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Christ Must Reign over All

I've been thinking a lot (almost constantly!) about the Lord's work to purify or sanctify the vessel that He purchased for Himself with His own blood. I haven't said much about this in any of the classes that I do, but we've talked a lot about it in the Friday and Tuesday night groups. In fact, we've had some really outstanding talks about this in the last few months.

I tried to share a little bit at the May Conference here, but didn't get too in depth. I shared a bit more while I was in Arkansas, and I know that some dear friends misunderstood me. I probably didn't communicate very well. I've had a hard time describing some of these things, as I often do when something is just coming into view in my heart. There are probably some folks in other places that have misunderstood me as well, perhaps even here in Ohio. I'm not sure.

So I thought I'd take this morning and try to say a few things by way of explanation. I think I have a bit better language now than I had a few weeks ago. So I'm going to take another try at communicating the way that the Lord has been dealing with my heart about purifying or sanctifying His vessel. And when I say His vessel, I mean the inner man primarily, because it is His eternal dwelling place and temple. But I also mean the outer man, because it too belongs to the Lord, just as much as the soul.

Now, right away when I say that, people who are truly seeing Christ begin to cringe. I know, I did too when the Lord started pointing to certain things. We cringe for a few really good reasons. We cringe because we have all spent a lot of years in Christian religion trying to focus on the deeds of our body, and we have found it fruitless, or condemning, or pride-invoking, or man-centered, or cross-less or something that is NOT Christ. We don't want to go back to those things. And that's a really good reason to cringe. We have all heard a bunch of motivational sermons to spur us on towards being righteous. And we have heard a bunch of condemning sermons that make us feel horrible. And neither kind did any good.

We also cringe because when we started to see Christ in a true light, and started to understand the gospel, we saw that He alone was good; He was righteousness; He was the Father's good pleasure, the satisfaction of God. We saw clearly that we could NEVER please God in ourselves, and we rejoiced in the view of seeing Christ made unto us righteousness, and wisdom, and sanctification, and

everything that God desired. We saw that it wasn't about what we could do, or be, but what Christ was in us. We saw that our salvation was a Person, and we were brought into His perfect relationship with His Father.

We also cringe because we saw, in the light, that in our flesh dwells no good thing; that apart from Him we can do nothing; that there is no one righteous, no not even one; that the natural mind is enmity with God; that flesh gives birth to flesh but Spirit gives birth to spirit; that all of our righteousness is filthy rags; and that we are born dead in sin and trespasses, we are sons of wrath by nature, children of the devil, slaves of sin, etc.

And so, in our hearts, our first response to anything having to do with a discussion about Christ affecting the deeds done in the body, or the outward man, is to say "been there, done that, I'm so glad to be done with it, and I'm not going back."

I want to say really clearly that I understand that, and for all of those reasons mentioned, I totally agree. In fact, I've stood up here for the last 10 years and said those very same things hundreds of times. I've seen it, known it, preached it, sang it, and wrote about it. And I haven't budged one inch in any of those foundational realities. They are as real to me now as they ever were, and probably more real.

HOWEVER... having said all of that, I still must tell you that knowing Christ in Spirit and truth, as the Father reveals Him in the soul, does indeed touch the outward man. In fact, if it does not touch the outward man, then you are withholding from Him part of the land that He has purchased for His own government and purpose.

Now, the things I am sharing today, I would not share with a Christian that is new to knowing Christ as their life. There would be way too much room for misunderstanding, and turning all of my words into man's religion. But I'm not sharing this with new Christians, or even people that are new to seeing Christ. I'm sharing this with all, who I feel are on a solid foundation.

Here's what I've been seeing in a few words: **Christ has a right to rule over and reign in our entire being, both inwardly and outwardly.** Or another way to say it is, **I don't have a right to tell Christ that anything is off limits for Him to deal with, to cut off, to put away, and to fill with Himself.** Or here is another way to say it: **I don't have one life that I give entirely to Christ in my soul, and another life that He doesn't have a right to govern, constrain, motivate, in my body.**

Friends, there are literally hundreds of verses in the New Testament that have to do with external things. We don't have to be afraid of these verses. They actually fit very nicely sitting on the gospel of

Christ revealed in the soul. Nobody sees how they fit together at first, when they are so used fleshly religion. But we don't have to avoid them or pretend that the apostles didn't mean what they were clearly saying.

