

See, Hear, and Experience Jesus Christ

By Paris Reidhead*

Will you turn, please, to two Scriptures this evening, Philippians the 3rd Chapter, and Psalm 27. One might wonder at the outset why these Scriptures are linked together, but I trust and believe you will see. I will begin reading with the 4th verse of the 3rd Chapter, and then we will take you shortly to the 27th Psalm.

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof be might trust in the flesh, I more: ⁵Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. ⁸Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may win Christ, ⁹And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: ¹⁰That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; ¹¹If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Now, please, to Psalm 27, the testimony of the Apostle Paul, and at this time the testimony of King David. Two men, each of whom in his own way and words declares the same central truth, the truth that shall engage us tonight.

Notice he begins by saying, Jehovah. "The LORD is my light and my salvation; (whom shall I fear?)" -- and then when we come down to the 4th vs, "One thing have I desired of Jehovah who is my light and my salvation. That one thing will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple." And vs 8: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek." And in vs 14: "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

Many years ago, a philosopher, Will James, wrote a very significant book, titled, The Varieties of Religious Experience. In this book, he set forth the fact that one cannot account for the dramatic changes in the lives of individuals, (And he cites many of them and uses them as case histories.) in which the complete course of the life has been changed, apart from some vitality and reality in religious experience. Consequently, he opened the way for the renewal of interest in another philosopher, Kierkegaard, whose existentialism had shocked and rocked the church of Denmark where he wrote, writing against the dear ceremonial formal Christianity that characterized his day. And so, since the time of James, there has been this great interest in Christian experience, and today we find that it is revived. I would have liked to have announced this as The Varieties of Christian Experience, although I would have been plagiarizing a good Christian philosopher from the faculty of the University of Minnesota, if I had done that. Nevertheless, I feel tonight that it is imperative that we should understand on the occasion when we remember the resurrection of Christ, that the Lord Jesus is not only to be contemplated, but He is also to be experienced. We are to experience Him.

This is word knowledge, as we found it here in Philippians, the 3rd Chapter, and the 10th vs, "That I may know Him," is a setting forth in the words of Scripture of the very principle that I want you to see and to grasp tonight. You notice, he did not say, That I may know about Him. This is the way our parlance would have presented it. We would have spoken in those terms: That I may know about Him. We generally do not speak of knowing in that sense, experiencing a person.

Years ago, saw a sign advertising an evangelistic campaign in a distant city, saying, See, Hear, Experience Evangelist So-and-So. I just kind of wondered what it was going to be to experience the evangelist, but I am sure they meant, experience the meetings that he was having. But this is exactly what we have here. See, Hear, and Experience Jesus Christ. He is thus to be known, not only terms of information, but in terms of a personal, experiential relationship. It is imperative, therefore, that we recognize what God offers us. Who is there that is going to cry for the moon? Well, perhaps there are some of the National Aeronautics association that are, but I mean, Most of us are not going to fret and cry over reaching the moon. We recognize that it is out of our grasp, out of our grip. I believe that it is imperative that you should understand that God does not only want to be contemplated and analyzed, and studied, but He wants to be experienced. This is the cardinal truth of the New Testament. And

this is what the Danish philosopher presented in his existentialism, and I make no claims of being a philosopher or an expert on Kierkegaard in any sense of the word. Just what little I do know would be comprised in this, that his statement was that truth contemplated objectively out here is truth as far as its own essence is concerned, but it leaves you unaffected. It is when you experience the One of whom the truth speaks that you actually enter into reality. There is an existential, or there is an experiential quality to knowing God.

I have used the illustration, and I know no better, so I will dare to use it again: Back at John Fletcher College in Oskaloosa, Iowa, my wife and I, though she was not then...I was intending it to be so, but she had not recognized the wisdom of that at that point. We were assigned to the same zoological work table, and so were given the task of dissecting a frog on the same platter. And I had to kill hers, and I did it reluctantly, but bravely none the less, in order to prove my valor, and so we dissected the frog, and pinned it, and labeled it, and put it on the wax platter as is required, and there we had the audacity to write frog over the top, as though that little mass that we had taken represented a frog. As I have thought of it so many times since, How ridiculous, to take it all apart and put it down, and pin it and label it, and say, Frog. That is not a frog. A frog is a little, slimy, lively, green, pumping, croaking, jumping, hopping, swimming lump of animation; squeezes out of your hand and darts under a Lily leaf. That is a frog. What I had was just the remains of one. And there was no life in it.

