

Esteeming Christ

It is a most wonderful thing that we could have in our affections esteem for Christ. How marvelous that in our affections, in our very heart and love and feelings, there could be esteem for Christ. There could be regard for Him, where He Himself is the object of our attention and our everything. Esteem for Christ — this is a great thing.

What Moses esteemed

The word “esteem” is used in the New Testament. For example, concerning Moses Hebrews 11:26 says, “Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he looked away to the reward.” There is a comparison going on here. There is a value system within Moses. There is something in him that esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than anything else. The life and work of Moses embodies and typifies Christ in many details. When the Holy Spirit writes the Word, it is in the realm of one big eternal now. Whether you are in the Old Testament or the New Testament, it is describing Christ. All the types, shadows, and figures in the Old Testament are concerning Christ.

In the experience of Moses, he esteemed Christ.

Esteeming Christ

Something of Christ was far greater to him than the treasures of Egypt. This means that Moses was not being forced, coerced, or persuaded by someone to get away from Egypt and its treasures. He did not have an afflicted conscience causing him to run away from something. But he had an inner esteem for something higher. Something higher attracted his attention and pulled him away from every other realm. He left Egypt without a struggle, without a turmoil, because of the attraction of a greater object. Such an attraction has the force to deal with every other realm. A minister of the Word years ago in England, Thomas Chalmers, gave a message entitled *“The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.”* That title depicts what happened to Moses in Egypt. There was a new affection that took hold of him and that expelled him from Egypt. That means when a new affection is in us, it has the power to expel everything else. Moses esteemed Christ, and that gave him the ability to deal with Egypt.

This is why there is so much said about Moses in these verses. For example, verse 24 says, “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” That means there was an ability in Moses that was supplied to him. It was the ability to say “no.” He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He said no to being identified with the world.

Esteeming Christ

He just said no. Why did he say no? Because of what he esteemed. This is what needs to take hold of us more than anything. This life is not about being outwardly compelled. It is about something getting into your affection. It is a wooing of your heart. It is a winning of your being to the loveliness and the most glorious revelation of this Christ who is greater, sweeter, more attractive, more excellent, more marvelous than anything else that passes through us. So we esteem. It is what we esteem. Moses could refuse because he esteemed.

Verse 25 says, “Choosing rather to be ill-treated with the people of God.” Who would be that foolish, to choose to be ill-treated with the people of God rather than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin? Only someone who esteems something higher. This was all because of what was in this man of God. He esteemed. Then verse 26 says, “Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he looked away to the reward.” The King James Version says, “he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” Actually the Greek word used here is better translated, “he looked away.” It is the Greek word *blepo*, which means to see, to look, with the preposition “from.” “Look away from.” He looked away to the reward. But in looking at the reward, he was looking away from something, because he was looking

Esteeming Christ

away to the reward. It is a glorious thing, when you realize your trophy, your blue ribbon, your reward, is God Himself. It is God Himself in His enlargement for His kingdom and in His kingdom. This is a marvelous truth. We can see that Moses looked away to this reward. In other words, he esteemed something higher.

Then verse 27 says, “By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he persevered as one seeing the Unseen One.” Just consider the inner life of Moses. What person would do what he did? He was in one of the highest positions in Egypt. He was at the top. He had risen — prestige, everything. Then he forsook it all and went to Pharaoh over and over again. Defeat after defeat. One defeat after another. God told Moses, “Go talk to Pharaoh and say, Let My people go.” God said that to him. Has God ever said anything like that to you? Then you go and there is defeat, disappointment, no answer. Every time Moses went, Pharaoh hardened his heart. Pharaoh hardened his heart. But all the hardening of the heart was just the gaining of momentum for God to be displayed on this earth with all His signs and wonders, to make His name known.

So never be intimidated by disappointment, by defeat. God is only preparing to come back in. When the tide is ebbing, it is only gaining momentum to come back

Esteeming Christ

in. We should always consider this when we are discouraged. Remember this word. And just remind yourselves when you are on the floor, that the Lord's life is really gaining momentum to come back in a higher enjoyment of resurrection life. Hallelujah! This is true. So we can see that because Moses esteemed, he could forsake, not fearing the wrath of the king. He made so many crucial decisions as a result of what was in him. He esteemed as seeing this One.

