

Knowing Christ and Living the Christ-Life

I thank our heavenly Father for the gift of salvation. I thank and praise God as Paul does in Ephesians 1:3,4 which says ... *"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."*

Yes, way back, before creation, we were chosen to live the Christ-life, with Christ as our life and our all. So ... *"that we would be holy and blameless before Him."* And even though man sinned and was cut off from God, He graciously made the provision for us to be redeemed, made new, by being made one with Christ.

Now, what does it really mean to live the Christ-life?

We say that we are 'born again', and that we now live the Christ-life. We call ourselves the "Christ Lifers." But the real question before us is: What do our day-to-day thoughts, words and actions say concerning our life? Are they a true reflection of the Christ within us?

We freely quote scriptures like, *"for to me to live is Christ,"* or, *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."* We say, *"I'm a new creature, old things have passed away; behold new things have come."* *"I'm an ambassador for Christ."* And so on.

What we have to examine and ask of ourselves is: Are these merely cliches we spout out, or is this reality. Does our life consistently agree with these statements of ours. Are these statements a true reflection of our daily lives.

Paul says in 2 Cor 3:3 ... *"You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ."* Now, letters are read. So, what are people reading when they "read" us? Are they reading an account of the "Christ-life, or do we portray something else?"

For a moment, think on the following challenging questions:

If someone quietly and secretly followed you around for a whole week, they go everywhere you go, follow everything you do, and make extensive notes on what they observe. What would that reveal about your character, or your attitudes? What would it reveal concerning what you are most devoted to? What gets your time and attention? What gets your first and last moments of each day? When you have a spare moment where is the first place your mind goes to?

Would all of this consistently align with your statements about being in Christ and living the Christ life?

Remember we are always in the presence of our heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. He sees everything all the time. So, what is it that He sees of your and my life?

You see: We are only what we are in the dark, all the rest is reputation. What God looks at is what we are in the dark – the imaginations of our minds; the thoughts and passions of our hearts; the habits of our bodies; these are the things that mark us in God's sight.

Now, there's no question to our salvation. I'm not questioning whether we are saved. We have been born again, we have been made new creatures (2 Cor 5:17), we have been crucified with Christ (Gal 2:20), we are joined to Christ in one spirit (1 Cor 6:17), we are partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4), and every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies has been poured into us in Christ (Eph 1:3). But the real question is: do we now live as completely new creatures, with the evidence of our life consistently revealing this change?

We are not perfect; we are a work in progress (Phil 1:6); but what we need to ask of ourselves is how consistent and evident is our growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ?

Now the purpose of these questions and self-challenges is not to condemn you or me, but to help us see how well we are co-operating with the Holy Spirit as He conforms us to Christ who is our life and our all. We may genuinely want to live the Christ-life but may be struggling with the pulls of the flesh. There is a definite reason why we struggle, and there's an answer to how we overcome.

If we admit that we could do a bit better, hopefully, this discussion will also provide some practical help on the pathway of progress towards attaining to the full stature in Christ.

But, first, there are a couple more questions we must ask ourselves before we move on.

Are we fully content with our life as it is? Have we any sense of want as we stand before Christ? Have we any conviction of our poverty? Have we any depth of understanding of the unsearchable riches in Christ? Do we intimately 'know' Christ? Do we have a burning and all-consuming desire to know Him more?

You see, every new possession (appropriation) in the inheritance of grace will only increase our hunger for what remains to be appropriated. If we have no urgent sense of the need to know Christ, and appropriate the riches of grace, we end up battling and yielding to the pulls of the flesh. And while we will make the statements that we are "in Christ, new creatures, born again," and so on, our lives will be reading somewhat differently.

But the more we receive of a revelation of Christ, the more we get to know Him, and the more our minds are renewed to conform with Him, the more we will want to see Him and know Him. Vision/revelation stirs the hunger in us. That's why Paul prays the way he does for us in Eph 1:17-19, that we would receive a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. That the eyes of our understanding would be enlightened so that we would know the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us. The power that brings change in our lives.

