

Building on the Foundation

Chapter 4

Let's look at II Corinthians 5:17, Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, in the context of I Corinthians 15, where there are two men; one being earthy and the other heavenly. When Paul says if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, he is comparing that to the creature he was before he became new. In I Corinthians, it says that which was first was earthy and after that which is heavenly, so the new creation is heavenly and the old creation is earthy. The old creation is Adam. Obviously, here it says if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, so the new creature is Christ.

I want to take that and look back in John 3 and consider what Jesus was saying to Nicodemus. I have found this true in my life and I believe it to be true in many Christians' lives as well. Jesus said in the 3rd verse, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Clearly, he wasn't talking about seeing something up in the clouds. He was saying if you're born again, you have experiences that are of the heavens while you are here on earth. In fact, a better translation of the word "born again" is actually "born from above". In John 8, Jesus said he was from above and Adam is from beneath. So, here it is saying if we are born again, we will see those things that are not seen but are from above. Why would Jesus say we would see something if we're not going to see it with our natural eyes? It's not something that I saw with my eyes, but it was something I experienced in my life that was as real and has remained as much or more than anything I've ever seen with my physical eyes. It was something that was of the kingdom of God, I had an encounter with it, and it has remained with me to this day.

Many people in a difficult situation will accept the answer to a problem. If I am in a car and I run out of gas on the side of the road and somebody comes along and has some gas and puts it in my tank, I am very thankful, but I can just get in my car get some more gas at a nearby station and go on my way. Many Christians have accepted the forgiveness of sins as a solution to their problem, but then they go their own way. So, they see the kingdom and the benefit of the kingdom, but they want to live their lives their own way. What the spirit of God wants us to do upon seeing the kingdom and seeing the benefit of that kingdom is to then enter into the kingdom by subjecting our lives to the laws of the kingdom of God. It is by the laws of the kingdom of God that we are changed.

The law of Moses was not the kingdom of God. The law of Moses was the law that is of the earth. When Jesus came, he said, concerning the law of Moses, it's not

enough that you don't murder your brother because he said if you have hatred in our heart, you have murdered him. The law of Moses addresses performance. The law of Moses has to do with that which you perform on the earth. By obeying the law of Moses, you can avoid killing but you cannot cleanse your own heart. If you don't live in the kingdom of God, then you have no capacity to be changed. We can live all our life as Paul said he lived his life: concerning the law without offense but concerning the heart we have major problems.

Jesus addressed these things on the Mount of Olives when he gave in Matthew 5 the ultimate discourse known as the Sermon on the Mount. He spoke of a responsibility to respond differently. He said if you're cursed, then bless; if you are persecuted, pray for your persecutors; if someone hits you, don't hit them back. Not only that, don't run away; let them hit you a second time. He said if you do these things from the heart that is because you are children of your father who is in heaven.

Let's take a look at a verse over in Ephesians 3. It's just one verse in that chapter and it's the first phrase of verse 17, because this is the indication of more than just seeing the kingdom. This is both the result and the means of living in the kingdom, of entering into the kingdom of God. It says, That Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith. Obviously, this isn't referring to Jesus being in our heart. This is referring to a life that is quickened in us by the Holy Spirit. Just as much as Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit, so Christ is birthed in us by the Holy Spirit. That's what happens when we are born from above. That's how Christ is there; it's by the power of the Holy Spirit. It's what we read in John 1, when it said born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God.

The key word here in this verse is the word "dwell". It isn't just passing through; it isn't just being there at times, but it's a life that has taken up residence. It's a life who the owner of the house has embraced to be a permanent occupant. It's one thing to have a visitor; it's another thing to have somebody dwell in the house. This is a change that is more than just a different person dwelling in the house. This is the whole house beginning to live by a different law. This is taking the house out of this world and putting it in the heavens. It's as if it's being translated into a different kingdom, coming under the laws and government of that kingdom. It says that the way that Christ dwells in our hearts is by faith. When it says our heart, it isn't referring to our physical heart as an organ of our body. It's what Paul said in another place when he said, Set your affection on things above. It begins to take our hope into something that is not of this world. Christ does not dwell in my heart by understanding; Christ does not dwell in my heart by reading my Bible; Christ does not dwell in my heart by going to church although if Christ does dwell

in my heart, I think all of those things will happen. It says that Christ will dwell in our hearts by faith.

When the Israelites went to Egypt, they were a family of twelve. While they were in Egypt, they became slaves. When God brought them out of Egypt by miraculous occurrences – there were 10 plagues, there was the opening of the Red Sea and the destroying of the army behind them – when they got to the promised land, because there were giants, they were afraid. Their confidence in God was not strong. Instead of looking at God as bigger than the giants, they looked at the giants as being bigger than they saw themselves. God said because of an evil heart of unbelief they would spend 40 years in the wilderness. Then, when they were in the wilderness for those 40 years, he provided for them miraculously, and it says that still they kept their hearts far from God. It gave an explanation of what the problem was; it says because the word they heard was not mixed with faith in them.

This is what we have and what we face as a church. We have been forgiven of our sins, we have been born again, we have had the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and we now have the responsibility of bringing ourselves into the kingdom of God to be governed by a different government. It's a government that does not operate on natural power; it's a government that does not operate on knowledge; it's a government that increases because of confidence in God. I want to leave you with that phrase: That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith.