

All Begins in Revelation

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Published by NTChurchSource.com

"We impart this from words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those that possess the Spirit. The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things but is himself to be judged by no one..." (I Cor. 2:13)

In considering the spiritual outworking of the church, we need to see who is doing the work and how the work is being done. The work of God is being done by the Spirit. This is revealed to us in Ephesians 2:22, as the apostle Paul says to the believers in Ephesus, *"You also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."*

We also need to realize that the work that is being done is a spiritual work. The process begins with a revelation of who Jesus is and of who we are in Christ. After revelation comes submission to the Lord, to the measure He has shown us of Himself. Submission always brings obedience to what we have seen.

God is not doing many different things. In this age, God is building His church. All the Spirit's working is towards the establishment of the church, through what has been done in Christ at the cross. This is where the Lord reveals His great wisdom. In salvation He brings us into the body of Christ, the church. In filling the believer with the Spirit, the Lord equips each member to function in the body. As we have already said, the working of the church is all spiritual, which means that everything that is done is being done by the power of God.

We could say that if we want to see what God is doing, we must look to the church. In the church God is working with lively stones, members that are filled with the Spirit, but more than filled--controlled by the Spirit. The thing that makes members of the body of Christ unique in the world is that they possess the Spirit of the Lord. Now with the indwelling of the Spirit each member can express and reveal God's nature. Jesus said, "You shall be witnesses unto me." This was directly tied to the coming of the Holy Spirit to abide within the believer. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the only thing that can make this witness possible, and a reality. The Holy Spirit gives each member the ability that is needed to be a part of the body of Christ and to function in the body.

Ephesians 3:2: *"Assume that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it now has been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."*

Ephesians 3:7: *"Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace (note the gift of God's grace) which was given me by the working of His power."*

In Christ - By the Power of the Spirit

If we begin to talk about the work of God and take these truths with our natural minds, we will take them completely out of the context in which God is working. Although God is working His plan sovereignly, He does not work "in spite of us." God's plan shall come to completion, and it will be worked out in a practical way, but to understand this we must first see that all God's working begins in Christ Jesus.

The first and most important aspect of God's working is His revelation to your heart of who you are in Christ. It is who you are that gives meaning to what you say and what you do. Take away that one element, and what you say or do has very little or no value.

The reality of who you are in Christ will provide you with a beginning place in the church. Everything that is being done in the body of Christ is done by the Spirit and in His ability. We cannot move in the body of Christ unless we have revelation. Lack of revelation will completely prevent the natural person from being a part of the body of Christ. There is no place for the natural man to function in the body of Christ. If we are to function, it must be by the Spirit and the ability He gives.

You may look around and see things that are being done by men without the power of the Spirit, and think that they will last. But they will not. Only that which begins in God, in the revelation, will change your life and cause spiritual fruit to come forth in your life.

Seeing the revelation will also affect the words that you speak. Out of the abundance of your heart your mouth will speak the mysteries of God. It is only out of the revelation that God gives that we will recognize all the men God has called who have had a ministry of life because the revelation possessed them. God has not changed His manner of working. If each member of the body of Christ is going to grow and be fruitful, he must begin with revelation, and there must be a continuing growth in that revelation.

Don't think of the word "revelation" in a light way, because it properly demands of us submission and obedience. The revelation is in God, and when God reveals Christ to us by the Spirit, He will give us the power, the ability, the zeal and the determination to do His will. It is easy to work up zeal for a moment, but that kind of emotional zeal is short-lived. You can be on fire one day and down in the valley the next, because there is no constant burning revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. What took Paul to the end of his life, when he could say, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"? It was revelation, the revelation that brought him into a relationship, the revelation that caused him to lay aside every weight. It was the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ and what He was doing that caused him to take everything of this world to the dunghill, not only saying that he counted it lost, but actually losing it for Christ's sake.

Revelation - The Controlling Factor in the Church

It is the revelation that will determine the course that we take, whether we be young or old. The revelation will determine where we move in God, and how we move in God. It will determine what we say and what we do.

