

Seeing Him Who Is Unseen
Jason Henderson
West Side Meetings
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Last week we talked about him knowing Christ as our life. We started to talk about, not just the necessity of knowing Christ, but the way that Christ is known. There is great confusion about this subject in the body of Christ. There was great confusion about this subject in my life for many years. Not only do we not know Christ. We often do not even know how Christ is known.

All of our relationships in the flesh are natural and external. In other words we know each other based solely upon outward experiences of different peoples lives. We experience things like conversations that involve words, interactions of various kinds, we share time and place and experiences. This is how we come to know each other in the flesh. But this is not how we come to know the Lord.

Generally speaking, we always try to know spiritual reality in the same way, and with the same faculties, that we know and experience natural reality. Everyone does this without even thinking. You don't have to be taught in a wrong way to do this. You simply have to live on Earth as human. This is the only kind of relating that we know. Relating in the natural and the external. And then of course it is through own interpretation and understanding that we internalize these relationships. I mean, it is based on how we perceive these experiences, these interactions, these conversations, that we determine how these relationships feel to us, how important they are to us, etc.

And that is perfectly normal in the Earth. However, it is perfectly foreign to relationships in Christ. And specifically I'm speaking about our relationship to God in Christ, and not as much right now about our relationships to one another. Our relationship to Christ is not natural and it is not external. By nature it is spiritual and it is internal. And that means all whole lot more than we would imagine. That means that you can only experience this relationship, know this person, grow in our relatedness to him, when something happens that is both **internal and spiritual** in nature.

So what that means is that you will not come to know the Lord by reading a book. A book can say true things *about* him but still those true things must become internal *experiences of him* in spirit and truth. You will not come to know the Lord by experiencing dreams and visions or angelic visitations. These things are still natural and external. Even though they may have spiritual origin, they are reaching you through the natural realm. You are experiencing them through natural faculties.

You will not come to know the Lord through experiences in the natural realm. God cannot teach spiritual things with natural tools. The best he can do is point to spiritual things with natural arrows. He can point to spiritual things with natural parables, symbols, shadows, miracles. But experiencing all of these natural things

will not cause you to know the Lord. If they are true they will simply point you to the Lord who must be known inwardly and spiritually.

So we started looking last week at what it means to know the Lord inwardly and spiritually. We drew a diagram on the board with three circles inside each other -- body, soul, spirit. And I drew some arrows from the outside coming in towards the soul through the body, and I said that this is how many of us believe we are supposed to know the Lord. We believe that the words come to our ears and tell our hearts various things about him. And then we are supposed to supply our own understanding and our own application to these words and make the corresponding adjustment to our behavior.

And though many people, including myself, have given many years and much effort to this kind of knowing it is perfectly fruitless with respect to the transformation of the soul. It does not accomplish anything.

The way to know the Lord is when the life that is on the inside, the life that has been deposited in your soul at new birth begins to teach itself, show itself, reveal itself by the work of the Spirit, to you. I'm talking about an inward seeing, a spiritual beholding, a deep profound awareness that is much stronger than physical sight. Even though we cannot imagine at first how this could be so, it is far more real than any of the five natural senses.

If you'll recall, last week we mentioned how walking in the flesh with Jesus did not change the nature of any one of his disciples. Worse than that, walking in the flesh with Jesus for 3 1/2 years did not give the disciples one advantage in understanding anything that he said. Everything he said to them was foreign, different, contrary to what was operating in their natural minds and what they were perceiving through their natural senses. That didn't change one bit over time. Time simply cannot change that "otherness". The only way to change otherness, the contrariness of flesh and spirit, is for flesh to be put away in the soul to be born of spirit. And not only that, but a soul to have spiritual life revealed and experienced inwardly.

We do not need to see Jesus with our natural eyes. As strange as this sounds, that would not accomplish anything with regard to his purpose for you and I. God is not desiring to show up in your room in a vision. God is not wanting to show you natural miracle after miracle after miracle so that your belief in Him stays strong. God is not trying to convince you of his reality a dream, or through an angel appearing, or a sign. God's purpose has to do with conforming your soul to the life and nature of his Son.

You do not need to see Jesus with your physical eyes. You do not need to see anything with your physical eyes. I believe God shows us something about this in his dealings with Paul. The first time that Paul saw anything that was spiritually real he became physically blind for three days. It was time for Paul to stop using natural senses to judge spiritual realities. That is a form of trespassing. And it was causing Saul/Paul to persecute the very thing he thought he was trying to defend. And that's how it works in us as well. When we seek to know and serve God with our senses, we will end up persecuting and fighting against the very thing that we claim to protect. Some of you have watched that happen recently.

It is true that God appeared to Saul in a physical, shocking display of himself. And it is true that that had a dramatic impact in Paul's life. What I want you to notice with

me right now is that this experience did not transform Paul's soul. This experience change Paul's mind. It changed his direction. It certainly got his attention. But this physical experience was not the kind of seeing, or knowing, or the kind of light that Paul ever talked about in his epistles. In fact, Paul never once mentions this experience in any of his epistles. Luke mentions it three times in the book of acts. But Paul never mentions it at all.

