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Jason Henderson  
Akron Vineyard City Church

## Encouragement in Faith

I had planned to go another direction this morning, and felt the Lord simply directing me to try to encourage people by reminding them of the big picture here. And I thought that I was to share specifically about some of the things the Lord is continually having to deal with me on, so that we could see that these are normal parts of growing in the Lord and be encouraged together.

I. The first thing that the Lord has to continually deal with me on is the fact that it is impossible to see spiritual things with the natural mind. And friends, we are just so used to learning everything with our natural mind. Its just the way we've always done it. And that's fine in school, in business, etc. But it was never supposed to be that way in church. We were always supposed to learn Christ by the revealing of the Spirit. The Truth can never be learned with the natural mind.

And the Lord has dealt with me in such a way where he has made me to see that I didn't just have a few wrong concepts. But I had an entirely wrong foundation. And its not that what I knew was necessarily false, its just that it wasn't really knowing. It was an entirely wrong kind of understanding. . I don't even know how to describe how wrong I was. It wasn't that a few of my leaves were bad on my understanding tree...I had an entirely wrong tree. It was a tree that had always sought to know God with my natural mind. And I had given my life to that with considerable zeal. And the result was facts without true knowing. Information without revelation. Theology without life. True things without the Truth Himself.

I had a stockpile of imaginations. You see, imagination isn't just imagining that you're Peter Pan. Its not just fantasy stuff. Its everything that you think that is not according to the substance of reality. Imaginations are anything that you think period! ...apart from the mind of Christ. Imaginations are every thought, conviction, idea, belief, teaching, and feeling that you have that is not according to the substance of reality in Christ. Its either true, or you've imagined it. Its either real in Him, or its imaginary. There is what is real, that which the Spirit shows you...and then there is everything else.

And what the Lord had to do with me, and is doing with you, is casting down an entire world of imagination that has raised up against the knowledge of God. And for me that wasn't just a thing here or there...it was everything I was so sure I already knew. All of it.

And this is what He was showing me. And friends, this is hard. I know this is hard. But its wonderful. Its hard and wonderful...

He started showing me that the only thing's I've ever truly seen and known are the things that He has shown me. I have come to truly know nothing spiritual from my own mind. I may have come to memorize things, speak things, teach things. But all of that was shown up as empty when I took my first baby steps into truly knowing Christ according to the Spirit revealing Him.

And I saw this: what He doesn't show me, I cannot truly comprehend. If I am comprehending anything that He hasn't shown me, then it is an imagination. I can only comprehend the measure of Christ that the Holy Spirit has shown me – is revealing in me.

And this might sound strange, but even if I am comprehending something that is true, or good Bible teaching, but has not been shown to me by the Spirit as it is in Christ – then I have not seen it. As long as it remains lodged in my mind as true, and not revealed in me as the Truth Himself, then I have not truly seen. I have not found faith.

And you can spend your entire life with YOU living for the things that are true, or you can be crucified with Christ and rest in the One you've seen as Truth.

But let me say this plainly. I sat in my office and tried to think of a way to say this as nicely as possible – but without compromising the truth. Here's my best attempt: Even though I may have spent an incredible amount of time and energy learning Jesus (with zeal, excitement, and emotion) **I can never truly know anything the Spirit hasn't revealed.** And I have found that every thing that I have learned of Him that was not revealed by the Spirit was not a knowing of Him at all – though I would have punched you in the nose if you would have suggested that to me.

And I would guess that most people in this room have experienced the absolute contrast between learning true things, and the Spirit revealing Christ who is Truth. Peter did. Peter knew that Jesus was the Messiah. But then one day he truly saw it by faith – a spiritual seeing given by the Spirit of God, and declared "you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God". And Jesus stopped him in his tracks and made sure he knew that flesh and blood didn't reveal that to him.

Now some of the things I learned with my mind were true as facts. But true knowledge is not the learning of facts. True knowledge is the knowing of Him who is Truth as the Spirit so reveals Him. And my facts have no substance at all, unless He is their substance, and He is only known as the Spirit reveals Him. **And faith is the view that remains after the Spirit has unveiled Him.**

And I'm telling you all of this hoping to encourage you because this is hard. Because this is different. Because this can be confusing. Because this can make you feel weird. There are some days where you can't see it at all, and you want to throw the whole thing out. But this is what all of us are going through...going into...coming to know something that is finished already, and needs to be shown to us by the Spirit. Many people study it, but far fewer ever know it. I heard someone say "we yell at the devil saying, "you're a liar"...but he just turns and says "yeah, but you still don't know the truth".