The meaning of esteem

What we esteem is critical in our experience. The Greek word for "esteem" in these verses is *hegeomai*. It means "lead." This word is translated in the New Testament as "governor" (Matt. 2:6). Another time it is translated "ruler," speaking of the rulers of the Jews. In still another place it is translated "leader," referring to the ones taking the lead. Leader, ruler, governor are all translations of the root thought in the word translated "esteem."

By this we can see what esteeming means. It is what has first place. It is what takes the lead. It is what governs. It is what rules in our experience. When we esteem, it means there is something in us that governs us. For

Esteeming Christ

example, all of us have experiences, both personally and with others, where what we esteem comes out. What we talk about and what we are enthused about is an indication of what we regard, what we esteem. It is usually what rules us, what governs us. Many times when you talk to someone, you touch what they consider important. What they esteem comes out. For example, sometimes when you talk to me, I might start telling you about computers. By my talk you could discern that I am a person who esteems computers.

So what we say in our conversation and what holds our interest is what we esteem. What do we esteem? This is a major question that reveals what is in our heart. Is it our future? Is it our bank account? Is it our material possessions? The Holy Spirit is able to expose in us what we esteem, what governs us, what leads us. The Lord's moving on this earth is simply to gain His people so that they would find themselves esteeming Christ above every other realm.

Losing everything because of esteeming Christ

Now let us look at Philippians 3:7-8: "But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ. But moreover I also count all things to

Esteeming Christ

be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, that I may gain Christ.” Here is the testimony of the apostle Paul, helping us to see what the Spirit does in us and the way the Spirit takes with us in our experience. He is leading us to *count* all things to be loss. This is the same Greek word for “esteem.” It means to calculate, to value something. It means to regard it in a certain way.

So among us there is a certain kind of regard, there is a certain value in us. For example, you are having problems in your relationship with one another as husband and wife. Your feelings are real. Your views are also very real. What you think about a situation is real to you. You regard your thought, your feeling, your opinion. You regard that. You have a deep conviction that rules and governs you. Your own thought and feeling has the precedent over Christ in your regard, in your consideration. What happens to so many of us is that in our strong reactions, the Lord allows us to end up in death. We end up dry, dead, and without any inward nourishment and supply. It is like we are tumbling helplessly in space without any shoring, without anything to hold on to. This is because we have regarded our mind, and it had its way. Then another day comes around and the same

Esteeming Christ

feelings rise up. We pass through it again. But this time, because of the Spirit's operation, His working, there is a new esteem in us for Christ, a new regard for Him. There is a new respect and appreciation to experience Him rather than have our own way.

The ability in the excellency of the knowledge of Christ

According to verse 8, Paul could testify in his experience, "I esteem all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." This means there was something about the excellency of the knowledge. What kind of excellency of the knowledge of Christ do we have? We may be down on a lower level trying to carve out our little experience. We may be trying to make it work and trying to figure it out, when all the time what we really need to get us out of every hole is to have an expansive vision that could be described as "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Somehow there was within Paul something that could be described as the excellency of the knowledge. That means Christ was on his horizon. He had a vision of how unsearchably rich Christ was. Where did he get it? How did he get it? How do you get it? How do you have it? How do you have something that so supersedes every-

Esteeming Christ

thing else that you just regard it as loss? I count it all loss. I count my attainments, I count my ways, I count my life, as loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. How do you arrive at that state? In verse 8 Paul continues, “On account of whom.” Listen to this, “on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and regard them, esteem them, as refuse, that I may gain Christ.” I not only count all things loss, but I have suffered the loss. In our meeting on the Lord’s Day, when we are singing, we count all things loss. But on Monday afternoon we suffer the loss of all things. That means it is not just revelation and inspiration, but it is also in our experience suffering the loss of all things on account of Christ, that we may gain Him.

Paul was a person with something in him that so surpassed the natural, human realm that he lived with an esteeming of Christ, a value for Christ, a desire to live in Him, to gain Him, to be in Him moment by moment. He knew that every little fleeting emotion, such as the fear of death, would be just for Christ to be magnified. So when he was in prison he could say, “Whether by life or by death, Christ shall be magnified in my body. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” The supply of the Spirit was for that kind of living. This shows us what Paul esteemed.

Esteeming Christ

What do we esteem? Where on this earth are there brothers, sisters, young people, couples, who esteem Christ? Where are there churches, where are there saints meeting, where the value system is Christ? Where what really matters is not my way or his way or their way or anyone's way, but Christ Himself? Who values Christ? Who esteems Christ? Where is Christ? Not my doctrine, not my movement, not my denomination, not my emphasis, but Christ? In this universe what else but Christ is worthy of our esteem?

