

The Three “Knowings” of the New Creation

Touching problems with the value system of God’s economy

We love God’s economy. It is just Christ being everything and the church being the result and issue of Christ being everything. When Christ is everything, then the issue is God’s heart’s desire, the church. It is not a matter of trying to have the church and then adding Christ in. It is Christ being everything, and that is the church. So praise the Lord for God’s wonderful economy.

Consider how the apostles touched the church life. Whatever they touched, they were brothers with a clear focus. They were not just outwardly arranging the church in certain ways or just solving problems, but they were under the revelation that God wants to conform all His people to the image of Christ. So the kind of ministry that is found in the pages of the New Testament leads the saints into a deeper fellowship with the Lord in some way or another. It opens up something of the truth about the church, about the kingdom, about God’s purpose. It takes what is apparently mundane and links it to the eternal value system. For example, that one little turn to the Lord or that apology or keeping the oneness of the Spirit between us in the bond of peace — all these things are really the divine activity of God operating to build up His eternal habitation. So we see a different set of values in the New Testament in dealing with problems.

The world has its value system, and we have our value systems. But may we lay ourselves open to be so renewed that we would have the identical value system of the Triune God — that we would feel the way God

feels, that we would see things and perceive things in the same way. This value system is in every page of the New Testament. Whatever the New Testament ministry touched, the emphasis of God’s economy was there. This is a great thing.

I have been reading about Jonathan Edwards. We know that he was part of the Great Awakening, when the Spirit moved in those early years of American history. The Puritans had fallen back into formalism and worldliness and deadness in the churches. And then eventually in Northampton, Massachusetts, the Lord touched the believers where Edwards was meeting, and the Spirit came. They experienced a dynamic display of the Spirit, and people were quickened. Many kinds of people were saved and taverns were shut. It was real revival. It was an awakening. All this happened. And in that congregation, Edwards was leading them to know Christ and to focus on Christ. Some of the most descriptive language of the riches and the excellencies of Christ that has ever been uttered in English words came out of Jonathan Edwards’ mouth. In his ministry you can taste the sweetness of his relationship with the Lord and the centrality of Christ in his understanding and experience.

But somehow when an issue arose, the church in Northampton lost whatever focus Edwards might have shared and instead got into an issue. It became a big problem. As I was reading this, I felt like talking to the pages, “Don’t you know, saints, right here it’s a matter of turning to the Lord. You could bring God into that situation.” What a mercy it is that we could have our eyes opened not just in a church meeting, but on a Monday afternoon in our daily life. So many times we

IN THIS ISSUE:

- The Three “Knowings” of the New Creation — Pages 1-3, 6-8
- What Kind of Person Is God? (Part 2) — Pages 4- 5, 8
- Internet Update — Page 8

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have not linked what we heard in the meetings to the situation that we are going through. But increasingly as we all testify and share with one another, we are responding by saying, “This is that. What I’m going through is just what this saint has gone through.” We begin to make links in our experience and say, “This — what I am going through — is that which is revealed in the New Testament ministry.”

The need for a deeper fellowship

In the book of 1 Corinthians Paul deals with problem after problem, and in his dealing with each problem we see God’s economy. For example, we see him touching a narrow view of the church by ministering the truth of the universal church. Then we see him touching an organic division in the church by directing the saints into a deeper fellowship with the Lord in His name: “I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:10). That name is linked to their calling. They had been called into the fellowship of God’s Son (v. 9). So by their fellowshiping with the Lord, Paul knew God would be faithful to do something among the saints where there was an organic division, where there was not the harmony and the reality of oneness present with the saints.

The way Paul touches the problem is by saying, “God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Some were saying, “I am of Paul,” and others “I am of Apollos.” These words of strife were creating an atmosphere that was disintegrating the presence of the Lord in their meetings. This is what strife does. Strife disintegrates the reality of the church. Then the church becomes a form. It becomes cold, and the Spirit is not free to circulate in the atmosphere of the church. Then you do not feel an enlivening when you touch the church. Through the centuries, the enemy has always tried to disintegrate the Lord’s presence by strife. So Paul is saying that God is faithful with all of us regardless of our situation or how we were “cut” from our mother’s womb. “God is faithful through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son.” It is by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that Paul beseeches the saints to all speak the same thing.