For Paul there was a different kind of seeing. For Paul there was a different kind of light that he came to know. And that was the light that he wrote about when he said "God who commanded light to shine out of darkness is the one who is now shining in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". The light that Paul was concerned with shined in him by the spirit of truth that Jesus had promised to send. And Paul became extremely, intimately acquainted with this kind of light.

I think we have referred to the verses in Matthew 16 a number of times, but they are so important for us to understand. I'm talking about the first time Peter spoke something about Christ with understanding. The time when he actually came to see and understand something that was real. Jesus says to Peter, "flesh and blood has not revealed this to you Peter, but my father who is in heaven". Peter had seen the dead raised, Peter had walked on water. But Peter understood nothing of spiritual reality until it was revealed by the father.

It is as though Jesus looked into Peter's eyes at that moment and said, "Peter, seeing me in flesh and blood is not what caused you to know me in this way. Peter there needed to be another kind of appearing, another kind of beholding before you could ever really know who I am."

Here's what I'm getting at. Even though there have been, and there always will be, physical manifestations of God's works in the natural realm, these are not the kind of appearing that cause you to know anything spiritual. A lifetime can be spent watching these incredible shadows, these remarkable miracles, and at the end of it Christ could still say to you, "truly truly, I don't know you and you don't know me".

If you are going to know spiritual reality, and live in and by spiritual reality, you must learn to see the Lord as spirit and a life. Jesus said, "the words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life". It's as though Jesus was saying, "my words are far more than lessons. My stories are much more than teachings. These things that I say to you are the seeing of me if you have eyes to see".

There was a time a few years ago when I began to realize that nothing I had ever seen with my natural eyes had ever transformed my soul. People can argue with this if they like. But nothing I ever saw or experienced in the flesh changed my flesh. It certainly effected my flesh. I'm not denying that there were effects. But effects are not the same thing as transformation. I can effect that table with paint or with a hammer in significant ways that change its appearance. But I cannot transform that table into a kangaroo. That's something altogether different.

I can watch with my eyes a baby being born into the world. And that can certainly thrill my soul, but it will not change what I am. It's going to change my natural life dramatically if its my baby. But my soul remains the same. I could witness some of the horrors of World War II, and though that might sad and depressed me, it has not changed what I am by nature.

Here's a perfect example. Think about the Israelites that came out of Egypt. Do you remember all the things that they saw with their natural eyes? 10 incredible plagues, an ocean parted, an Army slain by the hand of the Lord, a mountain burning like an oven, of voice out of heaven like thunder, water pouring out of a rock, manna falling down from the sky, etc. And yet all of these natural appearances profited them nothing because they brought very few of them to the true inward appearing of the Lord. The book of Hebrews says,

[Heb 4:2](#) For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*.

And that brings me to the reality of faith. These people heard audible words from heaven. They saw mind-boggling signs in the Earth. There was not a single one among them that did not believe in God of Israel. There was not one among them who did not believe him to be their Savior from Egypt, or their provider in the wilderness. And yet this verse says that what they heard did not profit them because it was not mixed with faith.

Faith is what we are talking about. Faith is what we need to understand. Once again, with the word faith we have a term that is so familiar in the body of Christ, so commonly used, and used in so many different ways. And yet many people in the Lord's body do not understand the reality or experience of faith. And so again, I would ask that you and I would present to the Lord our natural understandings of spiritual words. We need to present them to the Lord not so that he can adjust them, but so that he can destroy them and give those words the meaning that was out from his mind from the beginning.

Faith is nothing that you do, and it is nothing that comes from you. Faith is not your beliefs. Faith is not your deeply held spiritual convictions. Faith is not the conclusions that you've come to with reference to God based on teachings or experiences. Faith is entirely supernatural.

I realize that every religion talks about faith. And yet faith has absolutely nothing to do with religion. As a matter of fact, true faith will be the destruction in your heart of every religious thing. Faith and religion do not mix. In fact religion has come into existence only because there has not been faith.

When people that are involved in religion talk to you about faith, they are talking to you about their beliefs. In other words, they are talking to you about what their mind thinks to be true. What they believe and why they believe it. Deeply held convictions, strong assurances of reality, all of which exist in the natural mind. I'm not trying to say that that is inherently evil, or even naturally useless. I'm simply trying to say that that is not the reality of what the Bible calls faith.

Faith is not what you and I believe about something. It is not a belief. It is not trust. It is not hope. Somebody says, "I have faith that God can cure my cancer". That's great. But that's not faith. That's a belief. It may be a true belief, it certainly is something that he can do. But it is still what *you* believe about him. Somebody else says, "I have faith that God will end this recession soon". That is a nice sentiment, but that is not faith either. That is hope. It is something you would like to see happen. Somebody else says I have faith that God will not allow the plane to crash.