The Father's esteem of Christ

Go talk to the Father. Refer yourself to the Father. In Matthew 17 when the Lord was transfigured on the mountain, Peter proposed that they build three tabernacles — for the Lord, for Moses, and for Elijah. He was excited about the Prophets and the Law. But the Father interrupted him and said, “This is My beloved Son in whom I delight. Hear Him” (v. 5). The Father's esteem in this universe is singular. It is on His Son. He is the Father's delight. Just refer yourself to the Father in the Gospels. See what He says both at the Lord's baptism and transfiguration, those two major points in His life. Both times the Father gave a quick, brief testimony. It was

Esteeming Christ

quick, short, and brief. He did not have anything else to say. He just said, “Hear Him.” Amen! This is the esteeming of Christ by the Father.

The Father has thought. And when thought comes out, it comes out as word. All thought is eventually translated into word. John 1:1 says “In the beginning was the Word” — singular. This is Christ. He is the Word. When the Father spoke, when God talked, He only said one word, and that word is Christ. Embodied in that one Word is every word that you will ever need to hear. Christ is the Word. What is God speaking to you? All of His thought, all of His intention, all of His purpose, is in Christ. God spoke and out came one word — the Word, Christ Himself, the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead. So when you have Him, you have all the thought of the Father. You have all the intention of the Father. You have Christ as the summation of every thought of God. This is the esteem of the Father concerning His Son.

Dare we esteem any other thing higher than Christ? In our experience, among us, among the churches, among the brothers, may we esteem only Christ. What a precious thing it is to esteem Christ and to have that esteem in our heart. In our affection, in our considerations, in all our deliberations, we regard Him. He is the governor. He

Esteeming Christ

governs us. He is the ruler. He is the leader. He has first place. Practically He has first place in our experience.

Esteeming Christ in God's economy

In 1 Timothy 1:3-5 we see the economy of God in Christ. Here Paul says to Timothy, “Even as I exhorted you when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones *not to teach different things.*” This compound Greek word can be translated “Not to teach differently.” You might ask, “Differently from what?” In other words, what is the standard that we should stay with in the teaching?

Paul is charging Timothy, “Do not let certain ones teach differently.” Then in verse 4 he adds, “Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings.” Then he says, “Rather.” This is *mallon*, a very strong contrasting word in Greek. There is a contrast here. Do not teach differently, including these myths and genealogies, “rather than God's economy which is in faith.” So there is a contrast between God's economy and something else.

As Christians, as saints in the churches, we need to esteem the economy of God in Christ in all that we fellowship, even in all that we minister, all that we

Esteeming Christ

emphasize. We must be on the target of what is included in God's economy, which is in the realm of faith. That means it is by revelation. Revelation generates faith. It is not speculation. It is not quibbling over doctrines and arguing over this and that point. This only ends up with people's dispositions and their flesh getting activated to disagree, to have hurt feelings, to argue, and to be separated from one another. If we are in that realm, we are in the wrong realm. God's economy does not leave us that way. God's economy results in a different kind of expression. It has a different outcome among believers practically.

And verse 5 shows us what the outcome is: "But the end of the charge." You could also say, "the result of keeping this charge is love out of a pure heart, and out of a good conscience, and out of unfeigned faith." All three of these things are so experiential. Love out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere, pure faith. When you touch these saints in whom there is an esteem for God's economy, you touch the divine love, you touch the clear conscience, and you touch this wonderful reality of unfeigned faith. That means unhypocritical faith — no pretense, no outward kind of behavior, just something sincere. This is the result of staying in God's economy.

Where are those who esteem God's economy in

Esteeming Christ

Christ rather than being off on all the tributary things that lead to squabbles, questionings, things that are ultimately of no profit? In Bible school and seminary, it is easy to get diseased with questionings. Paul uses the term “diseased with questionings” (1 Tim. 6:4). It means you just want to satisfy your mind. You want your ears to be tickled (2 Tim. 4:3). You do not care about Christ in your experience. You do not care for the Lord’s life in you. You only care for getting an answer, more knowledge, and having your ears tickled. That will never build up the church. Only those who are serious about the disposition of Christ being wrought into them could build up the church. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Paul says, “Do not teach differently. Do not get off on some hobby horse. Rather, stay with God’s economy which is in faith.”

