



The Treasures of Darkness

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"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."

1 Corinthians 2:13

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Preface

I had been put off writing this article because I was concerned that it would be too easily taken to be just about my personal experience. It is, in fact, grounded in, and proceeds from, my personal experience; but my goal in sharing my experience¹ is to draw attention to some spiritual truths I believe the Spirit of Christ desires to bring to light in the Church, which is His Body².

Therefore, I'd like to say up front that, if you find yourself thinking: *"I suppose writing for Bill serves to be 'therapeutic'. And of course, considering what he has gone through, I can see where this is meaningful for him; but this is not necessarily something I need to embrace."* – then I would suggest you not spend any more time on it, as you will be missing the point. However, if you do continue, please be mindful that whenever I am relating my personal experience, my intention is not to have this be "about me", but rather to be "about us" - and more so, about the Lord's working in us – His Body.

¹ I am writing in very "broad strokes", so to speak. I am not relating the physical details of my experience, because 1) I do not want the focus to be on "me", but rather on the Lord's working in us – His Body. 2) Unless you are disabled, it is impossible to even imagine what kinds of "situations" are added to everyday life. And it is much too laborious to try to explain those "situations". 3) No one outside my body can possibly understand the physical details of my experience. I am relating the spiritual details of my experience. (Cf. 1Corinthians 2:11. 4) "The devil is in the details", as they say. If I were to spend time writing all the details of my physical condition, we would get bogged down in details, and "miss the forest for the trees", so to speak.

² Ephesians 1:22-23

So, to begin ...

I had a fall which resulted in a disabling spinal cord injury. Early on in the resulting six-week hospital stay, Holy Spirit impressed upon my heart and mind the following passage of scripture...

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we also have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we celebrate in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only this, but we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

Romans 5:1-5

A few years later, I am still amazed – even more amazed – at how, in that traumatic state, the Lord *immediately* spoke to me some things I would need to know in this radically life-changing season, and how *profoundly* He spoke to me through this particular passage.

Another reason why I put off writing about these things is because I felt I needed more time to *experience* the spiritual truths I was being shown. I need to state clearly: I am speaking *about* my experience in the *present tense*. I am not speaking *from* my experience in the *past tense*. In other words, *I am still in the process*, I have not “completed” the process, and offering “keys to

success”. To the best of my knowledge, I will not be able to say in this lifetime, “I have completed this process.” I must also add this: From my perspective, I am failing miserably in this process. My wife, Frances, will unhesitatingly confirm this. Yet, I can attest to much increased awareness of certain attributes of God. And by grace and experiential knowledge, I see some evidence of spiritual transformation in those qualities of the divine nature of which we have become partakers.³

So again, I am speaking about what I am experiencing – present tense. Even so, these are some major points I would like to make:

- God intends for us to *experience Himself and His words*.
- We can expect *compound experiences* taking place at *deeper and deeper levels in our hearts and minds*.
- The *contexts of the experiences are circumstances and situations* that God allows⁴ to come upon you, which when embraced *have the power to effect spiritual transformation by the Spirit*.

³ Cf. 2 Peter 1:2-4, 3:18

⁴ Some circumstances and situations are the reaping of what we have sown. (Galatians 6:7) Some are the result of Satan obtaining God’s permission to afflict us, as in the case with Job. (Job 1:12 & 2:6) And all of these circumstances and situations are the result of God’s “engineering”. “*The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating disaster; I am the LORD who does all these things.*” Isaiah 45:7 For more on this subject, I suggest my article, [*Some Thoughts on Evil*](#).

Introduction

Let's take another look at that passage - Romans 5:1-5:

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we also have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we celebrate in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only this, but we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."⁵

As I received and reflected on this passage, I began to understand some of Paul's insights: Firstly, I realized that this passage only applies to those who "have been justified by faith", "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ", "stand in grace, through faith, in hope of the glory of God"; and that these things are affirmed to me because I "have received the Spirit and love of God in my heart".

Secondly, I almost immediately realized that "tribulation" - the "surprisingly strange fiery ordeal that has come upon me"⁶ – *has*

⁵ Cf. 1 Peter 1:5-7 "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love."

⁶ 1 Peter 4:12

the power in itself to change me. In one sense, I would not have to work at becoming more “persevering”, or “proving my character”, or somehow having more “hope”. This “strange, fiery ordeal” would do the work on me: The “tribulation” - suffering, affliction – *itself* brings about the “perseverance”; and the “perseverance” (steadfastness, endurance) brings about the “proven character”; and the “proven character” (tested and proved), “experience” – which brings about the “hope”. If I embraced it, the situation God allowed to come upon me would, in and of itself, do the work He wanted to accomplish in me.

Thirdly, I also realized – later - that *I do have to do something*. I have to *choose* to, or *choose not to* be in or stay in the situation. (At least in my case, I will be in this situation for the rest of my life – there’s no “opting out” for me.) The choice I do have to make though is whether or not I will choose to act in love - towards God, towards myself, and towards those around me. I’ll speak more about “choice” shortly.

And as I mentioned, I realized “this strange fiery ordeal” was all about *experience*. I had already known and experienced the realities of this passage regarding the connection between “tribulation, suffering, affliction, and perseverance, steadfastness, and endurance”. But I was now having a **deeper experience of**

these things, and therefore, a deeper experience of God and a deeper experience of the love of God. To be honest, I find this “deeper experience” *awesome* - in both the pleasant and the terrifying meanings of that word.

The “Process”

I have been motivated to write about some “*Treasures of Darkness*”, which I will do. But I’ve realized I probably have more to say about *the process* of discovering those “treasures of darkness”. There is a plethora of “Enjoy the journey...” sayings. That may be the case here also: **I believe what I have learned about and experienced in *the process* is as precious as the treasures themselves.** At the very least, *the process* has proven to be indispensable to discovering the treasures.

