

Experience the Finished Work

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INTRODUCTION

“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him” (1 John 2:29).

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous” (1 John 3:7).

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17).

A skill is a capability developed through the habits that a believer practices in his life. Skills are different from talents, which represent natural gifts. Anyone—even someone who seemingly possesses very few natural talents—can develop a skill if he puts in the time and effort.

When the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us the skills of righteousness, He is teaching us the skills of being right in all situations. Many skills are defined in the Bible, but I want to focus on

the skill that Abraham learned when he believed God. Abraham learned how to think with God, and it was counted to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6).

In Romans 4:5, we see that the one who believes is the one who is counted righteous. This righteousness is reckoned by grace, not by works. A Christian needs to teach himself to see that God's righteousness is his, and his forever. To think this way is a skill that a believer develops through his walk of faith.

Leaders, especially, need to develop skills in righteousness. Many leaders can be mean, reactionary, and hateful. That's wrong. Any leader in a Christian assembly should purpose to be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath (James 1:19). I pray every day that leaders delegated by men will operate in skills of righteousness consistent with the Finished Work.

As we will see in these pages, there is a particular skill every believer needs to learn, and that is the skill of experiencing the Finished Work.

Chapter One

SKILL YOURSELF
TO THINK IN LIFE

“Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness;

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

“And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:11-17).

A divine thinking skill in righteousness accepts what Christ did on our behalf in perfect humanity, making us just like Him the moment we get saved. From then on, this believer does not see himself as having to perform to get more righteousness. He just has to develop the skill to know and think upon what happened the moment he received Jesus.

A number of things happen to a believer when he is born again. One of the most important things is that he experiences a positional death. That is, once I received Jesus Christ, I died with Him and I was buried with Him. Also, I was raised with Him from the dead, and now I am seated above with Him at the right hand of the Father. Positionally, I am dead to sin and its effects. This is a wonderful kind of death. It means that I am hid with Christ in God. Still, I need to skill myself in getting this truth, knowing this truth, and believing this truth.

Understanding Death in order to Know Life

“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There

is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

“All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death” (1 John 5:16-17).

There are many kinds of death that we understand from the Scriptures, and in this passage the Bible refers to an early death that can come to a believer because of sin. David spoke of the potential of this death in Psalm 118:18, where he wrote: “The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.” The king of Israel was writing this after his sin with Bathsheba. Clearly he understood that there is a sin that leads to physical death.

The Word of God tells us that He chastens His children in love (Hebrews 12:11). His purpose is to bring us joy and peace. God’s grace is here today. Still, believers who consistently fall into a pattern of what I call “chain-sinning” can expect that God will implement His Word. Wickedly wrong choices can bring extreme consequences. Remember, God is still in charge of every heart that beats upon this earth.

Physical death is really a graduation for the Christian. The reality of going home to heaven and beginning an existence of being face-to-face with Jesus makes the Christian faith so wonder-

ful. An angelic escort arrives and up the believer goes as he draws his final breath (2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21; Acts 7:55; Luke 16:22).

Spiritual, Temporal and Operational Deaths

Yet, the Bible also describes a spiritual death. When Adam and Eve ate from The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the innocence that they had lived in was gone, and they became self-conscious. They were now sinking back to the dust from which they were taken. Spiritual death represents the state of every person before salvation. At the moment of salvation, Christ quickens that one who was dead (see Ephesians 2:1).

A Christian who functions outside of doctrine exists in operational death. The basis for this principle is found in James 2:26: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” These believers have measures of faith but doctrine is not at work in their souls.

Another “death” a believer can live in is temporal death. This happens when a Christian commits himself to sensual pleasure—hedone in the Greek—and refuses contact with God. Of course, Christians can experience spiritual plea-

sure that comes from being motivated through the Holy Spirit. When this is the case, the believer's mind is filled with the Word, his will is positive toward Christ, his emotions are healthy, and his body is presented to God as a living sacrifice.

Then there is a sexual death of barrenness or impotence, which Abraham experienced for a season. In time, God fulfilled His promise, and Sarah conceived Isaac.

Finally, the death that motivates us to go into all the world with the Gospel is the second death, described in Revelation 20:10-15. That death is the destiny of every unsaved person who rejects the salvation presented to him in the person of Jesus Christ.

It is very good for every one of us to understand these various deaths. But God really concerns Himself with bringing the Christian out of temporal and operational death. And He does this by ministering life to His people through the Word spoken from His pulpits and in the midst of Body life in His churches. Under this order and authority, Christians can enjoy amazing peace and success. In other words, we can experience our position in Christ and revel in the Finished Work.

Chapter Two

ABBA, FATHER

“And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

“For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

“If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

“Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 9:11-13).

“Father” indicates the presence of a parental relationship. All of us have fathers and some of us have wonderful relationships with our fathers. Others really know very little about their

fathers.

There is no father like God. He is “Daddy”—that is really what the word “Abba” means. The term “Daddy” reveals a relationship of mercy and a relationship of comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3). His mercies and comforts are new every morning. God, our Daddy, relates to us with patience (Romans 15:5). His relationship to us is built upon divine love (1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:18-19).