Esteeming Christ to execute everything over us

God’s economy is further opened up in Ephesians 3:9. Here Paul says, “And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is.” The economy is the working out, the administration, of this mystery. Paul wants the believers to see what the economy of this mystery is, “which throughout the ages has been hidden in God who created all things.” Why? “In order that now

Esteeming Christ

to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church” (v. 10). Then Paul says in verse 11, “According to the eternal purpose which He made, executed, in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Everything in this universe was created for a purpose. That purpose is embodied in the church. Through the church the wisdom of God is made known to the whole universe. And what is the wisdom of God? It is everything that has been executed in Christ Jesus our Lord. It means that here among us it is Christ who executes His life over my mind, over my will, over my emotion, over my relationship with you and your relationship with me. We cannot make it in ourselves. We do not make it by ourselves. But we are ones who live off of Him, drink Him, eat Him, follow Him, obey Him, confess Him. He is executing, and everything He executes is part of God’s administration. It is the economy of God. It is Christ Himself operating and working out.

Esteeming Christ or things?

Do not teach differently. You may like a certain thing. If you like prayer, that is good. But do not make prayer a hobby horse. Prayer is Christ. The prophecy

Esteeming Christ

about Christ in Psalm 109:1-4 says that the adversaries hated Him. They fought against Him without a cause, and for His love He got hate. The Lord's reaction to that treatment is in verse 4: "but I am prayer." This is the Hebrew expression. The Lord's response, "I am prayer," reveals that it is the Lord Himself who is prayer. The King James Version says, "I gave Myself to prayer." But "gave Myself" is not in the original text. It is just "I am prayer." He is prayer. This is true of prayer, and it is true of Bible study. We may get excited about Bible study, but even Bible study should not replace Christ. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, but you do not come to Me that you might have life" (John 5:39).

We have to see that with everything it is so easy for believers to get off. I was filled with the Holy Spirit one night, and I spoke in tongues. I had a powerful experience. I thank God that He allowed this over my life. But I doubt that you have an impression that I am so excited about the power that came upon me. You may have never even known it until now. You do not have that impression. Do we esteem an experience? Or do we esteem Christ? Hallelujah! It is just Christ. It is Christ Himself. To esteem the economy of God in Christ is a great thing.

When John Calvin commented on 1 Timothy 1:3-5,

Esteeming Christ

he clearly echoed what it means. When it says do not teach differently, this teaching differently does not refer to “different” heretical doctrines. Paul is not referring here to occult teaching. He is stressing what we should emphasize in the ministry. With all the various truths that we have, we need to emphasize the right thing. Emphasis is an important thing for any servant of the Lord. If the Lord calls you, takes you away to churches and uses you, remember, it is a great thing for you to be under a vision of what God’s economy is and not to be side-tracked with something other than what God wants to do in this universe.

I mean just look at Ephesians 1:10. Look, it stops our mouths. Ephesians 1:10. After Paul speaks of the mystery of God’s will being made known to us in Ephesians 1:9, he says, “unto the economy of the fullness of the times, the administration of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth in Him” (v. 10). It is all the things. Whatever the things are, they are to be headed up, summed up, in Christ. It is a great thing that there could be churches on this earth that esteem not a way of meeting, but Christ. Some brothers are so concerned about the way to meet — that it should be proper, that there should not be just one speaker, but it should be more

Esteeming Christ

corporate, more mutual. It is a method all over again. You can smell it. Of course, I do not mean we should not meet mutually. But brothers and sisters, what do we esteem — the way of meeting or Christ?

When Christ is our life and our portion, He breaks out in different kinds of ways. So what we prize is Christ. Sometimes we have had meetings where our calling on the name of the Lord is to the third heavens and beyond. But what a pity if we are reduced to a kind of calling church every meeting. Then we would esteem calling rather than Christ. Let me share an experience. When I was first filled with the Spirit and spoke in tongues, I would often feel, “Oh, we have to have a message in tongues this morning with interpretation, to have a good meeting.” I was getting off. I got sidetracked. It was not Christ that I esteemed. It was a manifestation of a certain gift. So we have to see how critical it is to be a person that esteems Christ in God’s economy.

