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## Knowing Him In His Death

The last two weeks I spoke about knowing the Lord. Specifically, we talked about having a heart to know Him. Where does it start. How does it begin. I want to continue in that same topic, but moving on to the reality of knowing Him in His death. And I will be on that particular topic for at least this week and next. I could describe this same reality in a number of different ways. I could say "being made conformable to His death" (Phil 3:10). I could say "His death working in us". (2 Cor. 4:12). I could say "taking up the cross and following Jesus" into death (9:23).

Incidentally, it occurred to me that when Jesus said "take up your cross and follow me or you can't be my disciple", that He most certainly meant into His death. I have often read that passage, as I suppose many do, and pictured myself picking up my cross (which I understood to mean my own personal sufferings, hardships, bad knee, cranky boss, etc) and following Jesus down the path of my life. Well, as I read that this week it occurred to me that in this verse, like every other mention of such things in the New Testament, Jesus is telling us to take up our cross and follow Him into His death. Or as He says elsewhere – "lose your life to find it", "hate your life to save it". Etc.

So "taking up the cross and following Jesus" is another way of saying "knowing Him in his death". There are other verses as well. There is 2 Corinthians 4:10 "always bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus", Phil 3:10 – "the fellowship of His sufferings", etc.

You will notice that in each of these verses it is speaking of us bearing His death, His sufferings, His dying. We will speak more on this in moment, but I just wanted to point that out now, having just read the verses.

But, very briefly, before we launch out into this topic, lets just review the main points of what we've said the last couple weeks. Because there is no point in even discussing what we'll discuss today if we don't first understand having a heart to know Him.

I could summarize what I said two weeks ago simply by saying that the heart that will come to know the Lord is a heart that can say with Peter "Lord, I have nowhere else to go because only you have the words of eternal life". It is a heart that has no plan B. A heart that has one magnificent obsession, one heart fascination, one goal, one purpose, a single objective. A heart that has settled the issue that life is not things, people, places in which we "try to put Christ first", but that Christ **is life** and only in knowing Him, experiencing Him, are we ever to find life.

This is the beginning of the recipe for "good soil". A heart that says with Paul "all other things are dung compared to the excellence of knowing Him". A heart that realizes that every obstacle and obstruction to that goal is something of ourselves, our own blindness, our own darkened understanding, our own self-life, our own

goals, our own ends, that stands in His way. We must not seek Him for selfish gain, but rather to lose our lives and find His. I'll speak more on that in a minute.

But, to summarize last week, we must come to know Him as the Spirit of God unveils Him. The natural mind is, in no way, able to comprehend the things of the Spirit. The carnal mind is, in fact, enmity with God. The things of spiritual reality, spiritual truth, spiritual salvation, must be revealed by the Spirit. The things which have been freely given must be unveiled by the Spirit who abides within us. And so in every endeavor to know Him, our heart must be postured like a little child who realizes that, even with the greatest wisdom of man, the most energetic pursuit, the most enthusiastic zeal, we will only know what He reveals to the heart of babes.

Anything outside of what you have seen in His light stands in the way of Truth. And if you can here this – even true doctrines can stand in the way of knowing Him who is the Truth. Because doctrines are merely the written or verbal or theological description of a living Person. **And these can be learned without seeing that Person.** And too often when one has learned true doctrines, they then resist the seeing of the Person, claiming to be already quite familiar with what is being taught.

But let's go back for a minute to something I said previously. I want to pick up from there and head into knowing Him in His death. I said that we must never seek Him as a means to our end. We must seek Him to lose our lives and find His. I cannot emphasize this enough, and in speaking with people I realize I need to say this more clearly.

We must not seek Him as a means to our end. We must not seek to know Him in order to use Him to fix ourselves. It is true that in the knowing of Truth you are made free. But knowing truth is never a means to our own end. Knowing the truth is the end in itself. Whether you find it "fixing" the things you don't like about yourself or not, in the way you want, at the time you want, truth is still truth. When we approach God seeking to use Him, His gospel, His cross, His Truth as a means to fix ourselves, then we never really take our eyes off of ourselves. We look at ourselves, to ourselves, waiting for the things we are learning to fix ourselves. And in so doing we do not come by the way of His death...and so nothing happens. Nothing changes.