And so when you come to the theological books, the systematic theology that you have, and I have several in the library, some large one volume, some three volumes, and there are many others much larger and more ponderous than the ones I possess, you find the central truths about God. He is set forth and all of His attributes, and characteristics and the proofs for His existence; and when you have finished eating and ingesting, digesting what they have given, you would assume that you knew about God. But you do not. It is just the sum of certain particular parts that have been labeled. And God is not the sum of the parts that we have labeled. God is God, and He cannot be experienced from the theological book. He cannot be known from systematic theology. Do not for a moment think that I am decrying systematic theology. I am not at all. I am simply saying that God is not known this way. He is known about, but He is not known through this type of an analytical approach. He is known on the basis of your experience of Him. You must experience Him. And, consequently, this is the very testimony.

Will you turn, please, to I John, Ch. 1, and vs 3. If I ever start a new denomination, this is going to be the whole creed. Now I assure you there will be no other creed than this, this and the Bible. And this is just to state that there won't be anything other than this. And I am not planning on it, so do not worry, do not get excited. But here it is. This is what it is. That which we have seen (that is experiential) and heard (that is experiential) declare we unto you, that you may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Westminster Catechism.... Isn't that what it says? And the 39 Articles... Do you see what I am trying to say? I am trying to point out the fact that fellowship has to be with Him, not with certain deductions concerning Him, and analysis of Him. ... "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (I John 1:3)

And the whole of this is, We have seen someone; we have heard someone; we have met someone. He is glorious. Meeting Him, and hearing Him is glorious. Now, if you have known the glory that we have known, let us talk together about Him. Not what we read. Oh, we have many things to read. But it something we have seen, someone we have met, someone with whom we have walked. And this, then, becomes the level of fellowship that John was proposing. He was not a trained theologian. I defy anyone to find in this Book systematic theology. You just do not. We can make it, and we can derive it systematically, but it is not presented here. A living person is presented, a person that was born supernaturally, and lived triumphantly, and died sacrificially, and rose gloriously. He is a person, and you can know that person. You can have fellowship with Him, and having that fellowship with Him, there are certain proofs that cannot be counterfeited that you have met Him. You can no more meet Him and know Him on the level that the Apostle is here presenting without having these proofs evident than you can walk through the flour mill and not have the dust on you that proves where you have been. You have something that you have carried away. There is an essence of the very Presence that you occupy, the space you occupy that continues with you. Now this is the testimony of the Apostle John. We have seen someone; we have heard someone; we have met someone. It has been glorious. Now, come on. You see Him, and you hear Him, you meet Him, and we will have fellowship together, because of where we have been, and because of whom we have met.

Now this is the testimony of the Apostle Paul. You saw it this morning: “It pleases God to reveal His Son in me.” (Gal. 1:15,16) Here was an inward revelation. Here was the fact that something had happened inside of Paul, someone had identified Himself and spoken to him, had communicated life to him. This life had dynamically, and gloriously, and permanently changed the whole course and direction of his life. And so he is saying, I have seen. I have heard. And I speak not from what I have acquired by instruction at the feet of various teachers. I am simply telling you what happened to me. I did not consult with flesh and blood. When I saw Him, I knew that in Him I had all instruction, all teaching, and that it was necessary for me to cultivate His presence, so he said, I immediately went out into the desert where I could be alone with Him. I felt I had to be close with Him. Now, I am sure that for Paul this was God’s will and God’s way. I do not necessarily think that it is the way for all of us. Most of us do not have, I am sure none of us have the intellectual quality and caliber, and the strength that he had. We do not have the knowledge of the Scripture that he had. For the risen Christ could relate the entire Word to him in a glorious way, a vital way, making it live because of the person that he had been, and he had seen the Lord on every page. We do not understand the Word as well as Paul did with his Hebraic instruction and education and training.