The greatest weakness in most local expressions of the church is that there is no prevailing revelation. May we let the Spirit speak to our hearts. What does it mean to see the revelation? It begins with Jesus. Some believers could tell all that they know about Jesus in five minutes. But if we have seen the revelation, we will understand that God builds revelation on revelation. We see more and more of Jesus, until He fills our vision. As we behold Him and His glory, we will be changed into that which we see. Some would say, "Don't get so spiritual that you can't come down to move in practical things." I would say, "Unless the revelation possesses our vision, we will never get down to anything pertaining to the kingdom of God and His working."

So, let us get down to where values are values. Let's get down to where truth is truth. Unless the revelation of God possesses our soul and directs our life, whatever we might do for God will be worthless. The revelation must be the controlling factor, with Christ Himself being the revelation.

Colossians 1:16, *"For in Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities, all things were created through Him and for Him."*

In these last days God is shaking. Only if we have a revelation will we stand. Nothing short of a revelation will cause us to continue to work to the point where our life is as the life of Jesus was--laid down. Only as we love as Jesus loved will the body of Christ come into the full expression of what God's Word says the body is. Ephesians tells us that the body of Christ is *"the fullness of Christ that filleth all in all."* He was the fullness of the Godhead revealed in the flesh, and the Spirit is filling the church with the fullness of Him. So, when we look around and see things falling apart, when we see lives that are coming loose from one another, we can plainly see why, by looking at the source of their strength. There is no revelation, nothing to grip the heart, nothing that can take a believer on in his walk in Christ. He may grab a truth here and there, and know it in his mind, but that is not revelation. Revelation demands obedience to truth because the Spirit has spoken and revealed Christ to us.

Everything that God is doing is based upon revelation. The revelation of Jesus Christ to each one of our hearts is given by the Spirit of God. Only the spiritual man, the one who is under the control of the Spirit, can understand the things of the Spirit. God's church is spiritual, and there is no way that we can get into the church and its working except by the Spirit. We can function only by the Spirit.

I was reading just the other day the comments of one brother in the Lord who said that certain manifestations of the Spirit were only for babes in Christ. Then I read what another brother said: "Unless we continue on with the same fervor that they had on the day of Pentecost with the burning presence of the Holy Spirit, the church will never be brought to maturity." There we have two exactly opposing views. I would say that one brother had only an opinion, which is not enough to minister life, and the other, a revelation. Revelation brings us into the reality of His life.

When We Move By the Spirit We See God's Results

Revelation causes us to see our need of the presence and working of the Holy Spirit in each of our lives. The church must have His presence. It needs the manifestations of His power in its midst, that it might be a glory and witness unto Him. We do not need gifts for gifts' sake. We need the gifts that the church might move in God by the Spirit. Without the gifts, the equipment that God has put in the midst, the church cannot move in a spiritual manner, cannot manifest His power.

Why do we fail in many instances? Is it not because we move out from our union with the Spirit? When we do, we do not have the direction of the Holy Spirit. When we move by the Spirit we see His results. This principle can be carried into any of the specific outworkings of God's plan, whether it be in the marriage relationship, relationships with our children, or our relationships with one another in every aspect of the church and the ministry. Wherever we might look, the question is whether the revelation is the controlling factor in our lives.

"He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." If we could only know this truth by the Spirit! If we could only see who we are in Christ! Those who are in Christ do not continue to sin. What a revelation! I am afraid we have too much knowledge in our minds and it gives us an ability to make excuses. We become slothful in our minds and our lives. We begin to say, "I can't." Revelation will show us that we are no longer doing anything, but that we are a new creation in Christ, and can do all things. Are we looking at ourselves, or are we looking by revelation at who we are in Christ? It is this revelation that will move us on in knowing Christ. It is this revelation that will cause us to run the race.