Now you **will** be changed in beholding His glory. That is true. But it is through being conformed to His death and found IN HIS Life, and NOT through using His life to modify yours, adjust yours, fix yours, or apply to yours. NOT through using His truth to apply to **your** life. Not through trying to make Him into **your** 7 step transformation program. I am so saddened by watching Christians try to apply true verses to their lives....rather than let those verses speak of Him who is their life.

So long as we are seeking to still live, and to use the Truth of His gospel to repair, revamp, mend, heal our own lives, we will never know life. We may learn some lessons or adjust some wrong thinking, and that might, for a time, be quite exciting. But, spiritually speaking, the quest for Life will forever be frustrated. Listen to this – this is a dangerous flesh trap – one that I have fallen into many times.

When you seek to know Him, you must seek to know Him at the cost of your life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said "When God calls a man, He bids him come and die". The cost is your death. That is the price. You cannot seek to know Him and seek also to save your life, fix your life, repair your life. I'm not making that up. Jesus

said a number of times. You must come to know Him in death. Let me just say this again. You cannot seek to know Him and then wonder why He's not changing YOUR LIFE. It is only as you are conformed to His death that any change happens. And that change certainly happens, **but its not His life fixing you, its His death removing you so that He can live.** Let me say that again....

[and when I say "removing you" – I don't mean the annihilation of your soul. I mean conformity to His death. We'll get more into what that means]

But if your heart hears a true message of the cross, a true proclamation of the gospel, and then says "I want to get a-hold of some of this to fix the things about myself that I don't like", I can promise you that you are headed for some confusion and disappointment. The gospel of the cross is not unto your improvement. It is unto your conformity to His death so that He may live and reign in His body – which you are.

You will never find His life working in you simply to steer yours. You will find His death working in you unto the enthronement and experience of His life. And yes, certainly in that things in your heart begin to change. Certainly that is true. But it is not because you are continually adding Him and His truth to your life. It is because your soul is being circumcised. It is because your soul is being conformed to His death. It is because your soul is being crucified to the whole world, the whole first creation, the whole Adamic man (a work that is already complete, but a reality that the unrenewed mind must come to know through the revealing of the Spirit). It is that your soul ceases to live as its own source, it dies to that whole deception, that whole illusion, and lives by the Life of Another.

I was reading a book this week by a man who was criticizing the way that the church often teaches what he called "schizophrenic dualism" with regards to Paul's references to "old man", "new man", or "old creation", "new creation". His complaint, which I agreed with, is that we often teach that we Christians are two distinct natures. We are both the old man and the new man – sort of like a good angel on one shoulder and a bad one on the other. And we are trying to have part of us grow and part of us shrink. We want the good part to get better and the bad part to go away.

And while there is a little truth in that, it does not really represent reality. The reality is that we who are in Christ are new creations. We have a new spirit – the Spirit of Christ. Behold, all things are new. We are not, in reality, two natures. We are born of spirit. We have crucified the body of flesh. We have circumcised the body of death. Well then...what is my problem? I certainly act like there is a schizophrenic dualism!

The issue is never getting more of something you don't have enough of, or getting less of something that you have too much of. The issue is always coming to know as we are already known. The issue is always coming to live according to what is already finished. The issue is living where we are – as who we are – and not like mere men. The issue is the reality of this finished work now having manifestation in and through us. The issue is the outworking of His indwelling life. It is the soul of man becoming conformable and so bearing the image of His Spirit within us. And all of this begins in being conformed to His death...following Him into His death.

Now, to avoid confusion, it is true that those who are born of Spirit, those who are made new, those who have union with Christ, can bear the fruit of death, can sin, can act like mere men, can be carnal. Of course. But that is not because the work is unfinished. That is not because you are half good and half bad. That is simply because, in our carnal, religious, unbelief, **we seek to live in His place**. And that is the very source of our problem. The Christian who has not begun to be conformed to His death will always seek to live Himself for God, rather than becoming the body of His life.