Christ is a Person, not a method

We have had meetings where we all raised our hands. One in particular was a very special meeting. The Lord just came in. It was real. There was a flow. Then we came back to the next meeting. I do not know if we raised our

Esteeming Christ

hands or not. It was just Christ. And I thought, “Thank You, Lord. Look at the church here.” It was just Christ again. He is a person. He is not a method. And so He throws curve balls. This is wonderful. Sometimes the meetings are loud. Sometimes they are quiet. His presence is here just in silence. So God’s economy is Christ. No substitutes.

This is why Paul said, “Charge some not to teach differently.” That means do not emphasize the wrong things. Years ago we had a marriage retreat with a hundred couples. We went to a retreat center, and we were there to talk about marriage. To tell you the truth, I was in fear and trembling that we would have a mindset, “Now we are going to fix our marriages.” I do not mean that we do not need to fellowship. Paul said, “Love your wives. Submit to your husbands.” It is in the Bible. But the emphasis, what you esteem, what you regard, what you value, could become an “ideal marriage.” If you hear that your marriage is supposed to be a certain way and it is not that way, this may distract you away from Christ. That is why the “how-to” books can be dangerous, spiritually speaking. They can put a view in us, a concept, an expectation. I know some sisters who have read books about what husbands and wives should know about each other. They read these books and it produces a thought in

Esteeming Christ

them, “Oh, my marriage is not this way. And it should be this way.” What they read put reactions in them. I saw it happen right before my eyes. Where on this earth are there brothers and sisters that lead people to Christ? You may not have what you think you should have. But where is your esteem? Do you esteem Christ or do you esteem “the happy marriage” that you want? So we have to see how critical it is to esteem the economy of God in Christ.

Esteeming our enjoyment of Christ

We also need to esteem our enjoyment of Christ. This is a great thing to esteem, just as Mary did. We all know the story of Mary and Martha in Luke chapter 10. Martha was busy, but Mary chose the better part. She sat at the Lord’s feet and heard His word. This shows that within Mary there was an esteeming of her enjoyment, of her regard for that. But some of us are like locomotives dispositionally. We wake up a locomotive. We are in gear from the moment we open our eyes. But the Lord knows that even locomotive dispositions will find the end of the track somewhere. When that day comes, it will no longer be a matter of forcing yourself to be with the Lord. It is “I have to be with the Lord, or I cannot live today.” I cannot live this life apart from supply. I cannot live

Esteeming Christ

without opening to my God, letting the intimacies of His voice talk to my inward parts, letting light shine and pull down attitudes and little hidden motives in me that get exposed in His presence. I have to have that kind of interaction with the Lord in the Word, to let Him process me with His life, with the Word, to eliminate funny thoughts out of my mind — condemning thoughts, accusing thoughts, weights that I do not even know I have. In other words, I esteem choosing to sit at His feet. That is what I esteem.

And this is what the Lord needs on this earth — lovers, esteemers — you esteem your time, your portion with the Lord, your closet experience, the time when you shut the door. You esteem your personal intimacy with the Lord, because out of that personal intimacy comes His governing of you, His headship of you, the inner life that is springing from within, not just from without. Not just because Paul is present will you obey. “But now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God who is operating in you” (Phil. 1:12-13). Do not obey just because of outward pressure. God is there from within.

We esteem our time with Him, our enjoyment of the Lord in the Word. This is another area that we esteem. We all know that it was Mary that broke the alabaster box.

Esteeming Christ

It was Mary that anointed the Lord for His death. It was Mary that was able to just pour out. Why? Because she esteemed supply and appreciation and love to the Lord. As a result she was able to be the one to pour out so much upon Him. Thank God for this esteem of God's economy and also for the enjoyment of Christ.

Esteeming our experience of Christ

In Philippians 3:7-8 Paul is passing through all kinds of experiences, and he esteems it all as loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. Then he says, "I have suffered the loss of all things." In the context Paul is speaking about his heritage, what fed his pride. For example, he called himself "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." In the previous verses he itemizes all those things that could be attributed to him, all of his attainments, his heritage — all that a man could boast in. This kind of boasting is inbred. It is in our fibers, in our flesh. That is pride. Italians are proud. Irish are proud. Mexicans are proud. It is in our flesh. That is the old creation. But now, all these things that were gains to me I count loss on account of Christ.

