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Knowing Him In His Death

We're on a series now having to do with knowing the Lord. We spent two weeks talking about having a heart to know Him. And last week we began talking about the reality of knowing Him in His death. Being conformed to His death. Bearing His death. The fellowship of His sufferings.

In other words, first we talked about a heart that wants to come to know Him, and then we began talking about how He is known. And I know it is hard to hear some of this. But please don't turn your heart away just because it doesn't taste extremely familiar to the natural mind.

If there is anything good happening in any preaching in the world this Sunday morning (and I trust that there is), then it is because the Spirit of God is taking words coming out of men's mouths, and bearing witness in hearts to the spiritual reality of which they speak. In other words, the Spirit of God uses spoke words, written words, to unveil the living Word. The Spirit of God is using the foolishness of preaching, perhaps even my flapping mouth, to take words and show the reality behind words to hungry hearts.

That is what we are needing Him to do this morning. If I can stand up here and teach you everything I'm trying to say simply by giving you words – then, in reality, I have nothing to teach. My words are only as important or influential as they first line up with Him who is truth, and second are able to be used by the Spirit to testify to Him who is our life. I say that, not to take pressure off of me (although it does), but to realize that there is nothing good happening this morning other than the Spirit of God revealing Christ, teaching us the reality of Life, the reality of salvation. Lets look to Him this morning for that.

Or as Paul says "the outer man is decaying, but the inward man is being renewed day by day AS WE LOOK to that which is unseen". Lets do that this morning. Lets look to that which is unseen.

So we began last week to talk about how He is known. Paul says he is known in the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death. Now remember, these aren't your sufferings for Him. These are the suffering's of Christ being wrought in your heart. This is the dying of Christ, the death that He died to sin, to the old man, to the old creation, working in your heart. This is you coming to know that when one died, all died. When He was lifted up, he drew all men to Himself. This is that reality being written in your heart by the finger of God.

We said it last week, but it bears repeating. 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. **So these sufferings 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.**

And so our sufferings accomplish nothing of new life. And as we mentioned, if you really think about it, our sufferings are, in general, are often the result of not being conformed to His death. They are often the things in life that hurt because you still live. They would most often not even exist as sufferings if, in fact, we were conformed to His death.

When we begin to become conformed to His death, it is the death that He died to sin, to Adam, to the world, working in our hearts. Through knowing Him as our very life 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. When I know Him in Truth, as Truth, all that is dead to Him becomes dead to me...and I live in it no longer. As Paul says in Romans 6 "how can we who have died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know..." And there he identifies the problem. Do you now know. **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".

Think about this. If He is your life, how are you going to live to something that He is dead to? Now if He is your friend, your buddy, I suppose you could. If He is some external Lord or just an Savior that made an external transaction to save you from hell...well then I see that you could still live in sin and death. But if He is your very life. If He is the life in you, being revealed in you, then how are you going to continue to live to something that He, your life, is dead to? Only if you live out from yourself. Only if you walk in the flesh. Can you see that? If He is your life - and that's the gospel! - and He is dead to the old, dead to the world, dead to sin, how is it that we still live in it? Only by living in His place. Only by staying in his way.

Think about this weird analogy for a minute. Lets say that by some weird scientific experiment, Tim Schlabach came to live in my body. His body stopped working, and somehow he was deposited in mine. And lets say then he, in me, needed to go to a family reunion...where there were a lot of people that were important to Him and would love a chance to talk to Him. Now, of course he was going in my body, so the flesh would look a little different (a little more handsome), but everything else would be the same. He was hoping that his family would not really care to know Him after the flesh anyway...but that there hearts would connect. He was hoping that a lot of people would get to know him even better through me, in me.

But, imagine if, even though Tim was in me, I continued to live in his place, trying to pass myself off as Tim. So I walk into this family reunion and start making an idiot out of myself. "Howdy Partner, I'm Tim Schlabach"....and then I start telling off-color jokes, and picking my nose, and taking food from babies, and all the things I naturally do at home. Here I am living in Tim's place, embarrassing Tim because I'm living for Him, passing myself off as Him.

Well, that's what we do with the one who lives in us! That's what we do with Christ, our life.

Well, in this analogy, what would need to happen in order for Tim to be able to live and express himself and cause people to get to really know him in me? Well, if I was going to allow him to live, you could say that I would have to get out of the way. I could still participate in everything that was his life in me. But I couldn't be the source of it, or it wouldn't be Tim.

I would need to become disassociated with everything that was not part of Tim living in me. You could say I would have to be conformed to death in order to let Him live. I would have to cease to live as or from myself and let him live in and through me. Then, and only then, would people see Tim! Then and only then would the people at the family reunion get to know him better. They would see him, and not my cheesy imitation.

But here's my point: As long as I am trying to be like Jesus as out from myself, then I am actually standing in His way. As long as I live, he is not seen. Only in my absence is he present. Now I am not suggesting that we become robot bodies for Jesus. But I am suggesting that His very life is to be formed in your will, your emotions, your mind, unto the expression of His nature, character, love, life.