And so, I think it is going to be necessary for us to find another place of nourishing and nurturing this experience you find it given to us in Acts, the 2nd Chapter. There the truth was preached about Christ, by Peter, the facts concerning His person that He was the Lord of whom David spoke. He was the long-awaited Messiah. He had been raised from the dead, was living now in Heaven, and that He had poured forth of the Spirit of God as they had seen, and their question was: What shall we do. He said, “Repent: Be baptized that you may receive a similar experience to the Spirit of God that we have received.” (Acts 2:38) What we have experienced, you can experience, and you can know just as certainly as we know. And so this was his invitation. Well, we know 3 thousand people were baptized. They undoubtedly, by inference at least, all experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit subsequent to their baptism; for this is the way it is presented. But what did they do? Go into the desert as Paul had gone? No, no, no. They met on the level of John’s invitation. That which they had seen and heard they now declared that others might have fellowship with them, and truly their fellowship was with the Father, and with the Son Jesus Christ.

But notice what happened. Because they had seen the Father, Because they had heard the Son, they had experienced Him, “they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

So here we have the two levels that were possible. First, *they had met the Lord*. They had met Him personally. They had met Him in their own hearts, inwardly. He was real to them. And, because of this, *they now had an interest in fellowship with others*. They had something in common with these others. And so their fellowship was with the others, because it had been with the Father and with the Son. This is Christian fellowship on a Biblical level. But it was all postulated on the fact that they had personally met the Lord.

Now if we can understand then that this is what the Lord wants for you. He wants you to meet Him initially. He wants you to know that you have met Him. Sometime I would like to bring to this pulpit our brother H. J. Sutton who is the District Superintendent for Western Pennsylvania, and specifically request him to bring the message that he brought to a fellowship of Pastors in Albany in February. It was a message of great blessing to my heart. He spoke on the Witness of the Spirit. I had never heard such a preachment on this particular truth as he gave to us. And my heart was greatly refreshed, greatly encouraged, as he set forth in Biblical perspective all that the Bible has to say about the Witness of the Spirit, greatly neglected, and greatly misunderstood. You remember that the distinguishing characteristic of the Wesleyan Revival, the revival God brought to England under John Wesley¹ and Charles², was that they renounced and declared the truth that “when you are born again you have the witness of the Spirit to the New Birth.” You do not infer it from what you have done, but you know it from what God does. And it was this truth brought to England. Everyone in England was a member of the State Church, all were Anglican, and all had been baptized and registered, but how few had been born again. And so it was Wesley that said, and said well, and God confirmed the saying, “When you are born of God you know it, because you have the witness of the Spirit to the New Birth.”

¹ John Wesley (1703-1791) Anglican cleric, Christian theologian, and founding the Methodist movement.

² Charles Wesley (1707–1788) An English leader of the Methodist movement

And so, as he preached the nature of repentance, and of justification, and of regeneration, these that were Anglicans, some worldly and carnal and wicked, and some devout and earnest and sincere, but all for the most part unregenerate, they responded to the truth. They sought the Lord and were born again, and received the witness of the Spirit.

Oh, he had methods that were designed to winnow. He would preach for 3 hours, and then give an invitation. You know what his invitation was? If you know you are lost, and you would like to repent and savingly receive Christ, meet me right here at 5 in the morning. You see, everybody that was just too indifferent to the claims of Christ could find a good excuse to sleep in, and that would eliminate those that were just emotionally stirred, and would separate to the Gospel those that really meant business. So most of his altar calls were held at 5 in the morning. Well, then he would incorporate these people into the Class Meetings, and they met together on the level of the fact that they had the witness of the Spirit to the New Birth. They began their Christian life on the level of an experiential encounter with God.