Because Paul esteemed Christ in his experience, he counted as loss all the things that built up his pride. He

Esteeming Christ

suffered the loss of all these things that he might gain Christ and be found in Him. In verse 9 he says, “And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law.” That means when others come and find you, how do they find you? They meet you on the street, but they do not want to find you thinking about how wonderful you are. They do not want to find you trusting in your good work. You lived a victorious life in every area. Your mind is full of cogitations. Paul said that he did not want to be found that way: “I want to be found in Him, not having my own righteousness. I want to be enjoying the righteousness of this One who is my righteousness. And that frees me from guilt, condemnation, preoccupation, and self-introspection. I am finished with it when I am occupied with Christ.”

He is my righteousness. I want to be found in Him not having my own righteousness, but that which is coming through the faith of Him, that I might know Him. Paul wants to experience Christ. He is esteeming Christ in such a way that He speaks these kinds of words to sweep his inner life, to sweep it from all self-trust, self-righteousness, self-confidence, self-effort. He sweeps it because he esteems Christ above everything in his experience.

So when you and I are thinking about ourselves in these kinds of ways, it is just another knock at the door to

Esteeming Christ

just count it loss. Drop it. Lose it. When you lose something, it always happens quickly, fast, accidentally. Nothing is finished. You just lose something. Just lose it. It got lost. I lost my wallet. What happened? I lost it. Amen! I lost trying to get myself together to come to the meeting. I lost it! Amen! Christ! Oh, what a joy, to be out of my self and into Him, to be found in Him. This is Paul. This is the brother that esteemed Christ in such a way.

Esteeming the expression of Christ

We can also esteem the expression of Christ. Where are there brothers esteeming the expression of Christ? We find one with John in Revelation chapter 1. Verse 1 says, “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him to show to His slaves the things that must quickly take place.” If we read the book of Revelation through our minds, it would be “This is the prophecy about all the things coming at the end of the age. And we are going to see how everything is fulfilled here.” That is the way we would start. Many believers today are taken up with prophecy. Do not misunderstand me. Revelation is a book of prophecy. But what does the Holy Spirit esteem in writing this book? The first words are, “The revelation of Jesus Christ.” That is what this book is about. Later

Esteeming Christ

it says, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of the prophecy” (Rev. 19:10). That means the testimony about Jesus is the sum and substance of the prophecy. If you want to touch the heart of the prophecy, the fulfillment of the seven seals, the seven bowls, the seven trumpets, and all the things, if you want to touch the heart, the testimony is the spirit of the prophecy. Whatever is happening in God’s administration, whatever is happening in this universe, this creation is groaning to produce Christ as the Head of His Body, sparkling in this whole universe, wearing His Body, wearing His members, glorified in His members. This is what this book is about. This is why it is not a small thing what we esteem as a believer. And here it is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

After John received the revelation, verse 2 tells us that he “testified the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, even all that he saw.” Then in verse 9 he says, “I, John, your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.” That is why he was there, because he esteemed what God esteems — the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. It turns out that the testimony of Jesus Christ is in the churches, is with the churches. That is why the Lord is standing in the midst

Esteeming Christ

of the seven golden lampstands. This means there is an esteeming in John throughout the book of Revelation of the expression of Christ, which is the churches.

Regardless of how bad the condition was, how off the conditions were in those seven churches, the Lord is right there in the midst of all seven, including the most deceived one, Laodicea. These saints did not think they had need of anything. They thought they were doing fine. And all the time the Lord is outside the door. He is not even really in their midst. He is knocking, trying to get in. Nevertheless, He is at the door trying to get in. This shows us that the church life should never be given up regardless of how low its condition is. Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Laodicea. The Lord has nothing else in this universe but His people, His gathered ones. So He comes at the beginning of Revelation, and there He walks in the midst.

If He cannot get everyone, He will get those who have an ear. It would be wonderful if everyone in the church in Ephesus would repent and give their heart back to their first love. It would be wonderful if the whole church responded. The Lord spoke to the church, but then He says, "He that has an ear, let him hear." And that is why church history is made up of one little recovery after another and one little remnant group coming out after another. There are the ones that heard the voice of the

Esteeming Christ

Lord, that heard the call of the Lord, and that pursued Him in the midst of the entire outward expression of professing Christianity. Some of this expression is dead. Some is institutional. But out of this come those who are the persecuted lot. As Paul said, “They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). “They hated Me; they will hate you also” (John 15:18). This indicates that when the Lord’s life is there, on the one hand there is a glowing testimony. On the other hand there are reports that come, that try to dissipate it. And that is as it should be as long as there is a devil around. We esteem the expression of Christ, which is the church.

