

## Christ-Life Outworked

Eph 1:3-4 ... *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be **holy and blameless** before Him."*

With one of God's names being Holy Spirit, and considering that the angels are continually declaring *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord,"* it's not surprising that holiness is the very foundation of who He is, and that's what He wants as our foundation. Everything of the Christ-life flows out of this foundation. Father God wants us to be holy and blameless before Him.

So, Christ went to the Cross identifying with, and taking on, the shame of our worst in order that we may be identified with, and enfolded in, the grace and glory of His best.

Col 1:21-22 ... *"And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach – if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister."*

We are born again. Christ lives in us. Yet we experience the pulls of the flesh, and as Paul puts it in Romans 7:15, 18-19, 22-24 ... *"For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate ... For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want ... For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?"*

Thankfully the answer follows in verse 25 ... *"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*

As we have previously noted, this is why we constantly need to ask the Holy Spirit to give us a revelation of Jesus Christ. We need to bring our lives into the light of Christ's holiness. As Paul says in the Ephesians 1:3-4 passage which we read a few moments ago, the Father's plan from before the foundation of the world was, and is, that Christ in all His fullness and holiness is to live in us and be the life in us. As we bring ourselves before Him, as we receive a deeper and deeper revelation of Christ, the Light, that Light will expose our faults, and as we acknowledge and confess our faults, He will deal with them and help eradicate them from our lives. Then we will walk holy and blameless before Him.

Paul goes on in Eph 1:18 to encourage us to pray for a revelation of Christ so that ... *"the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling"* ... We are called to a larger life – a life that moves from being fixed on non-eternal, temporal, worldly issues (including the circumstances and situations we face) to being fixed on the unlimited eternal. Off the worldly onto the heavenly. Off the limited mind of the ways of the world to operating according to the unlimited and eternal mind of Christ. When Christ is revealed to us and we "see" more and more of Him, His

ways, His attitudes, we will be transformed – we will walk in the holiness and blamelessness of the true Christ-life.

The secret of self-control is to be found in Christ. We walk in holiness, purity and self-control by “finding” Christ. As we enter the revelation of His glory, the wealth of our inheritance in Christ becomes unveiled, and we will find ourselves taken up by and walking in that Light.

We don’t come into these possessions in a day. Every day of seeking to know Him more and more, seeking a deeper revelation of Christ, will bring us more and more into the possession of our spiritual estates of the “unsearchable riches in Christ.” We “grow” in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

One of the most precious endowments of the life we have in Christ is an apprehending spirit and discerning soul, which can detect and comprehend the hidden things of Christ as they are quietly revealed to us. Prayerlessness, the lack of communion with God, makes these faculties dull, while prayer, intercession, supplication, and petition, makes us vigilant and alive to the revelations of our Lord. So pray. Talk to the Lord, and listen to Him.

John the Baptist, when referring to Jesus, said ... *“He must increase, I must decrease”* (John 3:20). The sort of decrease we must focus upon is the emptying out to make of room for Christ. Christ is crowded out of our daily attitudes, thoughts and actions when we are full of self, when we are self-opinionated, self-centred and self-seeking. The secret of walking the Christ life is making room for Christ. In every and any circumstance or situation make room for Christ to come forth. Empty out the thoughts and focus of thoughts on the circumstances and situations, and set your mind on things above – let the mind of Christ come forth. This is what Paul meant when he said ... *“for to me to live is Christ”* (Phil 1:21). This truly is what making room for Christ is all about. ... *“I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me.”* The more self approaches extinction, the more we become complete in Christ.

Christ is our Source and our Strength. As we abide in Him, His life sap flows through us enabling us to grow in the grace and knowledge of Him. As we face the circumstances and situations of life armoured with the Armour of Light, He leads us in victory, and each and every victory make us stronger and more able to face the next challenge. If Christ is not our Centre everything else will become erratic and eccentric. If we abide in Him everything will take its appropriate place. His strength and wisdom flowing in and through us will draw even the convulsive happenings of the circumstances and situations we face into destined and friendly order. As well as having to fight the pulls of the flesh, we have been assured that we will face trouble and tribulations in this world, but we have also been promised Christ’s peace in every situation. His peace is not synonymous with only the quietness of settled circumstances; it can co-exist with turbulence. It can go hand in hand with want. Life around us may be a storm but if our life is centred in Christ, we can experience perfect serenity. That’s what Jesus meant when He said ... *“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; **not** as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful”* (John 14:27).

How is this peace to be found? It is a matter of spiritual relations. It’s not something conjured up by human ingenuity. It is a gift, and that gift is Christ. Peace is a Person – Christ. Peace is a fruit of His Spirit. Every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies has been poured into us in Christ, and that includes His peace. It’s all in the bucket of grace deposited in us. *“My peace I give to you.”* By abiding in Him, seeking Him, we appropriate all that He is and has to offer.