Now, having stated that, let us go back to remember what Job said. He said, "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty, giveth him understanding." (Job 32:8) We have pointed out so many times to you that your spirit, body, and soul, indeed, but the part that is regenerated is your spirit. You woke up the day after you met the Lord with the same body you had the day before. One day you are going to have a glorified body. But now part of you that has been born again is not your body. It is your spirit. Your soul is the same. Your memory is the same. Your intellect is the same as it was before, but something has happened in your spirit. And the part of you that is made like God is the spirit. The part that God touches in His creative life when you meet Him repentance and faith is the Spirit, and so the inspiration of the Almighty giveth the spirit understanding. And thus it is that in your impenitent state, your unbelieving state, you are a spirit, submerged but isolated. Like being in the ocean, but yet apart from the ocean, insulated from it or protected from it by the diver's suit, and so you could be submerged by ocean on every side and yet have no contact with it. This is the analogy that Paul uses on Mars Hill. He said, "In Him you live and move and have your being." (Acts 17:28) He is not far from you. You feel after Him, but you cannot reach Him. You are insulated. There is something that separates you. God is all around you, but you have not touched Him yet. And this insulating thing that keeps people from knowing God is sin, impenitence, unbelief. And so, when the sinner repents, when he savingly receives the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is as though this shell that separated him, has burst and broken, and God comes in. Now the part of us that He touches is our spirit. And so it is, when you have been born of God, you, the intrinsic you, touches God who is Spirit, and you know. Just as when you fingers touch wood and feel shape and form you know, because you interpret the sensations that you have. So when your spirit touches God, because you are spirit, and the part of a man that knows the things of the man is the spirit of man, you know when you have touched Him. You know when you have met Him. You know because you know that you know. You are certain of it. You have arrived immediately at certainty. Just as Professor Brown of Harvard years ago wrote that book, Pathways to Certainty, in which he pointed out that there are several different methods by which we seek to arrive at certainty, but all of them just reveal a high degree of likelihood, except experience. The only way that you can know absolutely is to experience. And with experiment, for instance, in a chemical experiment you may perform it 999 times and it comes out the same every time, but no true scientist would say that it is absolute. There may be many factors that have not had instruments sensitive enough to record. And so the only thing a scientist can ever say is, Well it is a high degree of likelihood that this is the case. But it becomes us therefore to recognize that with experience we enter immediately into certainty. So when you know Him, when you have met Him, then you know that you know Him.

And thus the Christian life has to begin on this level. But it does not stop there. David knew that he knew Him. But we find that David has given to all of us (and this is after all the hymnbook of the church, the prayer book of the church and by it we are guided and directed in our praying.)... David has testified to the fact that he has known God in many ways, light, salvation, strength, protector, many different ministries that God has had in his life. He has known Him as we found in the 23rd Psalm as Shepherd. So much that God has done for him. You would say, "Well here is a man that is satisfied that he has known all there is to know about God." But this is not the case at all. Here is a king, busy with many responsibilities, and reigning over a difficult people, and he can bring to focus all of the true desires of his heart, and there must have been many collateral and lesser desires in a king's heart. I am sure that when he said in vs 4, One thing have I desired of the Lord, he is simply saying that the paramount thing, the thing of greatest importance, the thing that transcends all other interests, that which engages me

beyond all other concerns, that which is to hold my heart constantly in its grip from which I never can escape is this, “that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple.”

What is he saying? He is saying exactly the same thing John said, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye may have fellowship with us.” So we come back to this. Did you begin well in the Christian life? Have you actually had a time of real beginning in your relationship with God? You can look back and say, Yes, the Spirit of God has witnessed to my spirit that I have been born of God? Well and good. But what about today? What about tomorrow? What ought to characterize you now?

Well Paul has stated here in this 3rd Chapter, written one of the last of his epistles, though he has known the Lord now over 25 years, had that glorious beginning when Christ revealed Himself to him, completely changed the course and direction of his life. He had all of these experiences of the Lord’s presence, actually being killed — or I believe this, —and going into the 3rd Heaven, seeing these things unlawful to utter, and then being returned again into his body for the continued ministry. This one is asked, What is the thing that concerns you most? And his answer comes back, similar to David’s, “All that I have seen about God, all that I have experienced of Him, has but deepened my desire and increased my passion. And more than anything else in all the world right now I count all things but refuse and dross and as just incidental, having really no permanent value; the only thing that engages me is that I might know Him.”

Then we would turn to him and say, Paul, what do you mean, that you might know Him? Didn’t you meet Him back there? Didn’t He reveal Himself to you? Haven’t you seen Him wonderfully revealed through your ministry? And the answer is of course, Yes. But you see, I have just become insatiably hungry for God, and because I have drunk once does not mean I have not thirst to drink again. And because I have seen Him once does not mean that I am tired of seeing Him. Since I have learned that He can be seen, and wants to be seen, and is willing to reveal Himself, really nothing else matters any more. This is the thing of paramount concern to me. “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after. That I may dwell in the house of the Lord to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple.” He wants to know the Lord. He wants to walk with Him. He wants to not just know about Him. His intellect is not the part of him that is hungry, though I am sure that he was not lackadaisical, indifferent, and lazy as far as his mind was concerned. No one would ever accuse him of that. But this is not the part of him that is voicing his concern at this moment. It is not my mind. He did not say, I am trying to write a grand major opus on theology and I am doing research that I might not overlook anything that is important. This was not it. No. No. He said, I have drunk. I have tasted. I have eaten. I have seen. I have heard. And I just know I am made for God, and I know that nothing satisfies me but God. And so I have just come to the place where the only thing that really matters is that I know Him. And everything that I used to think important, that I counted gain to me, I count all these things but loss that I might win Christ, that I might know Him as He desires to be known, and now as I desire to know Him.