Let’s look at Paul’s choice of words in that Romans passage: He stated, “We *celebrate* in our tribulations”, The Greek word is *kauchaomai*⁷. Greek scholar, A.T. Robertson, informs us that the full meaning of this word includes *experiencing joy and glory*.⁸ Robertson also tells us: “*It is one thing to submit to or endure tribulations without complaint, but it is another to find ground of glorying in the midst of them as Paul exhorts here.*”⁹

A Greek word, *makrothumeo*¹⁰, is translated ***perseverance*** or ***patience***. Another Greek word, *hupomone*¹¹, means essentially the same thing: ***endurance*** or ***patience***. Some translations render

⁷ Strong’s # 2744

⁸ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

⁹ Ibid., A.T. Robertson

¹⁰ Strong’s # 3114

¹¹ Strong’s # 5281

hupomone as **patient endurance**. The KJV simply translates it as **patience**. Certainly, **patience requires perseverance and endurance**. *Hupomone* – **patience**, is the word which we see in verses 3 and 4 of Romans 5.

Some translations say that “patience” brings about “experience”¹². I have always found that difficult to understand. The following comment on “experience” by Greek scholar, M.R. Vincent, is helpful: *“Experience - wrong. The word means either the process of trial, proving, or the result of trial, approvedness. Here it can only be the latter: tried integrity, a state of mind which has stood the test. The process has already been expressed by tribulation.”* So, “Tribulation brings about **patience**, and patience brings about **strengthening**”, as metals are **strengthened** after being **tempered**¹³ and **tested** – **proved and approved**.

Now, considering the Greek word, *katergazomai*¹⁴, allow me to amplify the passage a bit:

“Tribulation **brings about** (that is, works fully, finishes, accomplishes) patience; and patience **brings about** (works fully, finishes, accomplishes) strengthening; and strengthening **brings**

¹² For example, the *KJV*. The Greek word is *dokime*, Strong’s # 1382.

¹³ In metallurgy, tempering is a heat treatment process to strengthen metal alloys like steel and iron.

¹⁴ Strong’s # 2716

about (works fully, finishes, accomplishes) hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

Do you notice that if we just “stand in faith”, **God allows certain circumstances and situations to bring about – that is, work fully, finish, accomplish - something in us.** In this way, “God is at work in all things ... to conform us to the image of His Son”.¹⁵ We, ourselves, in one sense, do not need to try to be patient, or work at passing the test solely by our own efforts. **The circumstances and situation brings it about – that is, the circumstances and situation works fully, finishes, accomplishes patience and proven character - tempered and tested, proved, and approved.**

In this process, I also discovered something else: I observed that I was expecting and waiting for a transformation in which I would be permanently changed in the sense of *not having to consciously choose* to be patient with others. Now, I do believe that the supernatural working of Holy Spirit is ultimately manifested in our “unconscious” behavior.¹⁶ But there is *a process* to

¹⁵ Romans 8:28-29 (NIV). “God causes all things to work together for good....” (NASB). Cf. *Expositor’s Greek New Testament* and *Elliott’s Commentary for English Readers*.

¹⁶ “The true character of the loveliness that tells for God is always unconscious.” Oswald Chambers, “My Utmost for His Highest”, August 21, “The Ministry Of The Unnoticed - Blessed are the poor in spirit. — Matthew 5:3”.

transformation.¹⁷ And during that *process*, the Lord asks for our *free will decision in choosing to be patient*. At this point, it is always *a choice* rather than “automatic”. And it is patience *with* kindness. As it’s been said: Love is an “action word”. And that act always involves *a choice*, for even after the transformation is completed, so to speak, it is always still possible to choose to act contrary to the divine nature.

¹⁷ “***From glory to glory ... this is of the Spirit.***” 1 Corinthians 3:18

Lowliness

There are a number of words I could use to describe the “process” I’ve been referring to. But the one word that would best describe it is: “*lowliness*” – that is, **being brought low**. There are some verses in Lamentations 3 which paint a picture of how I personally perceived the circumstances and situation I found myself in after my fall:

“He has made me live in **dark places**.” (6a)

“He has also made my teeth grind with gravel; He has made me cower **in the dust**.” (16)

“Let him put his mouth **in the dust**.” (29a)

Interestingly, “lowly” is the word Jesus used to describe the place of His heart: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and **lowly** of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves.” Matthew 11:29

The root word is *tapeinoo*¹⁸, meaning “to be brought low”.

Alternate translations are “to be humbled” or “to be humiliated”.

In the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, the same

¹⁸ Strong’s # 5013: “lowly” (*NKJV & ESV*), “humble” (*NASB & NET*)

Greek word is used a number of times to express what David penned:

“Before **I was made low**, I erred, on account of this I have kept your word.”¹⁹

⁷¹ “It was good that **you brought me low**, so that I would learn your duties.”²⁰

⁷² “The law you have revealed is more important to me than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.”²¹

⁷⁵ “I knew, Lord, that with righteousness and truth, your judgements **brought me low**”.²²

Jesus invited us to learn from Him about this lowliness;²³ and Solomon advised us that it would be wise to accept Jesus’ invitation: “The Lord opposes the arrogant, but He gives the humble (lowly) grace.”²⁴

James’ letter to the Early Church re-enforces the counsel of the Lord: “Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us? But He gives a greater grace. Therefore, it says, ‘God is

¹⁹ Psalm 118:67, *Lexham English Septuagint*

²⁰ Psalm 118:71, *Lexham English Septuagint*

²¹ Psalm 118:72 *Apostolic Bible Polyglot*

²² Psalm 118:75, *Lexham English Septuagint*

²³ Matthew 11:29

²⁴ Proverbs 3:34, *Lexham English Septuagint*

opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble (lowly).’ Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”²⁵

Shortly after my fall, as I laid in a hospital bed, Holy Spirit brought to my remembrance with quiet power and deep, sweet comfort Peter’s words: “‘God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore, **humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God**, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, having cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you.”²⁶

Why “Lowliness”? Why this process of “being brought low”? “**Lowliness**” is like being in a different spiritual place. Being brought to that place changes one’s knowledge of God and His words from theoretical to experiential.

