OUR COMPLETION. He is the source of all and we must abide in Him.

How many know that a branch is never made into its own complete entity? A branch abides in the

vine for all -- and if it does, then that branch is complete IN that vine.

We need to get these distinctions. Everything that the believer has, and everything the believer is, is absolutely dependent on the One in whom we dwell and abide. God doesn't make us into wonderful specimens all within ourselves. No. He puts us in Christ -- and Christ brings all the value -- that the glory may be of Him and not of flesh.

So Paul emphasizes this truth that in Christ dwells everything that God has for humanity. This truth is based on the cardinal reality of, "Christ in us, the hope of glory."

### **Christ in Us to be Manifested**

Many of us have this misunderstanding that, yes, Jesus Christ has died for us -- and now that His death is over and done with -- God is able to pour out His spirit to do stuff TO US to make us LOOK LIKE Jesus. Some of this, "stuff God does to us," we call, "sanctification" -- or we say it makes us righteous, and so forth. All of that is error. God does not, "make US righteous." No. Rather, Jesus Christ IN US is our righteousness. Neither does God do a work of sanctification upon us. No. Rather, Jesus Christ IS sanctification IN US.

Let's turn to 1 Corinthians 1:29. Notice the wording here and you will see what I mean. First of all, verse 29:

***No flesh should glory in His presence. (i.e.,  
the presence of Jesus in us.)***

How many know that His presence is IN US? Do you think this is going to result in our glorying in OURSELVES? No, It is going to result in our realizing that we are merely recipients of grace -- and that our glorying is in HIM. That is why Paul adds, "No flesh should glory in the presence of Jesus -- BUT of God are you in Christ Jesus." In other words, Christ is in us -- or we are in Christ -- but HE is our only hope of glory.

Paul continues:

***But of God are you in Christ Jesus, who of  
God is MADE UNTO US wisdom and  
righteousness and sanctification and  
redemption.***

The result is:

***According as it is written, "He that glories,  
let him glory in the Lord."***

So here again we see that God has not given us, "things," called wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. No. Neither is He is doing stuff to us called creating wisdom, making us righteous, sanctifying us, or redeeming us. No. God is not, "acting upon us," to produce this stuff. Rather, God has given us CHRIST -- and through the bearing about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, CHRIST is made unto us to BE wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. These are nothing more than

descriptions of how CHRIST is manifested THROUGH US.

For example: What is sanctification? We say it is Christian growth. Some errantly say that it is a matter of us being transformed to, "look like Jesus." But no. Sanctification is Christ in us being seen.

There are people, who absolutely demand, for example, that because God says in Romans 8:29, that, "we are conformed to the image of His Son," that this means that we are made to. "look like Jesus." But look up the Greek. The word, "conformed," means, "to be formed together WITH Him." This is the exact same Truth: That because Christ is in us, we are going to be formed (through the work of the Cross) so that He can be manifested through us. We are going to be, "bearing about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that He might be seen in and through us." This is Christianity, and the life that is behind all true ministry.

### **The Ministry of His Life**

We have seen that true ministry is Christ – His life being expressed and manifested – the impact upon others being freedom to know and walk with Him. And so Paul writes:

***Always bearing about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus might be 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***

***bodies. 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. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. (II Cor. 4:9-12)***

Take these verses from II Cor. 4:9-10 and compare them over and against Galatians 2:20. You will see exactly the same Truth.

***I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me, and the life that 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)***

Yes, the Cross is a finished work. It is finished -- Jesus died once for all. But we must pick up our cross -- not to get saved all over again; not to maintain salvation -- but we pick it up daily so that we can, "bear about in this self-life the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might then be manifested through us." God wants us to become His living witnesses. He wants us to become manifestations of the Christ who lives in us -- to the benefit and emancipation of others. That is true ministry.