What is going to give us the strength we need to walk each day pleasing to God? The answer remains the same--revelation and the continuing revealing of the Spirit. Lack of a clear vision of Christ, what God is doing, and how we fit into God's working causes us to look to ourselves and start to bring in programs and systems which will only fail, because they cannot accomplish God's will. We need a zeal born out of seeing Christ, and then we will be able to move over the obstacles in our lives. Without it we stumble and fall rather than bounding over them. We have lost our youth in the Spirit.

We ought to move right over these earthly things that stand in our way, but we are so prone to fall flat on our faces because there is no revelation in our lives that demands all our attention, to possess and to control us. When we see that Jesus is building the church, we will not be so quick to put our hands on it or bring in our programs, because we'll know that man's efforts won't bring about what God wants to do.

Reading Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, we can sense his utter dependence upon God. Paul is not moving in himself, but by the Spirit. Paul is moving because he has a possessing revelation from God. He said, *"That I may attain to that which I have been arrested for."* In other words, God came along one day and arrested Paul for a purpose. God also one day came into your life for a purpose. The Spirit will reveal that purpose to each one of us. Now, we might come up with the excuse that we are not Paul, but that does not mean that God will not give us a revelation. God is going to open the eyes and understanding of every person who will believe Him. God will not give you the same grace that He gives every member of the body of Christ, but God gives the grace for each member to function in the place He has put them in. Grace is the ability to function in the revelation He has given us of Himself.

When We Behold Christ We Become Like Him

Our revelation must not grow dim. What we see is what we become, and what we become governs what we do and what we say. We are being changed into His image, and God's work can only be done God's way if we are going to see God's results. You may try for a while on your own to produce what God wants, but when you come to the end of your efforts and strength, you will see that it takes divine revelation from God to move you on to take another step in faith.

None of us can move in faith without a revelation. I am sure we know this in theory, and in most cases we know the practical outworking of God's purpose in a measure. We must, if we have a new life in Christ. But to move in the revelation takes spiritual strength, an active faith--the lack of which causes many to become slothful in their walk. They begin to slow up in their obedience to what the Lord is showing them; thus the vision dims. Many look upon the revelation as something that only the ministers need. God does not have it reserved for one or two; the revelation is for all of God's people! The Lord knows how to feed each one of us through the revelation. We all need the fullness of revelation!

It is the working of God that will hold you on course; nothing short of the revelation will do it. You can talk about it, but that is not enough. We need the life which comes from the Word made alive to us by the Spirit. Our words can be life to others only when we abide in Christ and our words proceed from the revelation. Our lives can feed others only as we rest in the Lord. When I say "rest in the Lord," I mean that we have ceased from our labors and started to allow the Lord to work in and through us, which is all a part of seeing the revelation.

Romans 8:4, *"In order that the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."* This brings our walk in the revelation to a place in which we must have the anointing of the Spirit, which is a place of real strength. It may look like

weakness to the natural world, but it is strength in the spiritual realm. It is in knowing who we are in Christ, and in making a confession of this by our lives, that we are in Him.

Romans 10:3, *"But speaking about the Jews being ignorant about the righteousness that comes from God, seeking to establish their own..."* They did not submit to God's revelation of Himself and all that He is, and thus missed God's working for them. They did not have spiritual eyes to see God's provision.

The greatest need that we have is that our eyes may be opened spiritually. This will have an effect on the words that we speak, the path that we walk, and the influence that our lives have on others. The revelation of God, breaking into our conscience is the only thing that can work the character of Jesus in us. It is only as we look to Him in faith that we can draw strength that will allow us to walk out the reality of His life.

Romans 8:5, *"For those that live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those that live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."* The Christian walks in a different realm from the world. It is not just "going to church on Sunday." The Christian walks in the Spirit. The Christian has a new life; thus he starts from a different standpoint. It is not from the basis that we are "only sinners saved by grace." The Christian starts from the creation of a new life. He is in Christ. This is a place of faith, and if there are areas in his life that the Lord wants to change, He is able to speak to him if he is spiritually alive unto Him.