Spending time to let the Lord go deeper

When there are cleavages and discordant things surfacing in us, this is a call to deeper, more intimate and thorough fellowship with the Lord. It is not just touch and go. It is a fellowship of getting ourselves into His presence and lingering there for some time, until the noise in our mind and our heart is quieted. We need

to leisurely take time to sit in His presence and open ourself to Him and read the Word and also the writings that are of the nature of the New Testament ministry. These are writings that will lead us to God and expose us. They will unveil His economy at the deepest level and deepen our fellowship with Him. Then we are not just “fast food” Christians, but we are spending time to let the Lord go deeper. Ask Him the question, “Lord, why is there strife in me?” It is not just saying, “Lord, deal with the strife,” and then off you go. But stay there and ask Him why and let Him expose. Let Him show you that you have a preference that is rooted in your self. Let the light shine.

When the light shines and we see our preference in God’s light, there is nothing we can do to change ourself by the energy of our flesh. But when the light shines, we can look and say “Amen.” That in itself kills the preference, and the Lord is able to work at a deeper level. Rather than not facing it, rather than not admitting it, rather than living a life of denial, we live opening to Him and letting the cross work at the deepest level. And that cannot come quickly. It takes time to be in His presence, to let Him shine.

Paul took three years in Arabia. His whole being was in a rage. We do not know much about Paul during those three years except that he was obviously with the Lord and letting God completely renovate his whole being. He had views. He had concepts. He was a filled-up man. How could anyone physically take the believers into prison and have them killed, and watch Stephen get martyred right before his eyes, if that man did not have a lot in him. It was not just a little emotional break-out with Paul. He was constituted with a self-life that would not quit until God shut it down.

We have been called into the fellowship of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. How deep is your fellowship? How deep is my fellowship with the Lord? To live our whole life in fellowship, we need to have a running start. We need to spend some time with the Lord, and then continue to nurture that fellowship with Him through the day. Then His life is living in us, and there is a dividing of soul and spirit. We see the self and we see Christ. This is God’s economy. It is “into the fellowship of His Son.”

Things related to a hidden life with God

In the church life oftentimes we go on for some years and then the Lord takes another major step in our experience. We have the sense that it is a call for a deeper fellowship with God. This happened in the Gospels. The Lord told the apostles, “Come away for a while. Rest a while.” There are times and seasons in our life when this is necessary, because it is so easy to

be caught up in the mundane things of life and not go much deeper than that. So go to your closet. Shut the door. Pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. We all need to have a secret life with God, a hidden life. And that brings the blessedness that funnels so much life into the church. There is so much life because everyone is enjoying the Head and the Source, and we are in fellowship with Him.

Paul says, "God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ." That is where God is faithful — in the fellowship. So say, "Lord, deepen my fellowship with You." In that fellowship, you have experiences such as taking your gift to the altar in Matthew 5. This is a picture of being in the realm of fellowship. You are enjoying the Lord. You are going to the altar. You are touching God. And while you are going, while you are in that fellowship, you remember that your brother has something against you. So the Lord says to leave the gift there and go be reconciled to your brother first, and then come back and continue. This shows that in the process of fellowship with the Lord, light comes. Things surface in our consciousness. God shines. And then we can say "Amen" and let Him do that interior work. We find ourselves over and over again humbling ourselves, telling Him, "God, I am more wretched than I thought. This runs deep. Self is at the core." Opening to Him in this way allows His life to be imparted and allows Him to actually transform us and change us into the same image. But that comes by beholding Him with an open face, without any self-justification or anything that would try to excuse ourself. We are openly admitting in His light what we are, and then beholding Him and letting Him transmit His nature into us. We get changed and become a person with a different essence, the essence of Christ. This happens by deepening our fellowship.

