

As You Received Christ So Walk In Him

“...as you received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, so walk in him...” (Colossians 2:6)

It says in Proverbs how when one receives wisdom and understanding from the Lord that these things are more valuable than fine gold or rubies and it's true isn't it? One's life can turn around just through a change of thinking or understanding on something. This is hopefully an encouragement as it was to me, to walk in the truth of all the Lord has done and promised us and of our place in Him.

I tend to think that the picture of a young child whose confidence is in his Father as he proudly walks alongside holding his dad's hand, pretty much conveys the kind of relationship we are called to and it's always good to be reminded that love is what everything is about, that it's our Father's very nature and that all He's done and purposed is from love, which is very relevant as it's the heart of the gospel message, “...that God so loved, that he gave...” that it's all about relationship. That what delights Him is our love and trust as we grow in grace and have a willingness to learn to be obedient to Him in everything.

Having made such a pig's ear of things at times in my life, due for the most part out of a lack of understanding of the Lord's ways, my confidence is now more than ever in His lovingkindness and faithfulness. I'm convinced that He only wants the very best for us; the Lord Jesus ever living to make intercession for us and able to save to the uttermost. So with that in mind, these few thoughts are like gold to me, having caused me to re-examine my walk with the Lord and set me on the solid foundation of the gospel. They are an encouragement to really lay hold of that word of good news, to embrace it by faith, to bin the doubts and the cares of this world and take Him at his word.

I remember my former Pastor and very dear friend, Bill Mauger, preaching years ago saying that the issue has always been “...has God said?” And it's so true isn't it? This has always been at the center of all the things in our lives. On the one hand God saying trust me, on the other all sorts of things, from doubt to the more subtle effects of the cares and general things of life that so easily turn our eyes away from the truth.

There's a scripture that stopped me in my tracks a few years back in Romans 1:16: I had read it countless times, but just like when you walk into a glass door that you haven't seen, it brought me up with a start;

*“...I am not ashamed of the gospel for **it** is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.”*

What struck me was the realization that the gospel message is the key to receiving everything that God has provided in this so great salvation. That even the Spirit of Christ, the Lord himself who comes to live in us, who is God's gift of life, comes to dwell in our hearts as a direct result of believing the gospel message, as it applies to each of us personally. It made me look closely at the gospel message again, this finished work of God and of my place in Him and realize just how easy it is to be in unbelief or to find oneself not walking in the truth.

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So here's Paul saying this to the believers there in Rome, who were going on in the Lord and going on well, since he acknowledges this in the verses before but that nevertheless he was ready and wanting to preach the gospel to them, showing that the gospel isn't just our beginning, but a finished work of which we are part and which we do well to keep in view and walk in by faith.

Obvious? I suppose it is, but in a nutshell that's what I would like to share, the importance of continuing to look in the mirror, the gospel word declaring the Lord Jesus and our place in Him, that it's not only our beginning but the means through which the Lord is transforming us as we continue to believe and walk in it.

2 Corinthians 3:18 "We are being changed from glory to glory while we look not at the things seen but the things not seen".

"...and we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe." 1 Thessalonians 2:13 NIV (I like the Panin version best "--which effectually works in you that believe")

So rather than be like the man James speaks of, who having seen his reflection in the mirror (the gospel) and what manner of man he is, who then goes off and forgets what he looks like, instead, I want to walk in the truth, the place of blessing, like the man who having looked in the mirror and seen his reflection, then walks in the light of this. James 1:23 Of course what this man has seen is the Lord Jesus as proclaimed through the gospel (the mirror) and that he is seeing himself as he is now in Christ; that we are alive in Christ, a new creation, we are in Him and He is in us, His nature is our nature (he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit). 1 Corinthians 6:17 No wonder it says this man receives God's Blessing, he's walking in Christ and scripture says God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in him. "...of him are you in Christ Jesus".

So there's clearly a work in progress, a transformation taking place as a consequence of the word of the gospel being at the center of our lives, something repeatedly mentioned in Paul's letters and those of the other apostles too. This one in 1 Corinthians 15:1 & 2 (Panin) is a good example:

"...now I make known to you brethren, the gospel, which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are being saved if you hold fast to the word which I preached to you, except you believed to no purpose."

"Christ in you the hope of glory".

It also made me appreciate just how important it is that what's proclaimed really is the truth, in order for people to receive the promised Spirit of Christ through believing the gospel, as the Holy Spirit will always and only bear witness to the truth. How the word of the truth and the Spirit of the truth go together like hand in glove.