You say, "but I started seeing Christ, and I saw that Christ was everything! He was the life, the light, the righteousness, the wisdom, etc. and ever since then I just didn't know what to do with these verses. And so every time somebody talks about them I'm sure they're deceived or confused because I *know* what I saw!" Well, it's great and true what you saw. But are you afraid to grow? Are you afraid to see more? Do you think that growing in God's own truth will threaten what you've seen of Him? Will it not rather establish it further? Do you want to keep ignoring and avoiding these verses? Or is it possible that somehow, in some way, the man who wrote "not I but Christ who lives in me" is also the same man who wrote "Jesus Christ gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works." Is it possible that the one that said "Christ is made unto me righteousness" also wrote "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ." Can the one that said "Apart from Me you can do nothing" also want to say to you, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Can these things actually come *together* in a greater view? Are they actually perfectly harmonious in the light, as they were in the hearts of the men who wrote them? I suggest to you that they are.

I avoided some of these Scriptures for years too, because I felt like they threatened what I had so clearly seen about Christ's everything-ness, and my nothingness. I couldn't reconcile them (and many more like them), with the incredible judgment of the cross that had declared all of Adam dead and worthless and enmity with God. But I'm telling you that they are coming together in my heart now. I don't mean that Adam and Christ are coming together! That must never happen! I mean these verses are starting to fit nicely together with the reality and revelation of the cross of Christ. I'm trying to tell you that as the view of Christ gets bigger (not smaller!) there is a very important place for these verses and they still have nothing to do with my goodness, my works, my flesh, or with what I am or what I bring to the table. It's just as much "Not I, But Christ" as ever. And yet Christ is wanting to reign in all of me.

Let me read you a few verses:

Tit 2:11-15 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and

Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. 15 Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

1Th 4:3-5 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

1Pe 1:17-19 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

1Pe 2:11-12 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

2Ti 2:20-21 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

Tit 1:15-16 To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

Tit 1:7-9 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Just because there are a bunch of wrong, works-based, man-centered, cross-less ways to interpret verses like these, doesn't mean that these weren't written by the Spirit of God for a reason. Are we going to limit Christ's government and glory just because we used to try to change external behaviors

with the power of the flesh, and walk in condemnation before we saw Christ? Are we going to not let the Lord deal with us with regard to these verses just because we've only heard them preached from a man-centered view?

Are we going to (like I once did) draw a false line and say "Christ can't touch that because it's external, and he only deals with things that are internal"? He only touches strongholds of my mind, lies, the Adam on the inside, wrong understandings of the Bible, etc... but he doesn't need to touch my relationship with the world, with the body of Christ, my lack of love for the body, what I spend my time doing, what I invest my heart in, Oh no, that's external.

Do we think that being a living sacrifice, a slave of Christ, a vessel of honor is not going to change how we relate to the world, how we relate to the body in selfless love, what you feed our eyes and ears all day long, how you delight in the flesh and the world, about which Christ and the apostles had very strong words. **I'm not talking about making and living by specific rules. I'm talking about living by the light, nature, and purpose of Christ in all things.**

Let me ask you some questions, and I want you to think about these.

- 1. Have you put the cross between the soul and the body, rather than between Adam and Christ?** Do you understand what I mean? The cross divides between Adam and Christ, not between your soul and your body. The nature of sin, Adam, Satan, has reigned in both your inner and outer man. It has reigned both in your soul and your members. It has effected your heart, your mind, your body, your time, your relationships, your cares, your pursuits. Does not the Lord have a right to reign in all of these as well? Does the cross divide between your soul and your body?... or does it show both to be dead in sin and trespass, needing new life and the full conquest of a heavenly King?
- 2. Do you think that your freedom from religion, from law, from works and man-centered Christian means more liberty FOR your flesh?** Is it liberty to make your own external choices? To choose your own path? Do you think Christ has set you free from religion so that you have more freedom to be yourself? OR are you knowing a greater law, the law of LIFE, reigning in all things, and freeing you from whatever is contrary to Christ's nature and purpose both within and without.
- 3. Have you said in your heart, "My heart is seeing the true gospel, but my life is still pretty carnal or crude or wasteful. I'm still pretty manipulative or unforgiving or addicted or unloving.... but I know that this isn't Christ, so I'm ok.**

Friends, **I am NOT talking about outward changes being our goal.** Please understand that. I'm NOT saying that the inward is all for the sake of the outward. Nothing could be further from my mind. But

the outward is part of what Christ purchased.