And so as we come to the close of this Easter Day, with a resurrected, glorified Lord, what is your approach going to be tomorrow? Oh, I am so glad to have had my heart reminded again that Jesus Christ is alive. You knew that yesterday. Is that all it means? I am sure He is alive in Heaven, and I am alive on earth, and so I’ll just go on in the confidence that someday I’ll see Him. This is not good enough. This is not good enough. He did not desire to be known about. He wants to be known. And He wants to be experienced. He said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them. This implies fellowship and communion, continual revelation, continual unveiling. Is this the life that you are living? This is the life you can live. I can live. This is the life He wants us to live, of constant fellowship with Him.

I heard some months ago, when speaking at a college group, one of the men said he was... I made mention in the course of the message of the splendid little book, The Practice of the Presence of God, by Brother Lawrence³, and in comment and questions afterward, he said, “Oh, that is a terrible book.” Here is a fellow that did nothing but concentrate on God all the time. My, I bet he burned every meal he cooked in the monastery kitchen. And the man... When I commented on it later, I said, Oh, you misunderstood completely. It was not that the man was trying to hold certain Scripture verses in his mind and a system of theology and a structure of doctrine. This was not what he was talking about at all. It was not that his intellect was focused on

³ Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection (1614-12 – 1691) “The Practice of the Presence of God”

God. His mind had to be focused on roasting the meat, and making the bread. These were the responsibilities that Brother Lawrence had in a monastery kitchen. I used to say that the nearest thing to utter chaos in all the world was a restaurant kitchen of a noonday on Saturday. It was impossible. Normal human beings became whirling dervishes at the stroke of the noon hour, unbelievable turmoil. Well, here was a man that went through all of that and yet could say in 35 years I cannot remember as much as a moment when I was not conscious of the presence of God. Do you mean that there was not a moment that his mind was not focused on Him? Of course, there were many moments when his mind was occupied with the responsibility at hand, but his heart was set on God, and he was in that other level of communion.

Have you ever been driving an automobile, you that drive, and been thinking about something else, and yet obeying all the speed laws, and observing all lights? Someone has said that knitting is a wonderful invention; it enables women to have something to occupy their minds while they talked. Well I am not at all sure that this is the case, but I am confident of this, that one can both knit and talk at the same time, as one can hammer nails and think about something else. Oh, there are a great many things that we can do while we are engaged in some other responsibility. And it is thus that we come to this fact, that the part of us that is to live in continuous fellowship with God is that invisible part, in the heart, the spirit, constantly, constantly in fellowship with Him.

Now, do you arrive at this in a fell moment? Do you go out of the church, saying, Now tomorrow I am going to live in constant fellowship with God. No, of course you do not. You will acquire no skill that way. None at all. I understand, I have never done it, but I understand that learning to play the piano (A little six year old child cured me of any thought of that. She gave me instructions and after about half an hour said, I don't think you can learn how to play, and I have never had anyone persuade me otherwise, so I am utterly ignorant of the mysteries of the keyboard, up until this good hour, through the help of a little six year old child.) .. But I am told by those who can play that you do not just all of a sudden become a concert pianist because you read a book and decide that you are going to play in expert fashion, that it requires a good bit of practice. And this is the reason why Brother Lawrence said, The Practice of the Presence of God. The Lord Jesus does not just want to be known about. He died out of longing for you, and my dear friend He longs to be longed for. He wants to be wanted, and He waits to be sought. And He has said, Behold the Bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet Him. Oh, I know this has an eschatological significance, but to my mind I have full agreement with John of Ruysbroeck⁴ in his beautiful little volume, The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage, in which he says that the primary meaning of Behold the Bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet Him, is not prophetic but experiential. And your Heavenly Bridegroom, to whom you were related by this mystery and miracle of the new birth, longs to have you go out in desire, longs to have you go out in thought, longs to have you go out in worship. If tomorrow, as you are riding on the subway, in the silence of your own heart, in the midst of the clatter and clamor of the wheels on the track and the people about you, you will raise the inner voice of your heart without changing your outer expression and tell the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that you love Him, and you want this day to reflect His glory, and you want to know the fellowship with Him, you can use those few minutes on the subway as a precious time of going into the inner sanctuary. And throughout the hours of the day.