Esteeming Christ in the New Testament books

Consider how every New Testament book begins. See what each book esteems. New Testament, I like to come to you and talk to you. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I like to knock at your door and ask, “Who do you esteem? Who do you esteem?” Usually what people talk about first is what they esteem. You just consider the books of the New Testament — the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles, and then the book of Revelation. How does Matthew start? “The generation of Jesus Christ.”

Esteeming Christ

Right away we are on stage. Here we are front and center, focused. There are no myths or genealogies, in that kind of sense. It is just “the generation of Jesus Christ.” Then how does Mark start? “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” And the Gospel of John starts with, “In the beginning was the Word.”

Then you go to the book of Acts, which is just a continuation of Christ. Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke. Now he is writing the book of Acts, and he starts by saying, “of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach.” So Acts is just the continuation. Romans starts with a summary of all that was written in the Scriptures “concerning His Son.” Right away the economy of God is on the mark in every book. It is His Son. It is His Son. It is His Son. We are going to enjoy this more and more in the coming days.

The determining factors in our esteeming of Christ

One of the determining factors of our esteeming of Christ is our knowledge of Christ. I believe that after Paul got saved he went into Arabia for about three years. We do not know what happened there. All we know is that he had been a Pharisee. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel. That means he knew the Old Testament. He knew it in his Jewish way. But then the Lord appeared to him on the

Esteeming Christ

Damascus Road, and he preached for a while. After that he went into the desert for three years. No doubt he had his Hebrew and Septuagint with him. He went through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and his eyes were opened to see Christ in a way that he had never seen Him. He had the excellency of the knowledge of Christ by actually digging into the Word systematically through the Old Testament. He saw Christ everywhere. Then later when he was writing to the Ephesians, he said, “I have been sent to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel.” If you read this in the original language, Paul is referring to the good land, to the land flowing with milk and honey, to its breadth, its length, its height, and its depth. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is all there in Paul because he got into the Word.

Now look at Paul in Acts 28:23. It says, “And once they had appointed a day for him, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he expounded these matters, solemnly testifying of the kingdom of God and persuading them concerning Jesus,” listen, “from both the law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning until evening.” That is why Paul says “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” It was not just a vague thing to him. This brother spent time getting into the Old Testament. And from morning to night, from Genesis, from Exodus, he

Esteeming Christ

opened up Christ and God's purpose. When you see Christ in this way, then you esteem Him. So we need the knowledge of Christ.

The esteeming of Christ is in the realm of the Spirit. So if we exercise our spirit, there is an esteeming. You and I may not be feeling that excited about the Lord, but the moment we pray, the moment we start to sing, we get filled up in spirit, and our esteem for Christ rises. But if we live in our soul-life day after day, our esteem for Christ will not be that rich. But the more we live in the spirit, the more the spirit is our source, it will affect our esteem for Christ. We will value taking the Lord in a deeper way. We will value the Lord in little details. We will value Him in a greater and finer way when we live in the realm of the Spirit.

Where your treasure is, there is your heart. Where your treasure is, there is your esteem. What we treasure becomes the factor directing our heart and our capacity to esteem Christ. You cannot serve two masters. We know it is impossible. That is why our heart has to be single to love Him. Eventually the evidence of our esteeming of Christ is the supremacy of Christ in our affections. Our expectancy of Christ is in our living. We are willing to lose everything. We value and we regard Christ. Amen!

Oh, may the Lord grant us to have a deep impression. Whatever this word operates, my prayer is, "Lord, let it

Esteeming Christ

operate in us to bring us back again and again and again to Yourself, to keep us focused and occupied with Yourself, and eventually to not have a taste for anything else but Christ.” Oh, may the Lord ruin our taste for anything else — for arguments, for doctrine, for denomination, for method, for ways, for personalities — for anything. Oh, may He waste, may He ruin, our taste for all of that, so that the only taste we have is Christ. Lord, Yourself. Only Yourself.

This is how He is heading up this universe. This is His government. There are not other messages. I do not mean that I have the message personally. I am only an echo, one person, testifying that Christ is the burden in these last days. It is where the emphasis is Christ and Christ alone. And it is where the churches are being headed up to express this one Christ, where barriers are broken and there is fellowship around the earth with churches everywhere that are occupied with the same one thing — Christ. Not anything else. Oh, may our hearts go in this direction.

— *Bill Freeman*
7/21/96

Ministry Publications © 1996
PO Box 48255, Spokane, WA 99228
1.800.573.4105 / Fax 509.468.4222