When we look closely at what the Spirit said through Isaiah and Jesus, we see that “the lowly” – those living in “lowliness” - are very open to hearing good news:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to bring **good news to the poor (humble)**²⁷. He has sent Me to proclaim release to **captives**, and recovery of sight to the **blind**, to set free those who are **oppressed**.” Luke 4:18 (Isaiah 61:1)

²⁵ James 4:5-8a

²⁶ 1 Peter 5:5b-7

²⁷ The Hebrew word in Isaiah 61:1 is *anav*, Strong’s # 6035, which, in the *NASB* is translated “humble” 10 times, “afflicted” 8 times, and “poor” only once.

Luke used the Greek word, *ptochos*,²⁸ which has to do with the state of destitution – not only of things material and financial, but more so, of the things of the heart and soul²⁹ - as evidenced by the references to those who are **captive, blind, and oppressed**. In fact, the root meanings of the word are from other Greek words which are translated “to crouch”³⁰ and “to fall”³¹. What is being depicted here is **Lowliness**.

“The Lord is near to them that are of a **contrite heart**; and will save **the lowly in spirit**.” Psalm 34:18³²

In that dark, lowly place of weakness we find God’s strength.

²⁸ Strong’s # 4434

²⁹ Cf. Matthew 5:3, viz. “poor in spirit”.

³⁰ Greek: *ptosso*

³¹ Greek: *ptoeo*

³² *Brenton’s Septuagint Translation*

Finding God in Darkness

*I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."
and he replied, "Go out into the darkness, and put your hand
into the hand of God; that shall be to you better than light
and safer than a known way."*

from a poem written by Louise Haskins in 1908.

We have Jesus Christ, the True Light in this present darkness.³³

The scriptures refer to God in terms of *both* Light and Darkness.
*But it is important to note that God is indisputably Light.*³⁴ When
scripture uses the term "darkness", it is not in reference to God's
nature, but rather in reference to **the place in which we
sometimes find Him:**

**"Then Solomon said, "The Lord has said that he would dwell in a
dark cloud." 1 Kings 8:12**

**"He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him - the
dark rain clouds of the sky." Psalm 18:11**

"Clouds and thick darkness surround him ." Psalm 97:2a

Solomon was referencing the Psalms and describing the
presence of the Lord in the temple as a cloud. God was also
previously present in a "pillar of cloud" in the wilderness.³⁵ He

³³ Cf. John 1:4-9

³⁴ 1 John 1:5; Cf. John 1:4

³⁵ Exodus 13:21; 40:36-38

revealed Himself in a dark cloud on Mount Sinai³⁶ and covered the Tabernacle of Moses with the cloud of his glory.³⁷

The visible revelation of God was sometimes in the context of a storm-like event (clouds, rain, thundering, darkness, etc.)³⁸ This type of imagery communicated to Israel YWYH's power as opposed to the false gods of the surrounding nations, such as Baal, the "storm god".³⁹

Again, God is indisputably Light⁴⁰; but His is an "unapproachable" Light":

"[Jesus Christ], who alone is immortal and who **lives in unapproachable light**, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen." 1 Timothy 6:16

In contrast to these particular Old Testament references, this New Testament reference made by Paul says that **God lives in Light which is *unapproachable***⁴¹. To help us understand some of what this may mean, we could liken it to the sun: By its light, we are

³⁶ Exodus 19:9; 24:15-18

³⁷ Exodus 40:34-35; Leviticus 16:2

³⁸ e.g., Psalm 29

³⁹ *"The Canaanites believed that Baal provided rain and fertility, and that his power was seen in the storm. They called him 'cloud rider' in their religious texts. But the Lord controls nature (cf. 1 Kings 18)." Richard Pratt, Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible.*

⁴⁰ 1 John 1:5; Cf. John 1:4

⁴¹ 1 Timothy 6:16; Cf. Exodus 24:17 & 34:33-35; Psalm 104:2

enabled to see.⁴² Yet we cannot look directly into that source of light. Likewise, we cannot look directly into the face of God⁴³ – who is Light.⁴⁴ So, there are things about God which are “dark” – that is, “unsearchable”⁴⁵, mysteries needing to be revealed. And God has chosen to reveal those things to us through His glory “as it passes by”⁴⁶. That glory is the “outshining” of His attributes – bringing the invisible into the visible and bringing the darkness into the light. And those attributes are revealed to us through His Creation⁴⁷, and more completely through the Person of Christ⁴⁸, as He is specified in the scriptures by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁹ Some of these attributes are what I am referring to as **“Treasures of Darkness”**. Let’s begin to reflect on that intriguing phrase.

⁴² Cf. Psalm 36:9b

⁴³ Exodus 33:20; Cf. Genesis 32:30

⁴⁴ 1 John 1:5; Cf. John 1:4

⁴⁵ Romans 11:33

⁴⁶ Exodus 33:18-23

⁴⁷ Psalm 91:1-4; Romans 1:19-20

⁴⁸ John 1:14, 18 & 14:9; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:1-3

⁴⁹ Luke 24:27, 44-45; John 5:39

Treasures of Darkness in the Scriptures

“The glory of God hides a matter,
but it is the glory of a king to search out the matter.”

Proverbs 25:2

“I will give you **treasures of darkness**, riches **hidden away**, that you may know I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by name.... The One **forming light and creating darkness**, causing well-being, and creating disaster; I am the LORD who does all these things.... Truly, You are a **God who hides Himself**, God of Israel, Savior!” Isaiah 45:3, 7, 15

This passage in Isaiah 45 was actually spoken of Cyrus, king of Persia , of whom the Lord said: “You have not known Me.”⁵⁰ King Cyrus, and Persia, as well as other pagan kings and nations *did not know the One True God*. According to Isaiah, they were “**people who lived in a dark land and walked in darkness**”.⁵¹ Yet, the Lord chose, for His own purposes, to reveal “treasures” to these people in their habitat of darkness.

I would like to suggest that even for us who *do* know the Lord – and even “glory in understanding and knowing” Him,⁵² there are places in the spiritual realm - dimensions in God, which are

⁵⁰ Verses 1 & 4

⁵¹ Isaiah 9:2

⁵² Jeremiah 9:24

“dark” to us until He brings us into those depths and reveals more of Himself to us through experiences with Himself which gift us with “treasures of darkness”.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a **treasure hidden** in the field⁵³, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells everything that he has and buys that field.”