So what exactly is this reality of being conformed to His death? Well, as I mentioned briefly last week, it is where all that He died to becomes dead in me (to my heart, to my consciousness, to the spirit of my mind, my comprehension)...and He who is Life in me, is free to live. Where all that is dead to Him becomes dead to me...and I offer Him none of it any longer. **It is the ongoing realization by His Spirit of all that has been made new, of all that is Life, of all that is New Creation, New Man, Resurrection and Life, and the subsequent and necessary dying to all that is not**. All that is not made new in Him. All that is not of the resurrection.

Knowing Him in His death is the other side of the coin of knowing Him who is Life. As the Spirit of God increasingly unveils Him who is life, who is OUR life, then that becomes in us death to sin, death to the first man, death to self, death to the world. As you see Him who is the resurrection and the life, you cannot help but see that this One, who is your life, is dead unto all of that and alive forever more unto God. And as you come to share His view, as you come to know as you are known, then the reality and substance of that death, His death, begins to become your experience. Or as Paul says in Col. 3 – “whenever Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then we are revealed together with Him in glory”.

How are you going to live alive to sin when you see the one who is your life dead to it? And the “seeing” is the only variable there.

But being conformed to His death has nothing to do with you “suffering for Jesus”. Paul says that such sufferings are not even worthy to be compared to the glory being revealed in us. No, the sufferings of Jesus working in you, the death of Jesus working in you, are not your sufferings, or your sufferings for Him. **The sufferings of Christ cannot be performed by you**. The fellowship of His sufferings is not me trying to practice self-abasement or to suffer for His name. Seeking those things only produces self-righteousness. **Again, the sufferings of Christ are not performed by you, they were performed by Him in bearing the end of the Adamic man and His creation, and they are realized in you when Christ, your life, is revealed.**

Paul the apostle certainly suffered much for the sake of the gospel. There is no question about that. And he speaks of such things. He speaks of **his** sufferings and describes them at some length. However, when he is speaking of transformation, growth, or knowing the Lord, it is always the sufferings of Christ that he mentions. **Paul’s sufferings that he endured at the hands of the Jews, the judaizing Christians, the Romans, etc. were not the means to knowing Christ, they were the world’s reaction to a man that did, in fact, know Him**. A man that knew Him in his death and knew Him in His life.

And, as Paul says in Galatians 1:15 “it pleased the Father to reveal His Son in me”. Well, as that one who was His life was revealed in Paul, then Paul began to see that

the One in me is in me dead to sin, dead to Adam, and dead to the world. And if I am a partaker of the One who is in me, then I am a partaker in that death.

And when you come to know Him in this way, in His death, then the things wherein we used to find life, used to find value, purpose, security, stability, identity...well those things cease to really matter. **You become a man or a woman defined by the person of life, rather than the circumstances of death.** You become a man or woman defined by the reality of his resurrection because you have come by way of His crucifixion. Because you have taken up your cross and followed Him into His death.

And then, like Paul, then you are willing to lay down what most people call "their life". You are willing to present your body as a living sacrifice. It only makes sense. It is your reasonable act of service. **It is very reasonable that the body that you have should serve the body that you are.** Yes, Paul says that is reasonable – it only makes sense. You then lay down your life, and are often persecuted. Why? So that you can enter into His sufferings? No, because you have already entered into His sufferings...finding His death working in you...and now it is not a big deal to offer your body as a living sacrifice. Why? Because you now know – beyond theology – that your life is not in your body. Your life is Christ – and nothing done to the body can effect that one way or another.

Praise God...that is freedom. There is freedom in this death. Freedom, not in the death of your body. That's not where freedom starts. There is freedom in being conformed to His death while you're still in your body. There is freedom from everything that Christ has died to. Not freedom TO sin. But, for the first time, freedom to present your body as an instrument of righteousness. Free to be a servant or righteousness.

So, you see, you are not presenting your bodies for service, as an instrument, in order to become something to God or for God. You can't just run around and tell God that you're His instrument. An instrument doesn't play itself. How many trumpets have you seen play themselves? No, an instrument is played by another. You are presenting your bodies as instruments because His death is working in you and you are becoming a vessel of honor. A vessel for His life. Sanctified. Filled with the knowledge of God, and abounding in fruit. Abounding in life in every thing you do.