Christ is waiting to speak to us so He can speak through us. As we seek Him and He is revealed to us, our attitudes, our speech, and even our silent demeanour will be hallowed to the extent that even the indifferent person will be conscious of a mystic but most real Presence, and even the cynic will not be able to explain this away. To the extent that we abide in Christ and He in us, our words and life will overflow with the richness and treasures of divine authority and grace. That is truly when it will be said of us, our words are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63).

When Jesus said ... *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water"* (John 7:38), the "living" issue is not an act of our will, but the outcome of a vital relationship. As we seek Him and walk in fellowship with Him who is the source of Life, every part of our being becomes a channel of His holy grace. Then the outflow of this life and power irrigates and refreshes all those in our pathway. As long as we abide in the Lord our rivers will always be flowing with the water of life. We then like the Psalmist (Ps 87:7) can say *"My springs are in Thee."*

You see, there's a tendency with many to wander about from cistern to cistern, occasionally sipping that which is supposed to be the water of life, cisterns of law and religion, but having no abiding communion with Christ, the true and eternal Spring. To truly outwork and live out the Christ-life we need to settle down to a deep and ever-deepening fellowship with our Lord. Bow daily before the Fountain of Grace and seek a deeper and deeper refreshing revelation of Him. Allow Him to flow freely through you, influencing and effecting every area of your being, your demeanour, your thoughts, and your actions. As His joy and peace overtake you, you will find that outer things, like the C and S gang, can no longer disturb you. His peace and joy in you will be like the gentle light and warm fire in a country cottage while a raging tempest is blowing outside. This inner peace and joy in the midst of a stormy life is one of the distinctions of the triumphant saints down through the ages.

This brings us a fresh understanding of 2 Cor 2:14 which says ... *"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."* And what that means, among other things, is that as we pursue and abide in Christ, the peace and joy of Christ flowing in and through us rises above the painful and crippling antagonisms facing us. This is the outcome of fellowship with the Eternal Spring and River of Life.

When the time came for Jesus to approach the cross, and I can't think of a worse situation to face, He said ... *"for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name"* (John 12:27-28). He approached every circumstance and situation with the eternal purpose in mind, to make it bring glory to His Father. He has not changed; He is our life and our all and He wants to bring glory to His Father through our lives no matter what we're facing; and that is what living the Christ-life is all about.

John 14:2-3 Jesus said ... *"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."* Now while this, traditionally, may be speaking of our eternal home in glory, there's more to it than just that. You see, through His death and resurrection, He has prepared this abiding place, and now, as stated in Colossians 3:3 ... *"your life is hidden with Christ in God."* He is our home, the place where we are to dwell and abide. So, how do we enter into the inner rooms of our Lord? We do it by giving Him entry into the inner rooms of our souls. We are the temple, the home, of the Holy Spirit. Christ must fully occupy our mind, will and emotions. We get no deeper into Christ than we allow Him to get into us. Ask the Holy Spirit to shed the love and life of Christ from your spirit into your soul. Open up, let Him enter every room, bringing

the fragrance of the knowledge of Him into all your faculties. Our intimacy with Christ, brought to us as we receive more and more revelation of Him, is in proportion to the surrender of ourselves, our mind, our will and our emotions, to Him. It's to the degree that we seek Him, seek fresh and ongoing revelation, that He will enter and occupy our souls and live through us. So, open up another room!

So now, let us give some thought to the **practical issues** of how we go about giving Christ entry into the inner rooms of our souls, seeking fresh revelation of Christ, and how this brings change in us.

Now we are going to look at, and learn, something from the Old Testament. And for those who may think the Old Testament is only for Israel, let me remind you what Paul said in Romans 15:4 ... *"For **whatever** was written in earlier times was written for **our** instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures **we** might have hope."* So, we will look at a passage from the Old Testament, from Genesis chapters 12-22, where we learn something from the life of Abraham that can help us. I encourage you to go later and read through and meditate upon these chapters, keeping in mind what we are about to discuss now – the principles that are there for us to learn from and apply.

Abraham had many face to face encounters with God, after which he built altars of remembrance, and each of these encounters (or revelations) was for a specific purpose. These altar experiences brought direction, change and encouragement to Abraham. So, what do we learn from these encounters that have direct value to us today.

Well, first and foremost, when we see or use the term "altar" we are not to see this as a pile of stones, or a wooden rail in the front of a cathedral or any similar physical object. These physical things cannot alter the direction of our lives, or change our character, or shape our destiny. Rather, "altars" in our lives speak of specific experiences with the Lord that bring us revelation of Himself, His purposes and His directions for us. These revelations of Christ provide clear understanding and create within us new capacities – more of the fruit of the Spirit evident in our daily lives, more of Christ seen in and through us. These "altars" or experiences are occasions where the doors of our hearts are opened to God, where we open up and everything in each room of our lives is unveiled, secrets exposed, and the exceeding greatness of His power is released to us to bring about the Father's purposes in our lives.