Once again, that is not faith, it is something more like trust. You are trusting him, based on an experience you've had or something you believe, what he will or will not do.

And all of these things are fine, and they have their place. But they are not faith. **Faith is the mind of Christ operating in your soul. Faith is the view of spiritual reality that becomes present in the eyes of your heart as the light of his life shines there. Faith is a spiritual seeing, a beholding that is given to you by the spirit. Even greater than that, it is actually the spirit's beholding. It is his view working in your soul.**

So it is not your understanding of a spiritual thing. It is the spirit's understanding of all things being written on your hearts. It is his eyes, his light, his understanding working in your heart. It is yours to participate in, it is yours as a gift. But it does not have you as its origin or source. Its almost like your soul is a receptacle for faith. It receives it, carries it, uses it, abides in it. But at no time can you ever create it or control it.

Here's another way to say it. **Faith is when his mind that is in you by new birth begins to bring you to his view according to the light of his life. And so, when you see by faith, when you walk by faith, you are seeing and walking in the reality of what God sees. By faith you have access into all that God has done. By faith you have access into all that God can see. By faith you participate in his view, his mind, his awareness. You don't become God. But you walk in his light and have Fellowship with him in that light.**

And so in this way, faith is what brings you into the reality and substance of what sight cannot see. You see the Scriptures are always talking about this. We are meant to be walking by faith and not by sight. That doesn't mean that we are supposed to be living our natural lives according to our convictions. Walking by faith is not just when we trust God with our sicknesses or with our finances. Walking by faith is abiding in, living by, walking in the light of God's view. And it is always contrasted with the darkness of our own view.

The more that you come to see by faith, the more you will recognize that Paul and all of the apostles were always talking about faith and contrasting it to sight. In Colossians Paul says "since you have been raised with Christ fix your mind on things above not on things that are on the Earth". The things above are accessed by faith. The things on the Earth are accessed by sight.

In another place Paul says, "we are looking at things which are unseen and not at things which are seen". Galatians says, "I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God". Of course it is the faith of the Son of God. It is his faith, his mind, his view, his light, his understanding, that must be working in our soul. Paul lived by the faith of the Son of God.

Hebrews chapter 11 says, "now faith is the substance of things having been hoped for and the evidence of things that are not seen". Well of course it is. Faith is how that which can never be seen becomes substantial and evidenced in your life, in your soul. Faith is how you become an expression of whatever view of Christ is currently working in your heart.

Then again in Ephesians chapter 3, Paul tells the church that he desires that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith. Now remember, Paul is talking to the church here. Paul is not talking to unbelievers. Paul is talking to the very ones to whom he said in chapter 1 that he praised God for their increasing faith and love. And he's telling these Christians, these believers who have already come to some measure of faith, that he desires that Christ would dwell in and occupy their soul by faith.

Romans 5:2 - Paul tells us, "by faith you have access into this grace in which you stand". Paul is telling the Romans that they are standing in this reality and relationship called grace. And yet he tells them that accessing this reality, experiencing this relationship, is by faith. You're already in grace, but grace is accessed by faith.

Galatians chapter 5 -- Paul says, "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision profits anything, but only faith working out through love". How does love work in us? Well it depends what kind of love were talking about. We can operate in natural love through natural emotion and desire. But if we are seeking the kind of love that Paul is writing about, then faith is the only way.

You see, without question, the most essential thing for a heart to have and to grow in is faith. Because faith is the ever increasing view of reality as God knows it to be. And it is by faith that all spiritual things are learned, and known, and experienced, and worked into your soul. Without faith you are just you. Without faith you simply live in the flesh, you comprehend with the darkened natural mind, and you act out from your own soul. Without faith you will never experience anything other than just you. Maybe it will be you a little smarter, you a little nicer, you a little better behaved... but it will still be you.

But by faith someONE entirely different is accessed by your soul. An entirely different life, the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, is accessed and experienced and formed in you. All of this is by faith. And without the faith that causes the life and purpose of God to operate in our soul, we are "mere men".

Growing in faith is the means by which all of God's purposes are realized in man. It is the mind of the Lord, the Light of His Life shining in the soul that brings us into an active participation in what God has done in Christ. A finished work realized by faith. A new creation lived in by faith. Grace accessed by faith. Righteousness exhibited by faith. Love working by faith.

You cannot live by your life, your mind, and think that you will ever know or do the will of God. The will of God isn't even something that you do, it is something that He is. And all that He is works in you by faith.

Let make a couple summary statements. Christ is in you. But you will never know him in the natural realm. Christ is in you. But you will never understand him or experience him with physical senses and natural mind. Things and people that are external to you can be known to a degree by sight. But you will never know Christ by sight. You will never know Christ by experiencing things he does or says in the Earth.

If you desire to know the Lord and you must know him where he is, as he is, and in the way that he can be known. He is in you. He is your life. And he is known by faith.