Matthew 13:44

Jesus spoke the parables in Matthew 13 to reveal “knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” to His disciples.⁵⁴ Here, I am sharing some experiences of what it is like living in the kingdom of heaven – some “hidden treasures” to be found in the kingdom of heaven.

The Greek word translated “treasure” here is *thesauros*⁵⁵, meaning “a deposit of wealth”. The Greek word translated “hidden” is *krupto*⁵⁶, meaning “to conceal by covering”. In our case, it is the covering of *darkness*. The Hebrew word, *tsaphan*⁵⁷, corresponds to the two Greek words *krupto* (“hidden”)⁵⁸ and

⁵³ Cf. Jeremiah 41:8. “Owing to the insecurity of property in the East, from war and oppression, joined to the necessity of keeping valuable property in hand, for want of secure banks of deposit, the practice of hiding precious utensils and ornaments, money, and jewels, has always been common. Often these are built up into the walls of the owner's house, often buried in fields and gardens.” John Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations*.

⁵⁴ Matthew 13:10-11

⁵⁵ Strong's # 2344

⁵⁶ Strong's # 2928

⁵⁷ Strong's # 6845

⁵⁸ Strong's # 2928

thesauros (“treasure”)⁵⁹ as it means to hide or to treasure, or to store up as treasure.⁶⁰

Paul wrote of a “mystery”⁶¹, which for ages past was kept **hidden in God**”. Ephesians 3:9

He also wrote of “a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself”; and said that “all **the treasures** of wisdom and knowledge are **hidden in Christ**”. Colossians 2:2-3

Then, he went on to say that “our lives are **hid in Christ**”.

Colossians 3:3

And this treasure⁶² is (hidden) “in earthen containers”.

2 Corinthians 4:7

Because God is Spirit⁶³, we can conclude that the place in which these **treasures are hidden** is *in the spiritual realm*.

In *The Book of Revelation*,⁶⁴ listed among the promises for the overcomers, is that they would be “given of the **hidden manna**”⁶⁵ -

⁵⁹ Strong’s # 2344

⁶⁰ Brown-Driver-Briggs *Hebrew and English Lexicon*

⁶¹ “*This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 3:6)*”

⁶² Namely, “*the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ*”. (2 Corinthians 4:6)

⁶³ John 4:24

⁶⁴ Chapters 2 & 3

⁶⁵ Revelation 2:17. While not deemed necessary for our purpose here, there is a plethora of commentary on the “manna hid”, the “white stone” and the “new name” some of which can be accessed here: <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/revelation/2-17.htm>

again, a reference to “hidden treasure”. In this case, the treasure is “manna” – God’s provision in a wilderness. In the Old Testament typology, the manna was preserved in a golden jar as a memorial, which was “placed before the Lord” in the tabernacle and in the temple.⁶⁶ Along with the other items kept hidden in the ark⁶⁷, it has an eternal quality – like Christ, “The Bread of Life”, Whom these things prefigure.⁶⁸

“My dove, in the clefts of the rock, **in the hiding place** of the mountain pathway....” Song of Songs 2:14a

“**A locked garden** is my sister, my bride, **a locked spring, a sealed fountain.**” Song of Songs 4:12 Cf. 5:1

Ephesians 1:18 speaks of the Lord’s “portion”, or “possession” or “inheritance”⁶⁹ as being “in the saints”. We can understand this to mean that the Lord’s *treasure* is His people, the Church. In a typological interpretation of *The Song of Songs*, with the Bridegroom typifying Christ and the Bride typifying the Church,⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Exodus 16:31-37; Hebrews 9:4

⁶⁷ “*Aaron’s staff which budded, and the tablets of the covenant*” (Hebrews 9:4)

⁶⁸ John 6:31-33, 48-58

⁶⁹ Greek: *kleronomia*, Strong’s # 2817

⁷⁰ Unger defends this approach by noting that typological interpretation is found elsewhere in Scripture, particularly in connection with marriage. “*The typical view is given abundant scriptural support. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament the relationship of the Lord’s people to the Lord is illustrated under the figure of marriage. Israel is the wife of Jehovah (Hos 2:19-23), in her sin and unbelief now divorced, but yet to be restored (Isa 54:5; Jer 3:1; Hos 1-3) in most wonderful grace and glory, which we believe is the aspect of the mutual love that is highlighted in the book. On the other hand, the Christian church is presented as a virgin*”

we again see this is a “hidden treasure” – hidden “in the hiding place”, “a locked garden, “a locked spring”, “a sealed fountain”. And, certainly, those outside of Christ have absolutely no awareness of how Christ cherishes those who are “hid in the clefts of the Rock”.⁷¹ It is hidden from them.

“The house, while it was being built, was built of stone finished at the quarry, and neither hammer, nor axe, nor any iron tool was heard in the house while it was being built.” 1 Kings 6:7

In his commentary on this verse, F.B. Meyer wrote: *“In nature, God works so silently that we do not realize His activities.”* Jesus said it was the same in His kingdom work:

“Now He was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, and He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God is **not coming with observation**; nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.” Luke 17:20-21⁷²

For our purposes here, what is significant about Jesus’ answer is not the issue of “when”, but the issue of “how” – “**without**

espoused to Christ (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:23-32; Rev 19:6-8) and is also typically reflected as a part of the redeemed.” Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament

⁷¹ Song of Solomon 4:12; Exodus 33:21-22

⁷² There is much debate surrounding these verses, as to WHERE the kingdom is – “within you (even within the Pharisees, whom Jesus is answering?), or “in your midst”, referring to Jesus’ presence. The 2nd rendering is obviously more consistent with the context: Jesus is answering the Pharisees’ question, i.e., WHEN is the kingdom coming? Jesus’ answer is: It has already come. It is here in your midst.

observation". Much, if not most of the work of Christ's Spirit is taking place in the hidden places in the hearts of those that make up His Body, the Church.