You know what it ought to be, dear heart? It ought to be that when you get quiet, and tune out the world and dial in, you find yourself telling God that you love Him, and you will find Him, telling you that He loves you. This is what it ought to be. There ought to be just sort of that background. You have heard of it, of course, background music. Well it is not background music, but it is the incense in the rear sanctuary of your heart that is rising out of love of God, worship of God, adoration of Him. And then it is two way, you know, for He will begin to communicate to your heart and comfort you.

What am I saying? I am saying this, that every truth that you learn about God, and every principle of the Scripture and all of that which is unfolded from this Book has as its grand human end, that is, its end in time, to bring you into full fellowship with God now. But this does not happen. This does not just... It is not that you go along and then some experience like that, and all of a sudden you become a mature Christian, and all of a sudden you have entered into a life of continuous worship and continuous fellowship. It does not happen that way. Oh, there is the crisis of being filled with the fullness of God. But even

⁴ John of Ruysbroeck (1293-4 - 1381)

after that it is clear that one has to practice by the discipline of bringing every thought into the captivity of Christ, not in the sense of neglecting the outward responsibilities that are ours, but that which is called by Thomas Upham⁵ in his splendid little volume, The Interior Life (Principles of the Interior or Hidden Life), recollection of heart. Upham wrote in such loving terms, and I urge you to get it if you are vitally interested in nourishing your Christian life, The Interior Life(Principles of the Interior or Hidden Life), by Upham. In which he says that the prostate of recollection is when you have allowed yourself the responsibility of tasks, to which you will devote yourself to all that is needed, but that you have collected. Do you see? You have collected, inwardly collected all of the interests of your life, and brought them into this strict focus, that God means more to you than all else beside, and that worship and adoration, and love, and praise of God, is that which is the paramount interest of your life.

Now let me bring it to focus then. "One thing have I desired of the Lord," said a busy King, "that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." "When Thou saidst unto me, Seek ye My face, my heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." This is your responsibility. Now if you have tasted of Him in beginning way, and regeneration, and have the witness of the Spirit, or at any point in your pilgrimage you have had personal awareness of God, an experience of His presence, then you have the foundation on which to build.

This is why it is so imperative that people should begin well in the Christian life, because the Christian life is a life of fellowship with God, and if at the beginning an individual is denied this, sometime along the way, after impoverished months or years, they are going to have to have the initial contact with God, awareness of God. Now if you say, Somehow man cannot have an awareness of God, then you have destroyed in one blow the whole testimony of this Book, which says that God became man so that man might have fellowship with Him. It is not just with doctrine. It is not just with Scripture. Scripture, doctrine, all that is presented here are but the rungs in the ladder to lead us into that place of fellowship with Him, which is beyond the Scripture.

We are not Bibliologists. We do not worship this Book. We worship the God revealed in the Book. We do not stop here with the page. We go on to Him. And so this is the testimony, not only of a busy king, but of a valiant apostle. That I may know Him and the fellowship and the power of His resurrection, being made conformable unto His death. And I trust that somehow the fact that the exhortation and instruction of the evening is to tell you from the Word of God again that God wants to be sought after, He longs to be longed for, He wants to be wanted, is going to stir your heart with a hunger, afresh, anew, and you are going to find a secret place somewhere, before you go to rest tonight, and tell God with all there is in you that you are going to join David and join Paul, and make the big business of your life to know Him, better than you have ever known Him in the past, and using all the blessing of the past as an encouragement in the present, and a promise for the future. So if God has done as much for us as He has, with a little time and thought we have given Him, what will He do if we give Him what He asks for?