Too often we are only partaking in our minds. We are not alive to what God really wants to do in us and through us. We need to become alive in every area. Our lives need to be quickened by His Spirit, and we need to abide in that anointing that He has given. The book of I John tells us to abide in that anointing which we have received--abide in it, and live out of our union with Him. Then our lives will be a sweet-smelling savor to those around us, and most of all to God.

Truth Revealed By the Spirit Demands a Response

Let us go back and focus our attention on the truth found in I Corinthians 2:13. *"And we impart this by words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths."* There is a difference between truth, and truth revealed by the Spirit to those who possess the Spirit. The demand of the Spirit is obedience. Things that are true can come forth all day, but truth brought by the Spirit through the one speaking to the one hearing, when obeyed, brings forth an expression of the will of God. The Holy Spirit is the teacher, and the truths taught by Him will be the truths that build our lives together. It is truth, and fellowship in the truth, that will hold us together in the times of testing. Christians need to be continually partaking of the Word that they might grow up into fullness.

The Scriptures tell us that God is going to remove every stain that sin brought on our lives. He is coming for a church without spot or wrinkle. We might say, "impossible," but the Scriptures say "pure"--"without spot or wrinkle." We may say, "Well, that is in the Spirit." That's right, and that is where we are supposed to be--in the Spirit. We are to be living a new life, His life. This is what we have been talking about, the revelation which will cause us to move on in faith, not looking to ourselves. We are still in this body, but even if this body is dying, God's Word says the inner man is being renewed day by day. When we do see something by the Spirit, we will rejoice in our daily walk even when we must go through some hard places of testing and suffering.

A Controlling Revelation - The Only Thing That Stands

Each one of us needs a revelation that controls us, and the Spirit of God will have to give it to us. We need to realize that the work belongs to God and that God is present by the Spirit, working his work. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus through the work of the cross. Of course, we have our responsibilities, but don't ever think that you are building the church or that any man can build the church. Again we must state that Christ is building His church. It is being built in the Spirit, and the only thing that can build the members together is spiritual truths coming forth by the Spirit and being received in the Spirit. Human knowledge cannot take hold of spiritual truth. Until we start to see Christ by revelation we can never move in faith; we will be only hearing words. Without the Spirit there is only death, for it is the Spirit that brings life.

The Spirit will show us the fullness of our inheritance which is all in Christ Jesus, and if He shows us the fullness it is that we might be partakers of the fullness. We must seek the Lord with our whole hearts if we desire to know Him and be partakers of what He has purchased for us in Christ. The Lord is going to show you the fullness of what He has done. He will take you down into the valley of suffering, and then you will cry out, "I see, I see." God is not going to show you something without working it in you. This is why at times we hold back: because we know God and His ways. We know that when we start to see, we will have to walk in what we see.

Looking at this path in God from a natural viewpoint, some do not want to walk in that place of obedience to the revelation. It seems to be a place of loneliness, of rejection, a place where nobody understands you. Well, this is a place of rejection; it is a place where nobody understands you. This is why some stop short of entering into more of the fullness of God. They would rather have everybody understand and accept them--but this is not the way when we walk in revelation. Revelation brings us into the reality of His life--which is not accepted by the natural man.

The revelation will cause us to suffer for His sake that we might reign with Him. Only those who see the revelation and are obedient to that revelation will reign with Him. Only those who have tasted of the demands of the Spirit of God as He reveals the Father's heart are going to be changed into the image of His Son.

Only a vital working in our lives will bring us to a place of oneness, where we can humbly say, "Come, Lord Jesus," and it will be the Spirit of God speaking within us because He has made us ready. The Spirit will be crying within us, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus"; a church prepared, "Come quickly." Some would say, "Give me a little more time." But the Spirit says, "Come," and the church says, "Come," because it is indwelt by the Spirit. "Come quickly," because it is ready.

Let the Spirit speak to our hearts, and let us see that the work belongs to God, and that without the revelation we are not even within the working of God. But He doesn't withhold it from anyone, so we must not become discouraged. All He is looking for is a hungry heart. He has said, *"He that hungers and thirsts after righteousness shall be filled."*