Some of the Treasures Found Hidden in Darkness

“Treasures”

“Where your **treasure** is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 6:21

I am convinced that what I “know and understand of God”⁷³ is **the most treasured thing** I have in this life. Its value is all the more cherished when we consider that is the only thing we take with us into eternity. But, if we don’t actually “glory in knowing and understanding God”, we may not consider the things being discussed here as “treasures”. One of the most profound things I’ve learned in this season in life is this: Although we are truly created in God’s image and likeness, He is a *very different* Being from us human beings. As He has told us through Isaiah: His thoughts and ways are NOT the same as ours – they are “higher”.⁷⁴ *Lexham English Septuagint* says it this way:

⁷³ Jeremiah 9:23-24

⁷⁴ Isaiah 55:8-9

“For my counsels⁷⁵ are not as your counsels, nor are my ways⁷⁶ as your ways, saith the Lord. But as the heaven is far off ⁷⁷ from the earth, so is my way far off from your ways, and your thoughts⁷⁸ from my mind⁷⁹.”

So, unless we “join ourselves to the Lord and become of one spirit with Him”,⁸⁰ God’s “treasures” – His values, priorities, and agenda for our lives remain *very different* from ours. But if we “glory in knowing and understanding God” what He treasures we will treasure. Let’s look at some of *the “treasures” we may find hidden in darkness*.

I’ll be discussing *Meekness, Patience, Simplicity, and Contentment*, in that order. Looking back to the overture of this spiritual season in my life, Holy Spirit initially presented all four of these “treasures” together. But after the six-week hospital stay, being released from the hospital, and returning to my “normal” everyday life at home (actually, a “new normal”), I had the impression that I was being instructed on each of these traits separately. As in a piece of music, there was the presentation of the theme, followed by sections developing various aspects of

⁷⁵ Greek: *boula*, Strong’s # 1012

⁷⁶ Greek: *nomothesia*, Strong’s # 3598

⁷⁷ Greek: *apechei*, Strong’s 566

⁷⁸ Greek: *dianoema*, Strong’s 1270

⁷⁹ Greek: *dianoia*, Strong’s # 1271

⁸⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:17

that theme emerging one after the other. First the focus was on *Meekness*, then on *Patience*, then *Simplicity* and *Contentment*. I could liken it to a musical chord – one sonority made up of various tones in harmony with each other. Or to change the analogy: the various facets of a diamond. That diamond could be labeled “Love”, for these are some of the traits present when there is love. These are some of the aspects of the “divine nature”⁸¹ which we have received, as well as some of the “fruit of the Spirit”⁸² whom we have received. It is good to note that while we have received His nature and His Spirit, fruit is something which is *grown*.⁸³ As I share what I’ve experienced and learned, it should be apparent that some of these “treasures” I have embraced, and some, as yet I’ve only handled.

⁸¹ 2 Peter 1:4

⁸² Galatians 5:22-23

⁸³ 2 Peter 1:5-8

Meekness

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

Matthew 5:3-5

Clearly Christ was alluding to Psalm 37:11 - “The meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity.”⁸⁴ The verses preceding this in the psalm unfold the character of the **meek**, laying down six imperatives whereby **meekness** will grow and develop in us:

1. Do not get upset.
2. Trust in the Lord.
3. Delight yourself in the Lord.
4. Commit your way to the Lord.
5. Rest in the Lord.
6. Wait patiently for the Lord.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”

Matthew 5:5

“Meekness” is the prerequisite to this inheritance.

⁸⁴ *New International Version*. Also: Cf. Proverbs 22:4

Jesus referred to Himself as “meek”⁸⁵; and as “the Church which is His Body”⁸⁶, we are to be like the Head of the Body⁸⁷ – namely, meek.⁸⁸

Meekness is an essential aspect of the divine nature of which we are partakers.⁸⁹ Thus, through imparting to us the divine nature, God’s purpose is to conform us to the image of His Son⁹⁰, who is “gentle and lowly⁹¹ in heart”.⁹² The Greek text is translated: “gentle”, or, alternatively, “meek”. I prefer to use the word “meek”, because “gentle” carries certain misrepresentative connotations⁹³; and because “meek” begs of us a definition.⁹⁴

⁸⁵ Matthew 11:29

⁸⁶ Ephesians 1:23

⁸⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:12

⁸⁸ I have written elsewhere, in more detail, as to how the Lord desires His Body, the Church, to manifest to the fallen powers the wisdom of “the weakness of God” (Ephesians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 1:25) - namely, [*The Weakness of God*](#), [*The Cross & The Powers of Darkness*](#), [*Who is this King of Glory*](#), [*Seeing the Kingdom through the Cross*](#), and [*A Remnant Will Return*](#).

⁸⁹ 2 Peter 1:4

⁹⁰ Romans 8:29

⁹¹ Greek: *tapeinos* - humiliated, cast down, lowly

⁹² Matthew 11:29

⁹³ Jesus’ treatment of the temple moneychangers (John 2) and the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23) do not fit the word “gentle”.

⁹⁴ Please see “Addendum” regarding my use of the English word, “meekness” rather than “gentle” in these passages.

What is “Meekness”?

The Greek word translated “gentle” or “meek” is *praos*⁹⁵.

According to the Greek scholar, W.E. Vine, it represents a virtue of heart and mind, **expressed chiefly towards God**. However, scripture does exhort us to put on a “spirit” (attitude) of meekness *towards other people as well*.⁹⁶ I’d like to suggest this useful, but not all-inclusive, distinction between the use of the words “gentle” and “meek”: As we said, “meekness” is “a virtue of heart and mind, **expressed chiefly towards God**”. Whereas the *attitude towards other people* is usually expressed as “**gentleness**” - *a virtue of outward behavior and actions*. But when it is formed inwardly by Holy Spirit, “meekness” is also outwardly expressed **as the lack of self-assertiveness, pride and arrogance expressed toward others**.