To deepen our fellowship, sometimes we need someone to help us get going. We need to read books like *The Inner Chamber*, by Andrew Murray. I read that book years ago and remember the kind of registrations I was having as I turned the pages. I can still feel what was going on in me — "Lord, I want this kind of life. I want to know You. I want to spend time with You. I want to take time with You." It was a New Testament kind of ministry that drew my heart in the right direction and just gave more confirmation to the life within and more supply. So, Lord, deepen our fellowship.

Considering the depth of our fellowship

Have you ever considered the depth and the nature of your fellowship with the Lord? How deep is it? Is

it just calling on the Lord? Do not misunderstand me. Is it just interrupting your thoughts with "Jesus," and that is it? If it is just that, it is short. The Lord Jesus was into the bosom of the Father, and He would spend prolonged time with the Father. The disciples would find Him praying. As a man His fellowship with His Father was surely displayed again and again throughout the Gospels, especially in Luke. Luke mentions prayer, the times of prayer, and the experiences where the Lord prayed. In the other Gospels you do not see the prayer side of His life that much. But in Luke's Gospel, the Lord was always praying.

When Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," the Lord said, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you" (Matt. 16:16-17). When you read this account in Matthew, it looks like Peter came up with this response on his own. But when you read the account in Luke, it mentions that the Lord had been praying and then He asked them the question, "Who do men say that I am?" So when Peter said, "You are the Christ," that was a direct answer to the Lord's fellowship with the Father concerning these brothers. So thank God for the fellowship that is opened up in the New Testament that deepens our experience with the Lord. This is necessary for all of us.

As we grow in the Lord, as days go on, we need to ask the Lord, "Deepen my fellowship." It is especially a call for this when chronic things keep surfacing. These things keep appearing. They are chronic. The Lord wants to get to the depths, and that requires spending some time with Him, opening to Him and deepening our fellowship, our communication, our talking with Him. This deepening of our fellowship comes in our relationship with Him, and it comes equally by hearing the church, by hearing the Body. We must have ears to hear the members because the nature of our Christ today is the Head filling the members.

Fellowship with the Lord and hearing the Body

When we deepen our enjoyment of the Lord and fellowship with Him, and when we have an openness to the Body and an ear to hear the fellowship in the Body, this is how the Lord takes us deeper, this is how the Lord goes on in us. Notice the word "hear" in Matthew 18:15-17. Hear the members. Hear the Body. We could give testimony of how God has operated in all our lives due to our fellowship with Him and with one another, and how we have heard, how something a member said penetrated into us and the Lord took us deeper. This is how the Head communicated to us. Both the Head and the members are necessary for the Lord to take us on in His economy.

(Continued on Page 6)

What Kind of Person Is God? – (Part Two)

Responding to the Objections

In the last issue we presented the three common objections to the biblical revelation of God: (1) that God sends people to hell; (2) that God allows misery to continue on the earth; and (3) that God is narrow and exclusive. Thus far we have seen that God has the authority to do whatever He wants. He is not obligated to give any response to our objections. He is the Potter and we are the clay. But we have also seen that He is a God of righteousness and love. In other words, though He could do whatever He wants to do, because of His own nature He will always treat man with complete justice and love. He does not handle us unrighteously or unfairly. With this in view, let us now respond to these three objections.

Is God Unjust?

“Is God unjust who inflicts wrath?” This was a question posed to the apostle Paul in the first century. It indicates that many people then, as now, objected to the matters of hell and God’s wrath. They felt that God was unjust to inflict wrath upon man. But Paul’s response is “Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?” (Rom. 3:5-6). What does Paul mean by this? Notice how he brings up the matter of God being our Judge. This indicates that God is not only our Creator, but He is also our Judge. In other words, the infliction of God’s wrath is the result of His judgment.

Why would God judge us? We all know that judgment implies two things: first, it implies that a standard or law exists to which we are held accountable; and second, that we are guilty of violating that law. What does a judge do? A judge impartially examines the facts and pronounces judgment. If the judgment is one of guilt, then the judge also prescribes the appropriate penalty.