The Spirit needs to show us Christ, or we never truly learn. This is what the Holy Spirit does. There is this wonderful three-fold description of the Spirit's work in John 14-16.

1. First Jesus tells them that the Holy Spirit will be in them and will allow them to see Christ – and specifically see that "I am in the Father, you are in Me, and I am in you. John 14:17-20

2. Then...in John 15:26-27 he tells them that the Spirit will come and bear witness of Christ and that they will also bear witness. That is, they will become the living testimony, the visible witness of His life. That doesn't mean just talk to people about Him. Bear His testimony. Bear His image. Bear his name.
3. And then in Jon 16:14 Jesus says that the Spirit will "take all of mine and show it unto you". The Holy Spirit is revealing Christ.

**The Holy Spirit is ONLY EVER revealing in you what is already there. If it wasn't there, he couldn't reveal it. If you knew it was there, he wouldn't have to reveal it. He's not revealing something that is off someplace else. Or something that is for another time. He's ONLY ever revealing to you what is already there. A salvation that you already have. A house that He already built and placed you in.**

Again...the reason I shared all of that is because what the Lord has had to remind me of time and time again is that truly learning Christ is not a thing that I can do, it is a person that must be revealed. Now I can position myself in a way that is conducive to having Him revealed...or I can harden my heart. But either way this thing isn't getting done through my effort and my mind. And so-called spiritual disciplines do not get you this life...the cross did.

This is a bunny trail – but allow me to take it for a minute. The term spiritual disciplines is somewhat of an oxy-moron. It is impossible to discipline a **man** to make him spiritual. If there is anything spiritual about a man, it is the Spirit Himself. It is Christ as the resident life, and not the man as a vessel. A man is only ever a vessel of spiritual life. The only thing that needs discipline is the flesh...and that is never to gain more spirituality. If you are a believer, Christ is already your life. How much more spiritual life do you want? The flesh can be disciplined to protect the Seed of His life and the growing expression of that life. The vessel can be disciplined to keep it from obscuring the treasure. But the discipline of the vessel never grows a Seed or creates a Treasure. That doesn't make sense. We should really call them "fleshly disciplines".

So you can't make things happen...because its already happened an now you are growing in your view of what happened. Growing in faith. Coming to know your salvation. And so that is frustrating and discouraging at times if you're like me... because you want a report card. Don't you? Every other thing in life comes with a report card. In school you get an actual card, in business you have your review, in marriage...well, you kinda married your report card.

And we think, Oh Lord, if I could just measure how well I was doing, then I'd know where I stood. **But, my God...you don't stand at all. That's the whole point.** You want to see how good you are! How good you're doing! And that's the whole point. You're dead, and He is the life. And the only measure is the measure of the Man. The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Ah, but just give me a report card! For what? So you can boast? Or so you can feel condemned? Tell me if I'm getting a C+ or a B-! Why? So you can work really hard to build up that grade point average. Impossible. Ok...here's your report card. He is an A+ and you are an F. You were born an F, and apart from Him you'll always

be an F. Now, since you have an A+ living in you, go manifest his grade in a world of F's. **And don't even concern yourself with how well its going.**

If its going well, then hey, it's Christ. If its going bad...well, there's no surprise, its just your F showing up again.

You know, brothers and sisters, here's something the Lord has comforted my heart with time and time again. You have nothing to prove in this gospel. The cross proved everything. The cross proved that you needed to die. The cross proved that you are an F-. The Cross proved that He is the life. There's nothing left for you to prove! There's just the manifestation of what was proved at the cross.

But we get all flustered because we feel the need to show something of ourselves. But that will never happen. And if it does...if you do show something from yourself, I promise you it will be an F. There's nothing to show but Him. A finished work. A full salvation.

And the Lord has dealt with me on this. "Son, what's your hurry? What do you think you're gonna accomplish here?" Well, Lord...I've been seeing the cross for 6 months and I've gotta get some fruit or nobody's going to believe me!