But if His death isn't working in you then everything you do in your body for Jesus, everything that you consider a "sacrifice" for Jesus, becomes an act of self-exaltation. Jason, how can you say that? Because my life has been the proof of it. All that comes out from your life will be towards your ends – whether you realize it or not. If its your own sufferings for Jesus, then it will be your own pride, your own ministry, or your own exaltation that come out from it. But if it is the sufferings of Christ, if you are being conformed to what He has already killed, and now that is working in you by the revealing of Christ, well then...what comes out of that is His risen life.

Again, when we begin to know Him who is life by His Spirit – that very knowing becomes death in us to all that He is dead to.

So, let me just be really clear about this. Why is it His death? Why are we being conformed to His death, having His death work in us, carrying about the dying of

Jesus. Why does Paul always say it that way? **It is His death because it is the realization in us of what His death has already accomplished, already finished. Being conformed to His death is that realization working in you so that you line up with what is finished. It is His death because He is the one that died to sin, died to Adam, died to the old creation, and came forth out from all of that death and lives in resurrection. And so it is THAT death that needs to be worked into our heart through the work of the Spirit of God.**

It is not our suffering and your death. Our sufferings accomplish nothing of new life. If you really think about it – though this might offend some people – **our sufferings are, in general, often the result of not being conformed to His death. They are often the things in life that sting because you still live.** They would most often not even exist as sufferings if, in fact, we were conformed to His death.

It is only because we are not conformed to His death that the loss of things is such a terror to the human heart. It is because we who are in Him have not come to know what he has died to that we spend our lives, as Hebrews says “in slavery to fear of death”. Sadly, most Christians live in slavery to fear of death. And I don’t just mean the death of the body. Its easy to not think about that, especially while you’re young. Or if you just watch a lot of T.V. Most people can distract themselves from the death of the body.

But the fear of losing things, people, rights, health, love, money, honor, reputation...you see all of this is the fear of death. It is the fear of losing something that is vital for self. It is losing that which you understand yourself to be. You only fear to lose all of that because in all of that you find your life. And so you are afraid of death.

And so much of our life and energy is spent in the attempt to preserve and secure these things. And the motivation for all of that is fear of death, fear of loss, fear of losing our lives...and everything we think to be “our life”.

And so it is that only in being conformed to His death will we ever be freed from fear of death, because only in the revealing of Christ and Him crucified do we find ourselves already dead and alive to God. There is nothing then that can be taken. There is nothing that you want to be added. Fear is always over loss of life. But when we come to realize that what we called life was lost at the cross, and found in Him as Him, and that by Him, in Him, life can never die – well, there goes the fear of death, the fear of loss, the fear of all things.

By His Spirit revealing the reality of His Cross into our hearts, we come to comprehend that by His death we are dead. That by His death we have been put away. That there is nothing of life, identity, reality, eternity, in us...and that all of that is in Him. And then you begin to find all of that in His appearing. Having seen, and known, and agreed, and lined up in your heart with the reality that it is not in you, a dead man, then you begin to find it in His appearing, in His revealing.

But let me close by saying this, and we’ll pick up with this next week. He is not working life into you. He is your life. He is already your life if you are born again. That life doesn’t need to be “worked into you”, but something that stands in its way needs to be worked out. You are not being conformed to His life. You could never be anything like that life. You are being conformed to His death so that He who is your life may live in and through you.

He is already the life. We are not. We think that we are, and that is the problem. But we must be conformed to His death or we stand in His place. But make no mistake about it, He is not working life in us. **He is the life in us working in me AGAINST everything that would try to live other than Him.** In other words He is working His death in me. He is conforming me to His death.

Incidentally, that is exactly what you see in the testimony with the children of Israel taking the land. The whole land was already theirs...all they had to do was work death into that land. Work judgment into the land. All they had to do was drive out the enemies that tried to live there. **All they had to do was bring death to what was already there, so that the Seed of Abraham could live.**