We must realize that we live under an absolute law, an absolute standard, in our universe. This is God’s universe. He created it. And governmentally He established an absolute standard of truth and righteousness by which all things are measured and judged. Of course, this fact runs directly contrary to the commonly held view of relativism. Relativism states that there is no such thing as absolute truth or righteousness. Truth is a relative matter — it is whatever each person believes it to be or wants it to be. Righteousness is also a relative matter — what is right for one person can be wrong for the next. This is what Pilate meant when he posed the rhetorical question to Jesus, “What is truth?” To Pilate, absolute truth was an elusive, even unattainable, object. Who can say that he or she has found the truth which is applicable to all? Who can say what is right or wrong for everyone? Today this same idea is prevalent in our culture. No one should say that he or she has found the truth. It is okay to search for truth. In fact, it is considered rather commendable to be on a quest for truth. But to claim the discovery of absolute truth or to apply a standard of righteousness to all is frowned upon. Why? Because in the philosophy of relativism, there is no such thing as absolute truth.

But the Bible declares that in our universe absolute truth does indeed exist. Contrary to popular sentiment, we do not live in a relative universe. No! We live in a universe where a standard of righteousness exists. Why? Because

God exists. God is reality. God is truth. All creation finds its ultimate meaning and purpose in Him, the Creator. And because He is absolute and unchanging, truth is absolute and unchanging. Truth does not conform to the trends, fashions, and ever-evolving philosophies of man. That is why it is a great mistake to make God conform to our human concepts. So often, man worships a god that he has made up according to his own thoughts and desires (Rom. 1:21-23). God becomes whatever we want Him to be. We want Him to be indifferent toward sin. We want Him to be all-loving and without wrath. So we concoct a religion with a god that conforms to our desires (Phil. 3:18-19). Moreover, we reject any depiction of God that is out of alignment with our concept of how God should be. In essence, we are playing the role of God. Instead of us conforming to God, we are demanding that God conform to us. Worse, we are setting ourselves up as the judge of God. But this is utter folly! God is God. He is absolute and unchanging. And He does not conform to our desires. Regardless of how much we wish God to be a certain way, God is who He is. All our wishing, all our philosophizing, about God is useless and vain. In the end, we are not God. He is God. And as God, He has established a moral compass in the universe — an absolute standard of righteousness.

The Standard of God’s Righteousness

Now, what is God’s standard of righteousness? What is the standard by which He judges us? As previously stated, the standard of righteousness is the very righteousness of God (Rom. 1:16-18). It is not the righteousness of man, but the righteousness of God. It is not some arbitrary set of rules tacked up somewhere, but the righteousness of God.

It is important to understand that the Ten Commandments given to Moses are simply a reflection, a portrait, of God’s righteousness. The commandments forbidding man to murder, steal, lie, or commit adultery show us what kind of God He is. They reveal how righteous He is. But even this portrait of God through the law was somewhat obscure. The law did not give us a full portrait of God’s righteousness. Many centuries later, Jesus revealed God’s righteousness in a much clearer way. In what is commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stated that it is not enough to merely refrain from the outward acts of murder or adultery as the law commanded. He said that we are guilty before God if we even harbor anger in our heart or if we indulge in inward lust toward someone (Matt. 5:17-48). In other words, Jesus revealed God’s righteousness on a much higher level. He showed us that the requirement of God’s righteousness applies to our inward thoughts, feelings, motives, and choices as well as to our outward behavior. What a righteous God we have!

Thus we are under a standard of righteousness that applies to every part of our being — to our outward actions and to our inward state. And this is the standard by which we are judged. We might ask then, how often are we allowed to fail this standard before we are considered guilty? Perhaps the answer will surprise you. The answer is, only once. The Bible tells us that if we violate God’s law just once, if we stumble at just one point, then we are guilty of the whole law (James 2:10). One violation — one angry thought or word, one lustful look, one jealous feeling — and we are guilty before God. Why? Because that is how

perfectly righteous He is. Remember that the standard we are speaking of is the very righteousness of God. And from eternity past, God's righteousness has remained untainted. He has never faltered or stumbled. Indeed, His righteousness is infallible and perfect. Therefore, the standard of righteousness is one of complete perfection.

All Are Guilty before God

Then let us ask ourselves, if this is the standard by which we are judged, are we guilty before God? Of course we are. As Paul says, we all have sinned. There is none righteous, no, not one. Our mouths are stopped before God. None of us can boast that we are righteous. We are all found guilty (Rom. 3:9-23, 27).

So often we hear people say, "I'm a good person. I do my best to obey the Ten Commandments. I help other people. I give to charities. I have never robbed or hurt anyone. I have been faithful to my spouse." This is obviously an attempt to justify oneself. But against what standard? Our human standard is only so high. In fact in God's eyes, what we consider righteous is about 1/4 of an inch high! Against that standard we may fare okay. We may even labor a lifetime to outdo most everyone else and attain to 1/2 of an inch high — twice as righteous (and self-righteous) as others — and then boast before God! But God's standard of righteousness is one million miles high! And in His light, we see how sinful, how guilty, we truly are. The Bible gives us several accounts of men who have seen God's glory. The immediate response of each was to fall prostrate on the ground (Isa. 6:1-5; Ezek. 1:26-28; Acts 9:3-9; Rev. 1:17). When we live our lives among other men of like nature, we might deceive ourselves into thinking that we are quite good, most righteous. But when we see God, we instantly realize how unrighteous we are. We come to see that all our good works are as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). God's standard of righteousness is simply unattainable.

Therefore, we can conclude that governmentally God has established a universal standard of righteousness and that we come pitifully and woefully short of that standard. We are guilty before God.

Let God Be Found True

"Is God unjust who inflicts wrath?" Or is God just in His judgments? Is there any culpability with the Judge Himself? Or does the culpability lie with us? Let us consider the facts for a moment. The Bible tells us that everything God created was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). In the beginning everything was perfect, pristine, and beautiful. There was no sin, no rebellion, no disease, no misery, no death, no wrath. God's handiwork in creation was truly wonderful. Then, as previously mentioned, God warned man of the consequences of the free will He gave to him. He clearly and unequivocally spelled out for man what would happen if he chose to rebel against Him. The dire consequences were primarily twofold: (1) man himself would come under God's condemnation, judgment, wrath, and death; and (2) all creation would come under a curse.

Thus, when man rebelled by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the consequences that God warned about came to pass. Man died spiritually. He came

under God's condemnation and wrath. Moreover, the earth came under a curse. Such things as famine, disease, sorrow, and misery entered the scene — things which God never originally intended for His creation.

Where then should the culpability for our present state be laid? Is God at fault? To quote Paul: "Certainly not! Indeed, let God be found true but every man a liar. As it is written: That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged" (Rom. 3:4). God is not culpable. We are. We deserve the wrath of God. We deserve hell. We have rebelled, and we continue to rebel, against God. We refuse to submit to Him and we insist on living for ourselves. The Judge is not to be blamed. We are the violators, the transgressors, of the righteousness of God. It is absurd to find fault with the Judge. A guilty criminal would look rather silly blaming the judge in the courtroom for his plight. The law has been governmentally established, and the punishment for transgressing the law has been made clear. Now, if a man violates the law, he has no one to blame but himself for the consequences. Not the judge, not the law. Let us ask, doesn't this same principle apply to God? It is foolish (as well as futile) to accuse God. God is just and righteous in all His judgments.

Moreover, the responsibility for the world's misery does not fall on God's shoulders but ours. God never desires to see men, women, or children suffer. He is a God of great compassion. But God imposed the curse upon this earth as a forewarned consequence of man's rebellion. Thus, God should not be held accountable. No fist should be shaken at the heavens in an accusatory way. Rather, we must take full responsibility ourselves for the plight of this earth.

God's Provision: the Gift of Righteousness

Given the above, it is obvious that we are helpless and hopeless. The standard of God's righteousness is simply unattainable for us. There is no way for us to earn our way into favor with God. We cannot work up, by a little more exertion, a righteousness that will justify us before Him. We are doomed. And the penalty for sin is God's wrath and hell. Our only glimmer of hope is that somehow outside intervention would step in to save us.

Thank God, outside intervention came! As we have seen, God Himself intervened. The Judge, of His own volition, became the Savior. How? He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross. And on the cross, He effected a double transfer — a transfer of our sins, guilt, condemnation, and the infliction of divine wrath and the curse to Christ; and a transfer of His righteousness, the righteousness of God, to us. In other words, Jesus stood in our place so that we could stand in His. He took the two great consequences of sin — God's wrath and the curse — upon Himself, so that we would not have to bear them. This is how God, in His great love, intervened to save us.

Thus, Jesus Christ did all the work to justify us. God knew that we could never justify ourselves. We could never work hard enough or long enough to come up to the standard of God's righteousness. Again, we were helpless and hopeless. But God established a way for man to be justified before Him. First, it was to have Christ do it all for us — to bear the penalty for our sins on the cross so that God could

(Continued on Page 8)

(Continued from Page 3)

When Paul deals with the matter of division in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 he says, “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?” (v. 13). Paul identifies this church division with, “Is *Christ* divided?” This is touching the church with God’s economy. It is putting it in the realm where it belongs. Instead of dealing with it as a denominational squabble or something of that nature, or instead of dealing with it as some kind of personal problem, Paul puts it where it belongs — “Is Christ divided?” When he touches division, he is not just solving a problem, but he is releasing revelation about the church, that the church is the Body of Christ. When he says, “Is Christ divided?” he is addressing the church as Christ, Christ corporate, the Head filling the members, the whole Christ, the Head and the Body. This shows us how Paul touched this problem with revelation, with an unveiling of the nature of the church.

The three “knowings” of the new creation

Second Corinthians 5:15-18 says, ¹⁵“And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised. ¹⁶ So then we, from now on, know no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him so no longer. ¹⁷ So then if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, they have become new. ¹⁸ But all things are out from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” This is an opening of the realm of the new creation, which the church is. And there are three knowings in the realm of the new creation — the knowing of Christ, the knowing of ourselves, and the knowing of one another. These are the three knowings in the new creation.

Knowing Christ in the new creation

The church is the new creation. Our meetings, our fellowship, our relatedness to one another, is not in the old creation. It is in the new creation. And in the new creation there are three things we all need to know. We need to know Christ in the new creation. We need to know ourselves in the new creation. And we need to know one another in the new creation. These three knowings are all here in 2 Corinthians 5. In verse 16 Paul says concerning Christ, “Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him so no longer.” This is a new knowing of Christ. It is the knowing of Christ in the new creation, which means the knowing of Christ as the new man, as the Head of a many-membered Body. Paul’s revelation of

Christ has changed. He used to think of Him as merely the individual Jesus of Nazareth, alone, by Himself. But he no longer knows Christ according to the flesh. He does not know Him in the realm of the old creation. He knows Him now in the realm of the new creation. He saw this on the day he was knocked to the ground on the road to Damascus. Saul saw when he heard a voice say to him, “Why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you persecute” (Acts 9:4-5).

Saul was not persecuting Jesus of Nazareth. He was persecuting the Christians. He was hauling them into prison. But now he had a revelation of the resurrected Christ as the Head of His many-membered Body, and that to touch the members was to touch Him. So the knowing of Christ in the new creation is to see Christ in this way. It is to see Christ and to know Christ as He is in all the members. He flows out through the members, and that is why it is so utterly critical to hear the Body. It is because the kind of Christ today is the resurrected One, the life-giving Spirit, the Head who now lives in His members. He is not just doing things, if you understand, all by Himself there in the heavens. The way He is doing things is through His members.

So Saul learned this from day one. When he said, “Lord, what shall I do?” the Lord did not give him a further vision or a dream direct from the heavens of what he should do. The Lord said, “Go into the city and it will be told to you what to do.” And Saul went to a very humble disciple, Ananias. We do not know anything about this brother. He was just there. And through Ananias the Lord told Saul that He appeared to him and called him for a purpose (Acts 26:16). Then what came out of Ananias’ mouth was God’s call in Paul’s life. It was through the members, it was through the Body, that Saul received this tremendous vision. The Lord touched him and then the Lord guided him to the members. And that is how he received. That is the Christ in the new creation that Paul says we no longer know according to the flesh.

This is the knowing of Christ. And we need to see the church this way. The church is not a denomination. That is such an insult to the cross. It nullifies what Christ did on the cross. He slew the Jew. He slew the Gentile. He slew circumcision and uncircumcision. He broke down all the barriers existing between humanity — racial, cultural, religious, social. All those things were taken out of the way on the cross. And what came through the cross was the new man, members organically joined to this Head, where Christ is all and in all (Eph. 2:13-22; Col. 3:10-11). So to bring back a Greek church and a Jew church and a circumcised church is to nullify the cross. It is an insult to Calvary. It is saying that the cross did not do its work. The cross

terminated the old creation, the old man, old relationships, preferences, Paul churches, Peter churches, doctrinal churches, experience-oriented churches. All of that was terminated on the cross. God forbid that we would nullify the cross by seeing the church in any other way than as Christ enlarged. This is the Christ in the new creation. So when Paul opens up the matter of division, he does not try to solve a little argument between the saints. He says, “Is Christ divided?” indicating that he brought in the revelation of the knowing of Christ in the realm of the new creation. That is the first knowing.

Knowing ourselves in the new creation

Let us go back to 2 Corinthians 5:15 again: “And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.” Here it is so clear that on the cross Christ died for all. And verse 14 says, “One died for all, therefore all died.” So we no longer live to ourselves. In the realm of the new creation, the second knowing is to know ourselves, and that is, we are not the point of reference anymore. We no longer live to ourselves but to Him. This is knowing ourselves in the new creation.

What does this mean practically? It means that the old source in me died, and I no longer live to it. So in the fellowship of the church in the new creation, if any of us are on the level of taking things personally, we are in the wrong realm. In fellowship in the church the light is here, and we get exposed. Something may be said, something may happen in a church meeting, something of the light of God shines, and we take it to ourselves and say, “I don’t fit here. I don’t belong here.” We ourselves are the point of reference. This expresses something other than the new creation, where we no longer live to ourselves.

That means we have to learn how to take sides with Christ, to identify with Christ against myself, regardless of how it kicks, how it fumes, how it yells, how it is angry, how it reacts. We side and identify with Christ in the new creation over against myself, and have a dividing of soul and spirit. The fellowship is not personal. It is about a six thousand year old problem. You are only going through a piece of the pie. We all experience a piece of the old man/Adam pie (Rom. 5:14—6:6). It comes out in my nature. It comes out in your nature. It is expressed in all of us. It is all the same. There is no difference. But when we pass through it, it becomes very personal. Then we get subjective.

But the knowing in the new creation is a knowing of ourselves: “One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him.” This means that whatever

is exposed in us, whatever the light shines on, we are living to Him. We are even against myself, one with Him. This is the dividing of soul and spirit. And this is the knowing of ourselves in the church. What does that do? It creates an atmosphere of God Himself living here, where there is a fellowship and a presence of the Lord and a freedom and a flow. God can pass through us and live His life and operate.

But the enemy is subtle. He has come in devious ways through the centuries, through the self undealt with in some form. In Matthew 16 when Peter told the Lord to pity Himself, the Lord said, “Get behind Me, Satan.” Then immediately He said, “If you are going to follow Me, you must deny yourself, Peter.” This is the great denial, that one great denial. Deny yourself as the source of everything. The real attack in the church against God’s building is through the self. It is when we become involved personally with our own offenses and hurts. That is old creation behavior. New creation is no longer living to yourself but to Him. This goes deep. You can feel the scourging sometimes. You can feel it because you are involved. But unless we pass through those kinds of experiences where you can feel the pressure of your self-life screaming for life, wanting to live, we will still remain at a certain level. So do not despise whatever He is doing at whatever level He is doing it. This is the knowing of ourselves in the new creation — no longer let the self be the point of reference, but live to Him. Identify with Him.

This knowing of ourselves cannot exist where pride is. If you are proud, if you are not willing to humble yourself, to fall down on your face and to admit, it is hard for God to get through. But if you say, “Lord, humble me,” and you humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, the identification with Him is easy. The looking at yourself objectively, the condemnation of yourself, the refusal of yourself, and the absoluteness not to pity the self-life is infused into us because it has already been lived. He already did it. And now we identify with Him. But that comes by “humble yourself under the mighty hand of God” (1 Pet. 5:6). Then God flows. This is the knowing of ourselves in the new creation.

