

Simply Christ

Gospel Newsletter

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

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Sinking into Darkness

I was a young pastor and so very hungry to see a move of God. As I sought the Lord, he began to teach me through his word many foundational precepts of the gospel of Christ. He showed me in the scriptures that the New Covenant is God's law written in the heart of his people by the Spirit of God. Hebrews 8:10-11. He let me understand that this is not a process, but the miracle of salvation itself. He also showed me how the redeemed have received corresponding grace for each grace that Jesus was filled with. John 1:14. The Apostle John said *"And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."* John 1:16. As I ministered these things, our congregation came to life. Many were lifted out of their struggles into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The freedom from sin and Satan that Jesus promised became their reality. Righteousness was not an effort, but simply the natural condition of those who live in Christ. It truly was an hour of refreshing in the presence of God.

One day something came to my attention that began to change things. I became aware of an activity involving one of our church members, and I was convinced something had to be done. Looking back I confess I was probably more insulted that such a thing would dare to be in "my church" than I was concerned for the person involved. Still, I was not too overly alarmed. I may

have been young, but I could be tough if I needed to be. I could certainly “handle” this situation.

My message quickly changed from declaring glories of the gospel of Christ, which God had been revealing in my heart, to a message that declared “You better get right or else.” We had been seeing great rejoicing in the presence of God, but this subsided as saints began to come into the altars to repent. I believed this to be a good start, but it was not enough because as of yet I had failed to reach the one person about whom my mind was troubled. Service after service I preached what God required his people to do. Today I call this a “do better” gospel. It seemed that a majority of the congregation was now repenting in almost every service except for the one person I was preaching to. Still I could not help but notice that the presence of God and “rejoicing in Christ Jesus” Philippians 3:3 had lifted from our gatherings.

A darkness began to settle over the church. One by one, saints who had been rejoicing in the glories of their salvation, came to me expressing how their hearts were now troubled with things that had once been taken away by Jesus Christ. “Alas!” I thought. “Things are worse than I knew. The problems must be spreading throughout the congregation.” The devil had found a place. But where? I determined to preach harder, tougher, and straighter than ever before. This devil would have no place to hide. Yet the more I pressed my case, the worse things became. It seemed nothing could be done as both the congregation and I sunk into darkness.

I did not understand it at the time, but my ministry had become the source of the darkness.

I had set aside the power of the gospel of Christ because I saw one person who seemed unaffected by it, and had become like those Paul spoke to asking, “*Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*” Galatians 3:3. Satan had baited the hook, and I swallowed it.

The Apostle Paul made a comparison between ministry that brings condemnation to the people and ministry that brings righteousness to them. He said, “*For if **the ministration of condemnation** be glory, much more doth **the ministration of righteousness** exceed in glory.*” II Corinthians 3:9. The first ministry he spoke of condemned the people because of sin, but it had no power to change what they were at heart. The second ministry he speaks of is the ministry of the gospel of Christ. It alone has the power to make the people righteous. This is why it is called the “*ministration of righteousness.*” Why would a minister choose a ministry that can only condemn, when God has committed to us a ministry with the power to completely transform those who receive it? II Corinthians 4:1.

The Apostle Paul preached “*repentance toward God, AND faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Acts 20:21. A message of repentance that does not point to the blood of Jesus Christ as the complete and only answer for sin and uncleanness, is an empty and impotent message. If I get ten thousand people into an altar promising God to “do better,” all I have done is solicit ten thousand promises that would not please God even if they were kept. There is only one means given whereby a person is changed into the image of Jesus Christ. It is through seeing

the redeeming power of Christ with the eyes of their understanding. Paul said, *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* II Corinthian 3:18.

To preach the gospel is to preach “Who Christ is,” “What Christ was sent to accomplish,” and “How Jesus Christ did it all through His death on the cross!” The person who understands this sees *“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* II Corinthians 4:6, and they are changed into that same glorious image!