Meekness is closely linked with “**humility**”,⁹⁷ as well as “**self-control**”.⁹⁸ It is **acceptance of God’s will and ways in one’s life without resistance**. This “*acceptance without resistance*” includes accepting God’s use of other people, circumstances, and situations in one’s life for His purposes. His ultimate purpose, and

⁹⁵ Strong’s # 4235

⁹⁶ 1 Corinthians 4: 21; Galatians 6: 1; Philippians 2:3; Colossians 3: 12; 2 Timothy 2: 25; Titus 3: 2; 1 Peter 3:15

⁹⁷ Ephesians 4: 2, Colossians 3:12

⁹⁸ Galatians 5:23

therefore what is behind His working in every circumstance and situation, is that we be “conformed to the image of His Son”.⁹⁹ So meekness is accepting anything God allows in our life, recognizing it as an opportunity to be conformed to the image of Christ, and surrendering to and co-operating with the work of Holy Spirit to that end in the given circumstance or situation.

Meekness is **not** relating to God in a self-assertive way. It is being **receptive** rather than assertive. James exhorted us:

“... *in humility* **receive** the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”¹⁰⁰ Meekness is **not** testing God’s ways, nor complaining or murmuring about God’s ways. There are many passages in the scriptures admonishing us **not** to resist God’s ways.¹⁰¹

The meek are those who, with humility and gentleness, view their role in relation to God as that of a servant. They are not proud, and they do not pursue their own personal gain. Their prime concern is the Lord, His kingdom and His Church, His Name and His glory.

⁹⁹ Romans 8:28-29

¹⁰⁰ James 1:21

¹⁰¹ E.g., Exodus 17: 2 & 7; Numbers 21: 4-7; Deuteronomy 6:16; Luke 4:12; 1 Corinthians 10: 9-10

A Quote from Samuel A. Meier¹⁰² ...

“There are two essential components for this quality (meekness) to come into play in the Bible: a conflict in which an individual is unable to control or influence circumstances. Typical human responses in such circumstances include frustration, bitterness, or anger, but the one who is guided by God’s spirit accepts God’s ability to direct events (Gal 5:23; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12; 1 Tim 6:11; Titus 3:2; James 1:21; 3:13). Meekness is therefore an active and deliberate acceptance of undesirable circumstances that are wisely seen by the individual as only part of a larger picture. Meekness is not a resignation to fate, a passive and reluctant submission to events, for there is little virtue in such a response. Nevertheless, since the two responses resignation and meekness are externally often indistinguishable, it is easy to see how what was once perceived as a virtue has become a defect in contemporary society. The patient and hopeful endurance of undesirable circumstances identifies the person as externally vulnerable and weak but inwardly resilient and strong. Meekness does not identify the weak but more precisely the strong who have been placed in a position of weakness where they persevere without giving up.”

¹⁰² Samuel A. Meier is associate professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at Ohio State University.

Images of Meekness

I think we cannot see meekness itself. What we *can* see is outward behavior – even a lifestyle – under the influence of meekness – meekness personified, if you will - through images we find in nature and Scripture:

*“Humble Yourself ... Change and Become Like a Child ...”*¹⁰³

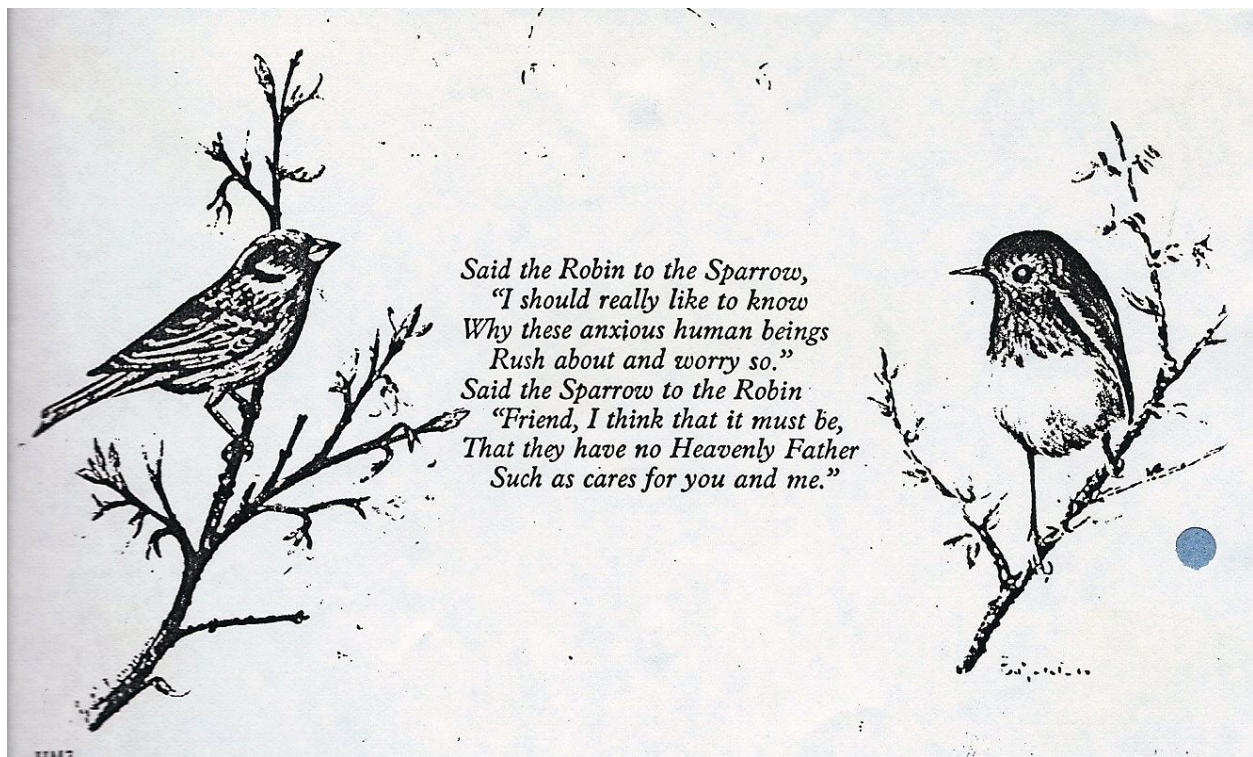
Meekness is relating to God in a **simple, childlike** way (rather than in a proud, arrogant, difficult way). Psalm 131 presents a perfect picture of simple, childlike meekness:

“LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes arrogant; nor do I involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me.