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Where it says in *Ephesians 3:17* for instance, "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith," that's it exactly. He comes to dwell in our hearts as a direct result of having believed the gospel message, the Lord then prospering us spiritually as we believe and walk in the truth that we died with Christ and were raised to life with Him, learning now to be led of His Spirit and to be fruitful. Not simply scholars who know a lot but living and walking in the truth in a developing relationship with the lover of our souls. "Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit"

So having come to appreciate the importance of the gospel, of taking God at His word, then as far as I can see, any opposition is surely going to be aimed at negating the power of it in our lives. Whether that's through doubt or unbelief, the cares of this life both good and bad, to preventing folks from hearing the true gospel message preached by altering it and so making it powerless, since the Holy Spirit will only bear witness to the truth. Which is what was happening with the Galatian church as some were trying to reintroduce elements of the law again, mixing it with the gospel message and so rendering it ineffective:

"Oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? One thing I would learn of you, did you receive the Spirit through works of law or hearing of faith?" *Galatians 3:1 KJV*

And there's that principle again of the gospel message and the Spirit, how the one secures the other and of a definite order in that first there's the Word, it's received by faith, the Holy Spirit then bearing witness, as this verse in *Ephesians* also shows:

"...in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth -- the good news of your salvation -- in whom also having believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, to the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of His glory." *Ephesians 1:13 (Youngs literal translation.)*

(John also wrote the same, *1 John 2:24-28 KJV*:

"...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."

My personal opinion is that to be founded on God's word to us, the good news concerning the Lord Jesus Christ is key to everything else, how it all works.

"--receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls" *James 1:21*

Providing the word I hold in my heart is His word, the word of the truth, then the gift of His Spirit and His continued work in us is guaranteed.

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“...but be doers of the word and not hearers only...” James 1:22.

Having believed on Jesus and turned from sin, from here on it's all of grace, as we look now to be led of the Spirit, learning to be obedient as He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure, which I find invariably involves being directed into paths of peace, of faith and of walking in love.

Perhaps others will have found the same but so often in my life it's been the little things that I hadn't considered very important at all, that in fact seem to be very important to the Lord as He seeks to draw us close. Like holding onto a grudge, resentment, a bad attitude or getting wound up by situations, niggly things in ones relationships with family and friends and so on. Not that we can avoid these reactions but it's the holding onto them that grieves Him, that these things really matter to Him. I think a good logo for a tee shirt regarding this would be, “let it go.”

Just briefly on that, for a while I'd been asking, “Lord please let me know you better, a closer walk with you please.”, and was doing some gardening while at the same time whingeing inwardly about some small injustice that had really wound me up and was simmering away inside, then out of the blue a thought popped into my mind of only a second or two, but as they say a picture says a thousand words, and I got it instantly. A snapshot of being in a room but with my wrist caught in the doorway by the outward opening door which had closed on it. I was in the room but stuck, pinned by my wrist, because in my fist, which was still on the outside of the room, I was holding onto things like grudges and resentment and only by letting them go would my hand then slip through. I knew the Lord was in the room just out of sight over my shoulder, but I couldn't draw close and remain there like I wanted to until I chose to let them go.

I can see now that these things are best dropped like hot potatoes as soon as possible, that they have no place in His presence and we are the losers for holding onto them. So letting go is something I try to do now as far as possible; it's not always easy is it? But making the choice to want to let it go is the key I believe in the first instance and so making room for the Lord to deal with it and allow His nature to develop in us.)

Continuing on from Romans 1:16. After having said about the gospel being the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, it goes on to explain what's happening, “...for herein (in the gospel), is being revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith.”

For me this speaks of the Lord Jesus, all He is and has done and that it's a deeper revelation of the one sent in love to save us that I get to see, through believing, as it says in Philippians 3:10,

“...that I might know him and the power of his resurrection...”

And

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*“...but we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”
2 Corinthians 3:18 (that mirror of the gospel being the means by which we are transformed by the Lord.)*

That the Father is being revealed through the Lord Jesus, His love and goodness being seen in Him and that it's all about His faithfulness, His lovingkindness, His grace, His mercy. The more I discover how wonderful He is, the more I see that of myself I really can do nothing and enter into His rest, but also on the faith there is this sense of God's approval; the imputing or reckoning of righteousness to those who believe on the Lord Jesus, of Him being pleased and well pleased.