If we are to truly walk the Christ-life, personal meetings with God, seeking revelation of Him and His heart, are imperative. And when we do meet and receive His revelations we must be prepared to:

- Respond to His instructions, corrections, and conviction and not try and rationalise or ignore His summons on our lives.
- Submit to the leading, guiding and instruction of the Holy Spirit as He conforms us to Christ.

These encounters are *personal* meetings with our Lord. Times where we have *personal* intimate encounters to get to know Him more and more. While it's good to get advice and instruction from other believers, books, etc, we cannot let that be your only source of input. Without personal encounters with God, without seeking revelation of Him, you will atrophy spiritually. You'll never attain to the full stature Paul speaks of in Eph 4:13 ... *"until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the (epignosis) revelation knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."*

There is no substitute to bowing in the presence of our Heavenly Father, asking for a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, to know Him who alone is your life and your all, to be conformed to Him, and to go away from the encounter changed. It's at these ALTARS that we are ALTERED (note the spelling and meaning difference!). Yes, we are ALTERED at the ALTAR of grace!

God is waiting, everywhere and anywhere to meet with you. You'll be surprised, as Abraham was, that God will reveal Himself and alter your life at the most unexpected place and times. Being conformed to Christ is a progressive journey, one in which our personal encounters bring more revelation each time, and conform us to the Father's eternal purpose, Christ in you, revealed through you, to His glory. This is a life time journey. Abraham's encounters which we read of in Genesis 12-22 cover a 40-year period. Growing into "full stature" in Christ occurs over a God-ordained period of time. All our Lord really asks of us is, to diligently seek Him, then respond in obedience and submission along the journey of life.

It's primarily a personal walk of trust. Each one of us is a unique person with a unique purpose. We are all containers of Christ, but He wants to be revealed in and through you in accordance with the unique calling and purpose the Father ordained for you before the world was formed. Abraham was promised a place, a new land (Gen 12:1-7). You have a specific place, not necessarily a physical one, but one in His eternal purpose – and understanding what that means can only come by revelation from Him by His Spirit.

The milestones of our walk in Christ are staked out by the altars or encounters, the times and occasions when we personally seek and receive the revelations of Christ, when we hear Him speak to our heart concerning His purpose for us, and where we submit, allow Him to bring change, and where we walk in covenant, in absolute trust, even when at the time we don't have full understanding of all the details of what He is doing or where He is leading us. He is Master of our destiny, we are to commit to walking forward in accordance with that which He reveals of Himself and His purposes, and of how this will bring change in us. The reason we open up to Him, seek to Know Him, is so He can bring us into conformity with who He is and the calling He has on our life.

As you walk through the Genesis 12-22 reading about the altar or encounter experiences of Abraham<sup>1</sup>, keep in mind what the purpose of the encounters is all about. See what such encounters are meant to mean for you and me today. For they speak of:

- Personal heart-to-heart encounters with God as we seek revelation of Him. Not second-hand information or instruction from others, but personal revelations of our Lord and His heart.
- Milestones or encounters with God where personal dealings, corrections or change occur.
- Encounters where you know that you know it was God speaking to you. Life changing times. Times that you can point to where real revelation and change occurred. Times when you met alone and the revelation of Christ you so dearly sought was brought to you and had massive impact on you.
- Encounters where the flesh is cut and carnality is removed. Dark times in our lives where we see the Light of Life dealing creatively, victoriously in our lives, bringing Christ to the fore. This

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 12-22 contains 8 altar experiences of Abraham: 1- Gen 12:7; 2 - Gen 12:8; 3-Gen 13:4; 4 – Gen 13:18; 5 – Gen 14:18-24; 6 – Gen15:1-21; 7 – Gen 17:1-27; 8 – Gen22:1-19

is where we see the reality of Eph 1:18-19 ... *"the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know ... what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe."*

- Encounters where you learn to trust God implicitly. He knows what He is doing in your life to conform you to Christ. As Paul says in Rom 8:28-29 ... *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son."* These encounters or revelations are places where you learn to trust God, even when what He reveals and requires seems absolutely opposite to anything you could imagine or desire. Where He demands of you your ALL, where your "Isaac" gets put on the altar of sacrifice, so He, Christ, can be your ALL.

Being conformed to Christ, to live the true Christ-life, requires of you and me these personal encounters where we seek to more intimately know our Lord, to submit to Him, to let Him have His way in us, and most of all to absolutely trust Him. He is the Author and Perfector of our lives. Seek Him, trust Him and you will grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let Him bring you to a consistent walk in holiness and blamelessness before Him.

Oh, that we, like Paul, may cry out ... *"Oh, that I may know Him."* So that we may *"put on Christ"* and *"walk in Christ,"* allowing the beauty of Jesus to be seen in you and me, every day.

Amen!