²I have certainly soothed and quieted my soul; like a weaned child resting upon his mother, my soul within me is like a weaned child.”

I believe this poem written in 1859 by Elizabeth Cheney entitled, *“Overheard in An Orchard”* also presents an image of meekness.

¹⁰³ Matthew 18:2-4



Ms. Cheney was obviously inspired by the lifestyle Jesus advocated in His Sermon on the Mount – a lifestyle anchored in the meekness of childlike trust in our heavenly Father:

“ ... Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”
Matthew 6:32b

The apostle Peter presented a similar image of meekness:
“Therefore, **humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God** [set aside self-righteous pride], so that He may exalt you [to a place of honor in His service] at the appropriate time, casting all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, **for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully].**”

1 Peter 5:6-7 AMP

Resting in the Power of God

“The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.” Matthew 11:12¹⁰⁴

“The meek will inherit the earth.” Matthew 5:5

Violent Men “Posses” *by Force* - Children “*Inherit*”

“Meekness” is **not** weakness; but it *embraces* “weakness”. It embraces weakness in the context of having faith in God. *In that context*, human weakness finds the strength and power of God. Weakness is having no resources *in oneself* upon which to draw. But meekness draws upon limitless resources in God.¹⁰⁵

Therefore, meekness is ultimately power. But the “power” then, is **not** to “*possess* the earth” in one’s own strength - as do “violent men” - but instead, to “**inherit** the land” through “childlike” faith in God’s strength to fulfill His promise.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ For my explanation of this verse see my article [*Seeing the Kingdom Through the Cross*](#), pp.12-15.

¹⁰⁵ This faith includes the works of faithfulness and obedience on our part. James 2:14-26 (also Hebrews 11). Therefore, one could never attribute compromise or failure to obey, to ‘meekness’. King Saul was an example of this type of compromise. 1 Samuel 15: 3 and 18-24. Under pressure of people, circumstances and situations, unfaithfulness and disobedience are moral *weakness*. Whereas *meekness* is the inner strength to be obedient and remain faithful to God even in the face of pressure from people, circumstances, and situations.

¹⁰⁶ In Matthew 5:5, Jesus is quoting Psalm 37:11, where it says, “The Meek will inherit the *land*.” The “land” speaks of the victories of inheriting God’s promises in this life. (Hebrews 13: 7; 6:12). “The earth” refers to the “new heaven and new earth”. (2 Peter 3: 7, 10-13)

²⁵ “At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them to infants.... ²⁸ “Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and **I will give you rest.** ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and **you will find rest** for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is comfortable, and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:25, 28-30

Meekness is the intentionality to *find* and *enter into* “**His rest**” in every circumstance and situation. **Rest is the reward of faith and obedience.**¹⁰⁷ **Meekness is choosing to look to God and trust God in a given circumstance or situation, and intentionally *rest* from employing one’s own works in response to that circumstance or situation.**¹⁰⁸ It is choosing to let God work rather than you work in a given circumstance or situation. In this sense, “**rest**” can be understood as *a place* – **a place in the Spirit** – rather than an actual ceasing of all activity.

We can choose the “easy yoke” and “light burden” Jesus offers. Or we can choose to carry our own “hard-yoke” and “heavy burden” by being *self-assertive, testing, questioning, complaining, murmuring about God’s ways, being proud, arrogant, difficult and stipulative* – that is, specifying certain

¹⁰⁷ Hebrews 3:18-19; 4:3-8

¹⁰⁸ Hebrews 4:9-11

conditions and demands as prerequisites. Meekness is always being open to “**learn from Jesus**”. His “easy yoke” and “light burden” are the fruit of *simplicity, childlike faith and hope, receptivity, and rest*.

Patience

During this most recent season in my life, a major spiritual theme which has emerged is “**Patience**”. If you asked my loved ones to describe me, the term “patient” would not come up. I’ve tended to be impatient with people all of my life. But after my fall, and the resulting disability, my *lack of patience* was quite more noticeable. Even I noticed it. I was very impatient with my wife, who is an indispensable caregiver whom I am utterly dependent upon to do many essential things I cannot do on my own because of my disabilities. I realized this was totally unfair, and I was aware that Holy Spirit was convicting me and working to affect change. What I am about to share is in no way a report that I have “run the race and crossed over the finish line into the land of Patience”. Quite the contrary – I am still very much “in process”.

But in time, I realized – probably for the first time in my life - that I was also *not patient with myself* regarding my inability or ineffectiveness in performing a multitude of basic tasks required for day-to-day survival. I reasoned that my impatience with myself was of absolutely no benefit and was unhealthy for my soul – as well as grievous for those around me. I also realized *I needed to be patient with myself*, and made a less than perfect resolve to do so.

Eventually, I began to exercise more patience with myself as I constantly struggled with the laboriousness of the daily routines of my life. Then I noticed that as I became more patient with myself, I also could be *intentionally* more patient with those around me – particularly with my loved ones – with strangers, not so much. “Intentionally” is a key word: **I’ve learned that love – of which “patience” is just one ingredient – is *always* a choice.**

I then observed that I could be patient with others because I realized they were also somewhat “disabled” and “weak” like myself – *just in different ways*. This not only made it a little bit easier for my wife to be around me, but it also revealed to me a key to spiritual change. And that key is as simple and profound as “all of the law and the prophets”: **The “Golden Rule” - “Whatever you would have people (including yourself) do to you, so also you do to them.”¹⁰⁹**

I am also learning to *be patient with life itself*. With due diligence, everyday life can be managed fairly well. But especially as we grow older and more physically feeble and emotionally more fragile, everyday life seems to become a never-ending list of routines that need to be completed. Very often life doesn’t fit into

¹⁰⁹ Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31

our routines, and things can easily “pile up”, become an “overload”, and quickly overwhelm us. And wisdom is to learn to just “go with the flow” – even try to find the humor in the ridiculousness of the situations that develop.