1Co 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

I am NOT... and please pay attention to what I'm saying... I am NOT talking about trying to manifest Christ to ourselves or to other people. In my heart, that doesn't even make sense. We are not running around trying to look like somebody's version of Christ, or demonstrate what we think Christ is like, or make people appreciate Christ in us. Nobody will ever see Christ in you. They will only see Christ as the Father reveals Him in their own soul. And your focus on manifesting Him will do more harm than good.

I am NOT talking about looking at ourselves, or in ourselves, to search for change, or to measure anything. There are so many things wrong with this idea, I could spend a month talking about it. And I don't think that any of the verses I have referenced today have anything to do with this idea. First of all, you'll never see anything good looking at yourself. Secondly, you have no ability to measure or assess anything. Thirdly, looking to yourself is looking away from Christ. Fourthly, the only two results are either pride or condemnation.

I am NOT talking about YOU fixing bad things, and then presenting yourselves as a good boy or girl to God. I don't like going through all of these clarifications and qualifications, and I wouldn't have to if there weren't so many lies and wrong ideas out there taught in the name of Christianity.

I'm just talking about you letting Christ reign wherever He wants to. Christ has a right to reign in the entire man— body, soul, and spirit. Or however you understand man's composition. I'm saying that you don't have a life to hold onto, to feed your with own stuff, and give to your own passions, to give to your own pursuits, to relate to the world according to your whim.

I'd like to read a text message I got this week that I thought said several things very clearly and concisely. I tweaked it a bit for clarity, but this is the essence of it.

It sort of became clear to me that, if Salvation is all Christ, and we are hidden/covered in Him, then any expression of self that becomes exposed needs to be removed. We are the ones who draw false lines between self-thought (inward adamic things) and self-behavior (outward adamic things) But behavior is only a manifestation of the inner man, and if self is being expressed in any way, then it is fair game for destruction. The issue is not whether the Lord "cares" about certain behaviors, the issue is that no flesh can stand in His presence. Whether it

is a leaf, twig, fruit, or whatever... if it is a bad tree, the whole thing is subject to death. It's not like "now we are talking about outward things," it's that we have to be willing to allow the Lord to cut off any and every expression of flesh that he "sees" sticking out from under that covering, when He wants to see only Christ. And we can't limit Him to our prior notions of how His life is to work in us.

I really liked that. It's not like, "Oh boy, Jason is off on some weird tangent talking about outward things now." No, I'm on the same tangent I've always been on. But its getting bigger in me. The kingdom is demanding more room. I've been sharing it with some Philistines and David is wanting to put them away. I've been making some treaties, some false boundaries, and Christ wants to fill all things with Himself.

In my heart, this is ALL still 100% about the gospel of Christ revealed in you, Christ formed in you, and ONLY Christ working to put off the old man and put on the new. I can't help Him do this with my own fleshy efforts. But I also don't get to tell him where the boundaries of His government stop. I don't get to tell him that His light shining in my soul is not allowed to touch, effect, change, destroy things in my outer man, in my relationship with the world, in how I spend my time, how I love the world, how I serve the church, how I pursue the cares of the flesh, etc.

Somebody says, "Well, the internal will eventually take care of the external automatically". I agree, it will!... if you let it. But if you think that Christ doesn't touch it, doesn't need to touch it, that all talk of external things is just dead religion, what are you letting Him do? I'm just going to wait for Christ to change my heart, but in the meantime I'm going to keep investing my heart, time, and energy in the world and the flesh. Some day he'll change me, but for now I'll keep pursuing my goals in the earth; I'll keep fixing my eyes on things below; I'll keep ignoring his checks and reproofs for the ways that I love the world and live for my flesh. Some day the Lord will get around to dealing with those things. No. Not if you don't look for Him. Not if you don't love His appearing, follow His light, cling to everything that He shows you, and flee everything that is contrary to Him.

So what am I talking about specifically with respect to outward things?... I'm talking about letting His light show you both what IS and what isn't Christ. When you see Christ, you also become aware of things that are not Him. He who is spiritual discerns all things. When you see what is, you will see what has never been Christ, or never leads to Christ, or is not of His same nature, purpose, mind. And when that comes into view, if it is an inward thing (like a lie, a belief, a lust, anger, whatever!), then agree with the Lord about it, turn to Him, and let His power, life, and light put away the first and establish the second. And if it is an outward thing (something in your ways, your relationship with the world, your dealings with the Lord's body, your investment in the flesh, the passing pleasures of sin,

your tongue, your soul-deadening entertainment, etc)... then DO THE EXACT SAME THING! Agree with the Lord about it. Don't say it doesn't matter because it's external. Agree with the Lord, turn to Him, and let His power lead you out of it and leave it behind.