Brothers and sisters, may I suggest to you that herein lies the single most important misunderstanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As Watchman Nee says, the normal Christian life is not you living for Christ. That is popular, but should not be normal. That might be the prevalent Christian life, but it is not the real Christian life. The normal Christian life must be Christ Himself living in you.

But, how do I get out of His way? Now that is a good question. You see that is so much better of a question than "how do I live like Him". That's a question from which we can go nowhere. But "how can I get out of His way". Well...that question has some promise to it.

And that is what I have been trying to say. Here's what you don't do. You don't go out and decide you are going to be conformed to His death and start suffering for Jesus, thinking that one of these days you're going to wake up just like Him. That is ridiculous. You can't be conformed to His life. You must be conformed to His death, so that His life can be known. You'll never be "like Him". But you can be the expression of Him.

And here is how it works. His life in you works death to all that is not His life. His increase becomes your decrease. You can't just run out and start trying to decrease. I'm telling you that is like shoveling buckets of darkness out the window of a room without turning the light on. You can shovel till your arms fall off, but if there is no light to bring death to that darkness, then its not going anywhere.

See, that is what I'm trying to say. I'm having to use weird analogies because I don't know how else to do it. But the revealing of Him, the coming of Light, brings a manifest end to all that is darkness.

That's why it cannot be your death or your sufferings. There is nothing darkness can do to get rid of itself. Something else must bring its decrease. What could bring a decrease of darkness? Well how about Him who is the light? Him who is the true light coming into the world. "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all". If he who is dead to darkness is our life, then, when we walk in the light, then the deeds of darkness have no place in us.

Paul says "formerly you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Therefore walk as children of light".

What am I saying? I am saying that we are growing in 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.

And we ended up last week just making the point that He is not working His life into you. He is the spiritual life in you. He's not giving you more of Him. He's getting you out of His way. He's working death in you so that He can live.

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. 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.

And this is what you'll find in so many types and shadows, both in the Scriptures, and in the natural world.

For instance, when you put a seed into the ground. Say one of those beans that the children's church has been planting. There is the husk of the seed, the outer part, the outer man. Then there is the actual seed on the inner part. The inner man. When you plant that hard bean seed, how is the outer seed removed? How is it destroyed? Does something from the outside come and peel it off? Does the dirt eat it away? Does a gopher come and eat it off? No, what happens? The life growing on the inside breaks it open, breaks it off, pushes it away. It has no place when the life starts coming forth. The husk is removed with the increase of the Seed.

"Though our outward man is perishing, yet our inward man is being renewed day by day". "We who live are carrying around the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh".

It's the same way in Israel. Remember when we were talking about the door. In type and shadow they became the Son when they went through the door. Exodus 12. We spent a few weeks on that. Then they wandered in unbelief because they would not become the expression in the earth of what God had made them to be. They would not be a kingdom of priests in the earth. They would not work death into the land that God had given them.

Only Joshua and Caleb. But, when the Lord raised up from their midst a generation that would, how did they bring the manifestation of their relationship with God, their kingdom, their priesthood....all of that....how did they bring the manifestation of that into the land? By working death in the land so that the Seed of Abraham could live. Can you see that? They drove out all those who tried to live in His place.

Saul tried to save the best of it for God. God called that an abomination. God didn't want to save the best of it, he wanted to work death to all of it so that He could be seen in that land. He didn't want to patch it up and put it back in the game. He wanted a judgment to remove it, so that He could live.

Do you see that we're simply talking about the gospel here? I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ!. Do you see that this life that is in you must become the decrease of you or He will never be seen. Do you understand that the one you received when you were born again has an enemy in His land that must become obedient unto death or there will never be a manifestation of Him. Do you understand that you and I stand as King Saul trying to offer up to him the best of what He wants destroyed. Can you see with me that, just like Samuel then did with king Agag, he wants all that reigns in His place to be cut up in little pieces so that He can reign and rule. All of this is conformity to death. Can you understand that, just like in the book of Judges, when the Israelites tried to share the land with the enemies of the Seed, then they were always driven back and conquered. Only when a man after God's heart, David, rose up as king and took the entire land, every city and stronghold, could there ever be the king Solomon who reigned in peace and conquest over this land.

Do you see that you are that land and that king David is working death in you so that one who is greater than Solomon can reign in peace. Halleluiah. That's what I'm talking about. I'm talking about one Seed working its way through the land bringing about the decrease of the other.

And that's what being conformed to His death is all about. That is what carrying your cross is all about. That is what bearing His dying, fellowshiping in His sufferings. See, that is the death that needs to be working in you.

You are like a land that, though it was fully given to Christ, the Seed of God, at new birth, remains hostile. You don't think you're hostile to His reign. You don't think you need to face His death. In fact, there are many places where you try to make peace, make treaties with Christ so that he will allow you to remain. I'll behave better, just don't kill me. I'll stop cussing. I'll be a missionary, just don't kill me. I'll do an internship, I'll do all my devotionals. Tell me how bad I am, tell me all that needs to be different, just don't tell me that I have to lose my life to find it. "Lets make peace Lord, you and I. Lets both live here. I'll be the main guy, and you'll be the dormant seed that takes me to a better place when I die."