What I like about our Father, our Daddy, is that Psalm 68:5 says that He is also the Daddy of the fatherless. If your natural father forsakes you and leaves you alone, then our heavenly Daddy will pick you up (see Psalm 27:10). In 1 Peter 4:10, our God is the Daddy of all grace and the Daddy of all faithfulness.

Open Arms for the Troubled

“And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

“And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

“And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

“But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

“And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry” (Luke 15:17-24).

Who went out to meet the long lost son? Was it a just a father? No! Daddy went out and hugged his boy and kissed his neck again and again. A parent may have had plenty to say to his child, but Daddy was just too happy to have his son back home with him.

The love of God goes out clearly. It is the most refreshing message in the whole world. But those who hear it must receive it as if it is coming from Daddy.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that he did more than preach to the people there. He im-

parted his own soul because the people were dear to him (see 1 Thessalonians 2:8). Still, the message must be received. Some people live and die without ever knowing God the Father as their heavenly Daddy.

My Father, Your Father

Think about what Jesus said to Mary Magdalene on resurrection morning: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). In other words, Jesus was telling her, "My Daddy is your Daddy."

I cannot think about that reality without weeping.

I will never be an orphan. Even if everyone left me and I was here by myself, I would still have my heavenly Daddy. Underneath me would be His everlasting arms.

"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable" (Psalm 145:3).

In the Upper Room, Jesus Christ was getting ready to go out and head toward the Cross. One of His final statements to His disciples was a prayer to His Daddy. He wanted them to be one

with Daddy as He was one with Daddy.

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21).

Chapter Three

GENTLENESS AND GREATNESS

“For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?

“It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

“He maketh my feet like hinds’ feet, and setteth me upon my high places.

“He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

“Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

“Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip” (Psalm 18:31-36).

Any skill in righteousness is related to the greatness of God’s nature. David expressed this to his Daddy: “Your gentleness has made me great.” It wasn’t killing the bear and the lion in the field that made David great. It wasn’t his great triumph over the giant Goliath that made

David great.

David recognized this very important truth: God's gentleness is what makes us great. For this reason, King David was kind and secure when Shimei cursed him and threw stones and dust at him (see 2 Samuel 16). Some of David's men wanted to take off Shimei's head right then and there, but David did not answer in natural strength; instead, he responded with the gentleness of God in his heart.

"And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

"It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

"And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.

"And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there" (2 Samuel 16:11-14).

Do you see how great David was because of the gentleness of God? David never boasted in

himself; he always boasted in what the Lord had done for him.

Before you react to any situation, take a moment and think about the greatness of God in your life. Think of how gentle He has been with you. Speak the truth in love and let your speech be seasoned with resurrection life. Consider the terrific relationship you have with your heavenly Daddy. You have a Finished Work relationship with the Father, and you can cry to Him, “Abba! Daddy!”

Get to Know Who You Are

Some believers are wandering in search of an added experience. That just brings confusion to their lives. The essence of our Christian life is a process of us getting to know what happened to us forever at the moment we were saved. The Finished Work is just that—the Finished Work. There is nothing more that I can do. Jesus did it all for me.

God wants us to get to know Him as Daddy. He wants us to get to know Jesus Christ our Lord through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Paul’s prayer was that this would be every believer’s experience. He wanted every Christian to perceive his calling from God and to live

in their glorious inheritance, in the exceeding greatness of God's power.

The Christian life is not about me doing better. It is not about me changing myself. No, the Christian life is about me getting to know who I have always been by grace through faith in the Finished Work.

I have always been complete.

I have always been seated above.

I have always been hid with Christ in God.

I have always been justified by faith in Jesus Christ my Lord.

This same faith gives us access to Daddy. It is in His grace that we stand. It is in the glory of God that we rejoice and hope.

Faith Tested, God Proven True

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

“Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

“Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

“But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD” (Job 1:7-12).

God allowed Job’s faith to be smashed. He saw Job as one of the most mature men on the earth, and Satan said, “Let me at him.” So God allowed the hedges to come down. Job did not like the situations that came his way during those difficult days. He failed several times, and he asked many questions of God. Still, Job clung to this reality: “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth” (Job 19:25). Job always saw himself in the Finished Work, even when everything and everybody seemed to stand against him.

Just keep experiencing what God has done in your life. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. Let’s stay rooted and grounded in love. We can rest in the love of Christ that passes all knowl-

edge because we know that His Finished Work has done exceedingly, abundantly above what we could ask or think, according the power that works in us.

CONCLUSION

Knowing Christ in our daily experience is what learning the Bible and walking by faith is all about. Day after day, moment by moment, God desires to reveal to us the reality of who we already are in the Finished Work.

It is so important for us to develop this great thinking skill. That is what will bring us to discernment and wisdom. With a mind that possesses a clear view of the Finished Work, we can quickly cast down vain imaginations and empty thoughts. Deception will not capture us and carry us away.

My prayer is that each of us will come to be skillful in the righteousness that God has put upon us. It is ours by grace through faith. It is the gift of God and it is ours forever. Let us live in the Finished Work in our relationships and in our dispositions. Let's allow our heavenly Daddy to draw out of our hearts the new creation temperament that He has put there.