Knowing one another in the new creation

In 2 Corinthians 5:16 Paul says, “So then we, from now on, know no one according to the flesh.” And then he says in verse 17, “So then if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, they have become new.” What is new is that we no longer know one another according to the flesh. We know one another in the realm of identifying with

(Continued on Page 8)

(Continued from Page 7)

Christ. So I not only identify with Christ in myself, but I identify with Christ in you. That is why the church is wonderful — it is transparent. The meetings calibrate us to identify with Him. We know one another in this way. If we refuse to pray, if we refuse to open our spirit, how can we know one another in this realm? But if we will simply humble ourselves and pray and open up to God and let God flow, we will know one another in the realm of the new creation.

In both 1 and 2 Corinthians when Paul touches the church with the problem of division, he touches it with an unveiling of Christ in the new creation, of ourselves in the new creation, and of one another in the new creation. We are members one of another, receiving one another, and enjoying the common Christ that flows between us. This revelation was brought into a church that was teetering with division and organic breaks. This is how the church is shepherded in God's economy.

Who could lead others to a vision of what the church is? Christ is filling the church. Who could lead others to know themselves? You are no longer the point of reference. Don't identify with that sulking in you. Identify with Christ. Know Him. Know one another not in the old creation, but identify with one another in Christ. This is how the church is brought out of those lower realms into the realm of the new creation, the new man. Lord, we want this. We desire this. We want You to go on despite everything and anything in us. Despite it all, we want to know You in the new creation. We want to know ourselves and one another in that realm. This brings us into God.

What a mercy it is to even have a little bit of bent in that direction. To have some inclination despite the pressure of the self and the flesh, to have a little bit of bent in that way, means that the mind of the Spirit is operating in us. We just take care of that and say, "Lord, keep renewing me." This constantly purifies the church. This is how to handle the church. It is with the washing of the water by this word, by this speaking, by this rhema. It is not political. It is not in the realm of just tickling the ear. Rather, all of us are brought into the realm of revelation, and that gives the opportunity for the Spirit to touch us, to speak to us, and to operate in us for the producing of the church in the new creation. Amen.

— Bill Freeman

(Continued from Page 5)

never hold us accountable for what has already been punished. (That would be unrighteous.) And second, it was to have the very righteousness of God imputed to our account. Therefore, being justified before God is a gift. Let me repeat that — it is a gift! In the Bible, it is called the gift

of righteousness (Rom. 5:17). And like all gifts, it cannot be earned, but only received.

How do you receive God's gift of righteousness? It is so simple — by faith. It is not by our works but by faith (Rom. 3:21-28). This is all God requires. Believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. Believe that He died for your sins. Believe that He was raised from the dead. By believing, you receive. By faith you receive the gift of righteousness. Upon believing in Christ and receiving His salvation, the Bible tells us that we become the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). Amazing! The moment we open our hearts to receive Jesus Christ, God imputes His own righteousness — that perfect, high, faultless, untainted righteousness — to our account. So we become the righteousness of God in Him!

However, if we reject God's provision by refusing to believe in His Son and His work on the cross, then we remain under God's wrath (John 3:17-18). Do we see that in a very real sense God does not send men to hell? We choose it ourselves. But by a simple act of faith in Christ, we become eternally justified before God. This is surely wonderful news.

— To be continued

— Kirk Eland

Internet Update

Ministry of the Word Internet site is regularly being updated with new material. This past month a *Search Bible Version* category has been added to the home page. Now anyone can access and search the following translations: ASV, RSV, KJV, Darby, Weymouth's N.T., and Young's N.T. Also, three Greek texts can be accessed: Byzantine/Majority; Westcott-Hort; and the Textus Receptus. All of these texts and versions can be searched online. Strong's numbers for the definition of Bible words in Hebrew and Greek as well as the parsing of verbs are also included online. The Internet site address is listed below.

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