Just look at Paul. Look at the drastic and massive change that occurred in his life. How and why did this occur? It was simply and purely the result of the revelation he had of Jesus Christ. The initial revelation on the Damascus Road, and the years of revelation he sought and received in the Arabian desert prior to going out into ministry. And then, all the rest of his life all we hear from him is his heart cry for more and more revelation of Christ. ... *"Oh that I may know Him"* ...

Gal 1:11-24 ... *"For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, **but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.** For you have heard of my former manner of life in*

*Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased **to reveal His Son in me** so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." And they were glorifying God because of me."*

We need vision/revelation if we want hunger. We cannot fabricate hunger to produce vision. That's the wrong way around. Trying to get the flesh to hunger for the spiritual never works. Paul tried by fleshly means to be righteous, and was nothing but a murderer and evil pharisee as a result. We need to pray for a revelation of Christ. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to give us a revelation of Christ. The more we see of Him (vision), the more we get to know Him (understanding), the more we will be changed, and that will result in our hunger being stirred to know Him and be conformed to Him even more and more. The more revelation we receive the hungrier we will be for more revelation.

In Paul's words from his letter to the Galatians:

Gal 3:3 ... *"Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"*

If our lives are not aligning with the statements we make as to who we are in Christ ... new creatures... born again ... crucified with Christ ...it's simply because we lack vision (revelation) of Christ. We are guilty of trying to perfect what was begun by the Spirit by means of the flesh. Christ and all the unsearchable riches in Christ are poured into us when we are born again, but only the Holy Spirit can help us to understand and appropriate everything this means and bring Christ out into our attitudes, words and actions.

Just listen again to Paul ... *"I count all things loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ... Oh that I may know Him"* (Phil 3:8-10). He knew that the only way we get to be conformed to Christ, to live the Christ-life consistently and fully, is by getting to know Him more and more. For Paul, and it's the same for us, the more he got to know Christ, the more revelation he received of Christ, the deeper his hunger grew to learn more and appropriate yet more and more of Christ. The more this happened, the more He was conformed to Christ, and the more he could realistically say ... *"for to me to live is Christ."*

Listen to Paul's words to Titus:

Titus 2:11-14 ... *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the*

present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

Now while this passage may be referring to the second coming of Christ, when that which He started at His first coming will be perfected, it makes it clear that He came to purify us and conform us to His life here and now in the present age, as well as prepare us for eternity. Just as we "*look for the blessed hope and the appearing*" of Christ's return, we are to "look" (seek revelation) of Him daily and allow Him to "purify" our every thought, word and action.

You see, it all hinges on "knowing Christ." That hinges on revelation, or vision. Vision stirs hunger. Pray, ask for a revelation of Christ, every day. Let your hunger for a deeper and more intimate knowledge of Christ grow. This must become a priority in your and my life if we are to grow to full stature in Christ. There is no other way there.

Growing to know Christ is a **process**, not an instantaneous matter. Seek a revelation of Christ every day. Read Gal 1:16-18 and 2:1-2. Paul spent 3 years in the desert and another 14 years more after that of time getting to know Christ, seeking more and more revelation of Him, and then for the rest of his life. Revelation of Jesus Christ in and to us is a **process** not an instantaneous event. We are to **grow** in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

Every day that you grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, and become more and more conformed to Him, the more you will gain ground on the corruption and pulls of the flesh. It's as simple as that! If you are struggling with bad attitudes, being critical, bad habits, or anything pulling you away from living the Christ-life to the full, then seek a fresh revelation of Christ. The more you see of Christ and are conformed to Him the more your life will reveal Christ and the less it will express the ways and attitudes of the world.

Look at what Peter has to say on this matter.