Tell me to do anything you want, just don't tell me that I have to be conformed to your death if I'm ever going to know what life is.

Do you remember what God kept telling the Israelites over and over before they entered the land. "Do not make peace with the inhabitants of the land". "Do not make treaties, agreements,". "Do not intermarry with them". Do not share the land. Drive them out. Destroy them. They are wicked and are under my judgment.

Death must work in us. We must be made conformable to His death. We must bear in ourselves all that he died to, through the knowing of Him as life.

And so there is the objective fact – “you have been baptized into His death”, and there is the subjective experiencing – “carrying about His dying”. There is the finished work – “I have been crucified with Christ”, and there is the ongoing realization – “putting off the old man”, “being made conformable to His death”. There is that which He already has finished and knows, and then there is coming to know even as you are known. Just as there is that for which He has already apprehended you, and then there is your apprehension of it. There is “having the mind of Christ”, then there is “letting that mind be in you” or “renewing the spirit of your mind”. There is receiving of His Spirit, and then there is walking in that Spirit. There is “believing on Christ unto salvation”, and “abiding in Christ” unto fruit-bearing. Believing in Christ unto salvation from Hell. Abiding in Him unto salvation from yourself.

You see there is always the finished work, and then there is the subjective participation in that which is finished through knowing Him as your life. That is how it always works. And that is how it works in death. There is the settled issue through the cross. And then there is the taking out of your heart all of which He has already taken out of His sight. There is the giving of the land to seed of Abraham, then there is the removing from His land all of that which stands opposed to the one who already has all authority in heaven and earth.

In other words, as Jesus says “

- Mat 10:39 `He who found his life shall lose it, and he who lost his life for my sake shall find it.
- Mat 16:25 for whoever may will to save his life, shall lose it, and whoever may lose his life for my sake shall find it,
- Joh 12:25 He who loves his life shall lose it. And he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal.
- Luk 14:26 If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and his *own* life also, he cannot be My disciple.

You see, and this is entirely contrary to everything that man has made religion to be. Many of you have faced this already, but the natural man has himself as the chief end of all endeavors and pursuits and relationships and desires and goals and loves and even the seeking of God.

And so it is that religion, Christian religion or whatever, has become to so many a way to get from God what you are unable to get from the world. Doing a religion, modifying behavior, agreeing with doctrines, etc. becomes a means whereby the natural man attempts to get from God the things that he realizes he cannot secure for himself. For instance, protection from harm. Personal feelings of purpose and success and accomplishment. An afterlife where you have even more than you have here.

I'm not trying to be hard, I'm must trying to call a spade a spade. If we ignore the nature of the gospel, which is the losing of what we call life in order to gain what He is as Life, then we are going to make something up whereby we can get everything we ever wanted. And that sells books and builds churches, but doesn't correspond to anything in the Truth.

In fact, I was recently told that there is a Christian book out called "how to be rich, and get everything you ever wanted". I'm sure it's a best seller. Now, that is an extreme title...but it is a common theme. And it demonstrates how we seek to use God for our own end. It might has well be called "how to make Jesus into your personal genie in a lamp". It corresponds nothing to the truth.

Jesus says to Pontius Pilate, "all who desire the truth will listen to me". Pilate looks at Him and says "what is truth?". Well, for so may of us it's a mish-mash of religious notions that somehow secure for us everything we've ever dreamed about without the price of being conformed to His death. And even though you have to cut out or ignore enormous portions of Scriptures that, in fact, demand this to be the way...we somehow find a way to proclaim such a religion as the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, let me leave you with this question. What do you want? Do you want a religion that will pretend to make you into something great? Or do you want the truth, wherein you die and He becomes in you and is made unto all things of life and godliness. What a difference. And wide is the gate that leads to a religion that is gain to self. And narrow is the gate that loses self to gain Christ.

But your life will be the testimony of what you have wanted. Your life will be the public demonstrated of what you have desired. Whether you want it to or not, your life will be a banner that shows men and angels what you sought to gain and what you sought to lose. Many, seeking to gain their lives, will lose Christ. Some, losing their lives, will gain Christ. (And I'm not talking about salvation from Hell here. I'm simply talking about the experience of Him)

I don't believe that the Lord withholds or has withheld anything from us in this covenant. In fact, I know that all things have, in fact, been freely given in the giving of Christ. Romans 8:32. 1 Corinthians 2:12. But I do think that you will come to know and experience only that to which you are willing to know through conformity to His death...because you are the wall, the veil, the barricade that stands in the way of knowing Him. And so, in my opinion, we will go as far with knowing God as we want to, but absolutely no further. In other words, you and I will go as far into knowing His life as we are willing to be conformed to His death.