That's how dumb I am. And the Lord has to deal with me gently. "Son, you already have all of Jesus that you'll ever have. Now fix your eyes on Him, stop bustling about trying to get a report card, and when you're found in Him, your F won't be found. Your F has no place in Him. But if you keep your eyes fixed on that F, its never going to change.

Do you see how we are so quick to turn from Him – the one who is our change – to look to ourselves to see what we're getting out of this whole deal. We're so self-consumed. We are so often only concerned with God and the things of God because of what's in it for us.

And that's how we get people saved. Jesus will help your life. Jesus will make everything better. No He won't! He'll kill you. And when you're found in Him, when you're found in His resurrection life, you wont even care if **your** life got better or not...because its not I but Christ.

But that's how conceited we are. "Oh, this is a good message...what's in it for me? Oh, Spiritual gifts?...ok, sign me up". "Oh, I like this pastor...if I join his church I can lead up front with my instrument. I like this gospel, it will wipe every tear from my eye." Well, it will...but that's because dead men don't cry.

But we're like that. The Lord is always telling me that I'm like that. And maybe you're asking "how is this encouraging". Well, maybe its good to know that the Lord is dealing with all of us this way.

We learn something new, or see something real, and then so often we look back to ourselves and start asking "Ok, God...now lets see you make it work. Lets see the fruit. Lets see how you're gonna fix me, bless me, change me." And God is always saying to me, "Jason, those blessings are in Christ, and to whatever extent you are alive to Him and dead to yourself they will be your experience also."

Peace? Well, that's My Son. That's not something I'm going to take from Him and give to you. That's Him. And if you're found in Him, you'll have found peace. Joy? Same thing. Love? that too.

Watchman Nee tells this story in the Normal Christian Life of Fact, Faith, and Experience. Fact, Faith, and Experience were walking along the top of a high wall. Fact walked straight ahead unwavering. And as long as Faith fixed his eyes on Fact, and Experience fixed his eyes on Faith...then all of them moved right along safely. But as soon as Faith turned around and looked at Experience, to see how he was getting along, both of them fell to the ground.

I'm telling this all to you because the Lord is always reminding me to fix my gaze on Him. I get discouraged and confused when I turn my gaze to myself. Its very subtle. I don't even realize I'm doing it at first.

But if we will just keep our eyes on Him, asking Him always to reveal Himself in us. Always coming like a child, ready to learn, ready to see...then I promise you that you will find that "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion".

But its not your work. The work he's doing in you is revealing the work that He's already accomplished. So that you can enter into His rest.

And its hard. And this is a little weird at first. It's foreign. That's a good word. It's totally foreign, because it is another Life, another Mind, another creation. Its foreign. But friends, I'm just standing here with you today saying "lets stick with it". Lets just keep our gaze locked on Jesus. Lets do this together. We're a body. Let's grow together. Wouldn't it look weird if my 4 month old boy never grew except for two of his fingers? Lets all grow up in Him together.

Lets not let our gaze drop to check out our progress. Don't worry about whether its "working". Worry about whether its true. If its true it will work.

If its true, and you come to know it, it will make you free. You are already set free, but Jesus says that knowing the truth will make you free. You are free in Him, but apart from knowing the truth, you will never feel free. You will never experience that freedom. If we'll fix our gaze on Him, our souls will grow in faith. Grow in a clear view of spiritual reality. We'll grow in our ability to see what the salvation that we received really is.

And that's why I've been teaching on faith. Because faith sees the salvation of the Lord. I'm not teaching you about faith so that you can get things by faith. My goodness, there's enough teaching like that out there. I'm teaching faith so that you can live by faith. So that you can walk by faith. So that you can never step out of the reality of what faith sees. I'm not teaching you tricks to get things you want.

Faith awakens the senses of the soul so that you can live by what is already there. You can live by what is now in Christ. You can live in what is the same yesterday, today, and forever. I'm teaching faith so that the eyes of your heart can open up and begin to be used, sometimes, for the first time. Did you see the movie "The Matrix". Neo says "why do my eyes hurt?". Morpheus answers "Because you've never used them before".

I know its hard to hear some of this teaching at first. But please understand that I'm teaching this so that the eyes of your heart will see what is already there.

Let me try to help a little with our body, soul, and spirit diagram with three circles.

First we have the body – this outer circle. We all know that the body has 5 senses. And it is with these five senses that we know the physical realm. You gotta have at least one of them working to know anything about the natural realm. Your comprehending of anything in the natural is based upon the functioning of these senses. Hellen Keller was blind and deaf, but if she also couldn't feel, taste, or smell, she'd be totally unable to experience anything of this creation.

Now it is the same in the heavens, in Christ, except it is a different set of senses. It is the eyes of your understanding, the eyes of your heart. It is the ears of the inner man. It is the touch of the Lord on your heart. Tasting and seeing that the Lord is good. Smelling the fragrance of the Lord.

Now...this isn't that weird. You all know that there is a seeing of things that isn't with the natural eye. There is a hearing of truths that is much deeper than the understanding words. You may have never had it laid out for you like this, but you know something like this is true. Because you heard the gospel a bunch of times. But then there was the time you HEARD the gospel.

The soul has these senses. They are similar in some ways to bodily senses, but they are exercised in the soul.

Your soul cannot see a flower. If you poked your eyes out, your soul could not see that flower. But, on the other hand, you eyes cannot see Christ. Your natural ear cannot receive his Word.

The soul was the part of you that was created out of nothing by God. It was not made from dirt. It was breathed into the body for the purpose for knowing His Son. And it was given faculties for this very purpose. An inward seeing. An inward hearing. Inward touching, and so on.

And the only thing that can bring a true knowing to the soul is the revealing of the Son according to the senses of the inner man.

Well, who is this Jesus that we were made to know? He is the Life that the Spirit is trying to show you. He's the voice to be heard, the Light to be seen, the fragrance to be smelled, the true food to be tasted, ...until your soul is defined by Him.

And we read all of these Scriptures about tasting, touching, seeing and hearing, and we always try to bring that into the natural. We always try to apply that entirely to the five senses of the body. We want to see with our natural eyes or we wont believe. But even if we see with our natural eyes, we can't believe. Because true believing is something that happens in the inner man, according to an inner seeing.

We want to hear with our natural ears, and have it handed to us in familiar theology that lines up with our nicely categorized understanding of reality. And Jesus kept saying "he who has ears let him ear". He obviously wasn't talking about the ears you have on the side of your head.

And the prophets spoke of a coming light that would be seen, a voice that would be heard, a fragrance that was pleasing in the nostrils of God, one who was true food...and every carnal mind from then until now has made all of that about the natural. Events in the natural. Things in the flesh. The Pharisees did it and we're doing it now.

And I know that from time to time the Lord is breaking into the natural to try to draw you into the Spiritual. And I have heard that on occasion he has caused a room to smell like roses. And I have personally seen Him put gold dust on hands and you could touch it. But I also know that gold dust doesn't transform your soul and neither does the smell of roses in your nose, or a cloud appearing in a building. These are natural manifestations that function as invitations into spiritual substance.

And my friends...if I thought for a second that seeking those would truly benefit your soul, I would be calling down the gold dust right now.

But the Lord just keeps dealing with me, and I suspect you, that there is something far more substantial than all of that. Something far more eternal. Far more spiritual. Not something, in fact, that He has yet to do, but something that He has already done. Something that a soul can only see by faith. Faith that only comes by a hearing. And hearing that is only granted through a revealing by the living Word himself.

So...faith awakens the senses of the soul. In fact, faith is the soul seeing what is real. Knowing reality. Hearing truth. Faith becomes the seeing of what is already there. Faith becomes the seeing, the smelling, the hearing, the tasting, and the touching of Christ. The Spirit awakens faith by revelation. And you live by all the soul has come to know. You live by faith. You walk by faith and not by sight.

The Spirit is taking that which is Christ and revealing it to your soul – because He's actually there. Faith sees what already is. The Spirit shows what's already there.

Why must I comprehend that Christ is my life?. Because He is.  
Why must I comprehend that at the cross I was crucified? Because I was.  
Why must I see that I'm in Him? Because I am.  
Why must I see that I have no life but Him? Because I don't.  
Why must I see that I'm a new creation? Because I am.

So, be encouraged, this morning. Be encouraged that, in whatever you are experiencing, you are not alone. And be encouraged that what you are desiring is already finished, you just need to see it.