2 Pet 1:2-4 ... "*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the **knowledge** (ἐπιγνώσει) **of God and of Jesus** our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the **true knowledge** (ἐπιγνώσεως) **of Him** who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."*

In both verses Peter adds a preposition to the word knowledge, forming the Greek word epignosis which means "knowledge upon knowledge", or, "revelation knowledge" where, in the English translation we only get the word "knowledge." If life is getting frazzled and on top of us, and we need grace and peace, it is multiplied to us through the **revelation knowledge** of our Father God and Christ our Lord. Everything pertaining to life (the Christ life) and godliness comes through the true, intimate **revelation knowledge** of our Lord. As we receive a deeper knowledge of Him and appropriate more and more of His divine nature we escape (overcome) the corruption of the flesh.

Verses 5-8 go on to talk about applying diligence, faith, moral excellence, self-control, perseverance, brotherly kindness and love. Then verse 8 says ... "*For if these qualities are yours and are increasing,*

they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the **true or revelation knowledge** (ἐπίγνωσιν) of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Two more of Paul’s prayers reinforce the need for a revelation of Christ. Paul also adds the preposition before the word knowledge to refer to revelation knowledge.

Col 1:9-11 ... “For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the **knowledge** (ἐπίγνωσις) of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding (through revelation), so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience, with joy.”

And again, he prays:

Eph 3:19 That we may ... “know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge (through revelation), that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

Now this will not all happen automatically. There is discipline and diligence on our part that is required for us to be conformed to Christ and to live out the Christ-life. Discipline and diligence to pray daily for both ourselves and for others, to receive a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Discipline to wait before the Holy Spirit and God’s Word as He reveals more and more of Christ in us to us.

Look again at Paul.

Gal 4:19 ... “My children, with whom I am again in labour until Christ is formed in you.”

He laboured in prayer that they may receive a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. He prayed and gave encouragement. For that is the only way Christ would be formed in them.

Col 2:1-5 ... “For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true (revelation) knowledge (ἐπίγνωσιν) of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.”

It is the only way we can get to know Christ and consistently live out the Christ life – revelation.

All of Paul’s prayers have this one focus – praying for a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Pray for enlightenment, the opening of the eyes of your understanding. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal more and more of Christ to you. The more you do this the more you will want to do this, because the more He is revealed to you, and the more this brings change in you, the more you will love Him and what He is doing in you, and this will drive you closer and closer to Him to know Him even more.

Rom 5:5 (KJV) ... *"the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."*

Whether it is the love of God or the love for God it is only the Holy Spirit alone who can "shed abroad" (reveal) God and His love to us.

The heart consists of spirit and soul. Christ is resident in the spirit; we are one Spirit (1 Cor6:17 ... *"the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit"*). To understand and intimately know Christ necessitates the action of the Holy Spirit in revealing Christ to our soul part – our mind, will and emotion part). We cannot express the attitudes, words or actions of Christ if we don't; first see and know Him. Living the Christ life necessitates, first, having Christ resident within us, and, then knowing Him in order to give Him expression.

We have this term "second nature" – meaning – a tendency or habit that has become characteristic or instinctive. Well, the more Christ is revealed to us and the more we get to know Him the more we will consistently express Him – the more the Christ-life will become "second nature."

But it starts with vision – asking for a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Ask and expect Him to open the eyes of your understanding. Ask Him to reveal Christ to you through the scriptures.

2 Peter 1:19 ... *"So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts."*

That revelation may come as you pray and listen to the still small voice of the Holy Spirit, or as He opens the Word to you, or through something He says through someone else as they share the Word with you, or even through the circumstances and situations that face you. Ask and wait on Him. He will reveal Himself and His ways to you. Christ loves you dearly and wants to reveal Himself to you! He longs for your fellowship and invitation to bring change in your life.

So, my encouragement to us all today is, to seek, and pray for, a deeper revelation of Christ each and every day, and soon you'll automatically find yourself bowing in His presence seeking to know Him and enjoying His fellowship more and more. You'll find He will bring change in your attitudes, words and actions – you'll be conformed more and more to Him – and when others look at you, they will see Christ in you. They will see you truly living by the life of Christ, consistently expressing Him. That's what the Father planned for you and me before the creation of the world, and that's what will bring glory to Him.

We will end with one final scripture, which is the encouragement to:

2 Pet 3:18 ... *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."*