And so we come to the place then with Paul that we say, That I may know Him. And it is as you see Him, and hear Him, and meet Him, that you have something to testify to when you are with Christians, and you have a desire to be with others, and it becomes a living fellowship because your fellowship with Him has been continuous. This is why so many of our meetings become dead, or are, because we hope that fellowship is going to begin when we gather. But if fellowship has not been continuous until we gather, it cannot begin when we gather. And so as you leave tonight may it be that you echo with Paul this, That I may know Him. This is the desire of my heart. He has been raised from the dead. He is alive, and He wants to be known. What grander occupation is there through time than to Know Him?

And thus Paul says, I know all the other things, everything else is just refuse. It has no value or meaning. The only thing I am interested in is God. It did not mean that he was not responsible, that he did not carry duties and fulfill them, didn't mean that he had to become cloistered. It was not a monastic thing. He was there with a jailer, a prisoner, or a soldier, on each side shackled to him. He is very much in the world. Every time he moves an arm the chain of Rome rattles. He cannot get alone, cannot go to a closet, but yet there he is testifying that the one thing in all the world which is most to him is fellowship with God. And he can have a soldier on each side, chained to him, and have sweet, glorious, transcendent fellowship with God. And

⁵ Thomas Cogswell Upham (1799-1872)

the soldiers won't even know anything has happened, as far as what is happening to Paul. They will know afterwards that something has happened, but they will not know it at the time.

And so it is that you can carry your responsibilities in the office, in the shop, in the school, or factory, in sweet, wonderful fellowship with God, and the people around you won't know it, except they will know that you have come from the presence of the King, because there will be a slight fragrance and myrrh and aloes and cache from out of the Ivory Palaces. Oh, there will be something about you. But may it be that regardless of what a world says or sees, you know that your heart is only with Him. You have been made for Him. And so with David, "When Thou saidst unto me, seek ye My face, my heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

Let us bow in prayer.

Should there be among us tonight, our Father, someone who does not know sins forgiven, peace alone Thou canst bring, might this just be the night of beginning, might they come because we tell them on the authority of Thy Word, if they will repent and believe and savingly receive Thy Son, they can know beyond any question of a doubt by Thine own witness to their hearts that they have been born again. We thank Thee for this. We thank Thee, Lord, for the day when we knew, each of us who do, that we had passed from death to life. It was not something we inferred. It was something you told us. We had seen you, and heard you, and met you, and knew we had passed from death to life. We thank Thee, Lord, for every experience of the past, for every revelation of Thyself, for every unveiling of Thy Son, and everything that has happened to us, and all our yesterdays is but encouragement for tonight and tomorrow, and the days to come, and, Lord, we do know that with this world about us passing so fast away, we are not going to be accused of being obscurantists or escapists, because we tell Thee from our hearts that we love Thee, and long for Thee more than all else besides, even if we are accused, we know it is not true, for we know, Father, we can only best fulfill our responsibilities to this world when we are in the fullest fellowship with Thee. And we know, Father, that Thou wilt never allow us to become so Heavenly minded that we are no earthly good. We do know, Lord, that everything Thou dost do for us, and all the Holy Ghost does in us, and every revelation of Christ given to us, will be to relate us more significantly and meaningfully, and powerfully and vigorously to the world in which we live. And so we ask Thee, Lord, that we might become just all that Thou hast wanted us to be, and we join with David, saying, One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord. And with Paul, That I may know Him in all the fullness in which He intends to be known. Seal to our hearts this and give us holy desire, coupled with Heavenly promise that ye shall search for Me and find Me when ye shall seek for Me with all your heart. This Thou dost ask of us, and in return Thou didst give Thyself. Oh, how little we give to Thee for how much Thou didst give of Thyself to us. And so grant, Lord, that on this Easter Evening, this night of nights in our year, we shall go, saying, I want to know this risen Christ better tomorrow and the days ahead than I have in the months past. He is alive and waiting to be known. And I long to know Him. So seal to our hearts this holy intention and purpose. We know tonight Lord, we are just as holy as we have wanted to be up until today, but may something that Thou hast spoken by Thy Spirit to our hearts in this service, put holier, deeper, fuller desires in us than we have ever had before. And we know that every step we take to meet Thee, Thou wilt meet us. Receive our thanks, In Jesus Name.

Invitation.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Easter Sunday Evening, April 22, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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