Romans 1:17 “...from faith to faith...” certainly indicates a progression and movement because the words 'from' and 'to' that are used are geometric terms indicating leaving one position and moving into another. So while faith will increase or grow stronger I can't help thinking that the choice of words, 'from' and 'to' is also a perfect description of walking, as one's foot is lifted up, moved forward and placed down again.

Remembering that we receive the Lord through the gospel message declaring Him, then it seems reasonable to assume that through the continued preaching and teaching proclaiming the Lord Jesus, all He's done and who He is now, as King of kings and also as our great High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us, that by whatever means He's proclaimed, even in written word or song, that this continues to play a significant part in our walk with Him as we hear and believe. The gifts and ministries all working to that end, and although at the moment it's through a glass darkly, one day it will be face to face.

As Paul says, --

“...but if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake”. 2 Corinthians 4:3-5 KJV

Even though it's the resurrection life of the Lord himself that we are intended to receive, and that this is the whole point of all that the Father has done for us, it's remarkable how it's words that figure in all of this and how a lot of the ministries are Word related, such as apostles, preachers, teachers, prophets, evangelists and so on. How it's a ministration of the Spirit, yet it's through words. “...has God said?,...” Genesis 3:1

I don't want to wander off here from the thought concerning the importance of keeping the word of the gospel in our heart, but what stands out to me with regards God's righteousness that's being revealed as we believe, is of Him being so pleased as a result, that faith brings his approval.

“...for without faith it's impossible to please him”.

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“...this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased...”

“...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”.

How that faith really pleases Him; faith which works by love. James mentions this when he's speaking of the man who in faith endures testing, (this is Young's literal translation which is very good), “Happy the man who doth endure temptation, because, becoming approved, he shall receive the crown of the life, which the Lord did promise to those loving Him.” James 1:13 Walking with Him through all the circumstances of life, just trusting in the Lord Jesus who lives within, looking to be led of His spirit and all the while believing and keeping His Word to us, the gospel with its promise of eternal life.

When one considers the example of Abraham, how he waxed strong through faith as he held God's Word of promise in his heart and doubted not, despite all the circumstances and problems in his life that daily stared him in the face for most of his life, things that were the exact opposite to what God was promising him most of the time. A wife who was unable to have children while his name of Abram meant something like exalted Father, yet despite all these things he doubted not but grew strong in faith, and giving glory to God was fully convinced that God was well able to keep his promises.

(This is more or less what I believe the lord has brought me to in my own life. That while experiences are great if you have them, they do fade and feelings can't be trusted, but His Word concerning the Lord Jesus my Saviour, is both my solid foundation and the means through which I will receive everything He has provided in this so great salvation. To keep it in my heart and walk accordingly nothing doubting, leaving everything in His hands, just rejoicing in all He's done and promised. That in this He's well pleased.

“...but that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. Luke 8:15)

There's just one final thought which I think is worth including, as it illustrates really well the link or whatever one would call it, between the Word of the gospel in our heart and the Lord's presence in us. The picture is there in the Old Testament set up of the tabernacle and also later on in the temple. Bearing in mind that we are spoken of as the temple (naos) of God.

In the innermost place, the Holy of Holies, God's presence would manifest there above the mercy seat, which was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant. Do you see? The Ark of the Covenant. It's there in the name, it's what was in the ark that was significant, the Covenant. A holy, special container yes, but it's what it was designed to hold that's so important, God's covenant to them at that time. All of which was the shadow of the reality that has now come with Jesus and the new covenant of eternal life through faith in Him, but what's significant is that God's presence was there with His Word of Covenant and it's the same in our heart, it's where His Word of Promise to us is meant to be kept by faith and treasured and His presence is assured.

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FOOTNOTE:

It's worth looking at the word 'naos' that Paul uses when he says about us being the temple (naos) of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 1 Corinthians 3v19 and similar verses. That we are made for Him to dwell in and even as individuals are mini versions of the complete Body of Christ.

In us His Word of Covenant is kept, He lives in us and right there before Him is the special blend of incense burning on the altar of incense continually, that fills the tent with a sweet smell to the Lord.

This is something else that I think is really exciting and worth exploring. Perhaps the reality of that special mix of incense is in fact what's in the heart of believers, a blend of thanksgiving, faith, joy, peace, of love for Him, prayer, all of which has been set smoldering by The Word of His Cross. It's a thought eh?

"...in nothing be anxious but with thanksgiving make your requests known to God." Philippians 4:6

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Romans 14:17

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