Lastly, I’ve come to realize that, in a manner of speaking, I have to *be patient with God*. After all, for His purposes, He has allowed all that is taking place in my life. He is totally aware of all of the circumstances and situations taking place in of life – down to every minutia every minute of every day. I have come to see “patience” as the other side of the coin of “meekness”, which is accepting anything God allows in our life, recognizing it as an opportunity to be conformed to the image of Christ, and surrendering to and co-operating with the work of Holy Spirit to that end in the given circumstance or situation.

Simplicity

The Childlikeness of Simplicity

¹ “O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty;
Nor do I involve myself in great matters,
Or in things too difficult for me.

² Surely, I have composed and quieted my soul;
Like a weaned child rests against his mother,
My soul is like a weaned child within me.

³ O Israel, hope in the LORD
From this time forth and forever.”

Psalm 131
Childlike Trust in the Lord
A Song of Ascents of David

This very short psalm actually contains an immense amount of spiritual truth.¹¹⁰ I cannot offer a full exposition here; but in general, it speaks of simple childlike trust in the Lord.¹¹¹ But I’d like to touch on some things more specific:

Verse 1: “O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; nor do I involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me.”

“I do not involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me.” In the context of David’s psalm, it seems that for us to do otherwise would belie a type of pride. Yet, through Jeremiah, the Lord indicates that He desires for us to understand Him and His ways – even the hidden things: “Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”¹¹²

¹¹⁰ I found Charles Spurgeon’s commentary on Psalm 131 in his “*Treasury of David*” very enlightening. <http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/treasury/ps131.htm>

¹¹¹ Matthew 11:25-26

¹¹² Jeremiah 33:3

How are these two perspectives to be reconciled? The key is: “Call to Me.” There is a difference between being occupied with great matters and being occupied with the God of great matters. Pursuing great matters without realizing our dependence upon the Spirit of God can be theologically risky. When we pursue God, He gladly teaches us by His Spirit His plans and purposes, for He actually desires us to participate in mighty things. “The people who know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits.” Daniel 11:32b I believe F.B. Meyer’s comments on Psalm 131 bear this out:

“The psalmist said this in all simplicity. He did not exercise himself (literally “walk to and fro”) in things beyond his powers, but left God to reveal them to him, as he was able to receive them. We are reminded of Matthew 11:25. Clearly, he had not reached this position without effort. He had found it necessary to still and quiet himself, as a nurse quiets a fretful babe. There had been a time when he was fed at the breast of the world’s consolations. The weaning had been hard, but he had learned to get all from God and to draw on His sustaining grace.”

We need to “wean” ourselves from any sense of “self-sufficiency” and sourcing “earthly” wisdom, for James says it is merely “natural”, and may even be “demonic”. (James 3:13-18) This is particularly true of the socio-politico-economic ways of the world.

“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

James 1:5

The acknowledgement of dependence on the Lord speaks of the simplicity of childlikeness.

Verse 2: “Surely, I have composed and quieted my soul;
Like a weaned child rests against his mother,
My soul is like a weaned child within me.”

This verse speaks of the condition of being “weaned”. For an infant, being weaned is a traumatic event. Without understanding “why”, the child must soon learn to feed other ways which are much less “natural and comfortable”. And the child also learns to be satisfied just “resting” on the mother’s breast. This is a picture of maturing faith and trust with obedience resulting in rest, as indicated in Hebrews 4 – “For we who have believed enter into that rest”¹¹³ and “the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works”¹¹⁴.

My fall, and the resulting trauma of a spinal cord surgery, hospitalization, and disabilities in many ways reduced me to childlike dependence and served to wean me of all that had been “comfortable and natural”. I am learning more deeply about “entering into His rest” through faith and trust with obedience.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Hebrews 4:3

¹¹⁴ Hebrews 4:10

¹¹⁵ Hebrews 4:3

The Singleness of Simplicity

Thus far in this article, I've been speaking of that which conforms us to the image of Christ. Is “**Simplicity**” an attribute of the divine nature? Do we usually think of Jesus as being “*simple*”? I hope to communicate that the original, root meaning of “**simple**” had nothing to do with intellect or mental prowess. It's meaning is closer to “**single**”. I believe we can say that “**singleness**” is an attribute of the Divine nature which Jesus displayed, and which we should desire to display also.

After my fall, early on in my hospitalization, one of the nurses had turned on the television in my room. As I recall, at that particular time, I had not been asked which channel I wanted to watch – what I remember is that the TV was on, and I was watching a documentary.¹¹⁶ The only portion of that documentary I remember was a section in which Holy Spirit impressed upon me – deeply and profoundly. Although at the time, I had no mental comprehension of its meaning for me, what I was seeing had amazing significance for my life after my release from the hospital. What was deeply embedded into my spirit that moment

¹¹⁶ After doing some research, I discovered that the documentary was “*Burt's Buzz*”. The section of the documentary I am referring to, is at the very end of the film, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BaaMj8BbPXM> starting at 1:24.

came from watching a man in the video, who lived in a one-room cabin in the wilderness, very slowing, and very methodically preparing a fire in a wood-burning stove.

Since the injury and surgery, the resulting disabilities have drastically reduced the number of things I can do. And so, much like the man in the video, the few daily tasks I can perform by myself demand my fully determined focus and concerted effort. The man in the video embedded an image of **“Simplicity”** and initiated an impartation of this particular **“Treasure of Darkness”**. Upon release from the hospital, and back to life at home, I soon found that because of my disabilities, everyday life tasks were very laborious. And because of this, a **“Simplicity”** was *“imposed”* upon my life. I know this word, “imposed”, may sound theologically disturbing, but it is accurate. The Lord didn’t “impose” it – He allowed it. But for as long as I am living with these disabilities, a physical / psychological environment of **“Simplicity”** will be built-in my life. There is a resulting **“singleness”**: I can focus on only one thing at a time. Everything must be done very intentionally, slowly, and carefully, while giving much attention to details. I have settled into a more reflective lifestyle – finding much more time to reflect, and to reflect more deeply on things. Consequently, I think I am much more open to receiving insight and inspiration from Holy Spirit.

But the point I wish to make is that all of this has served to make my overall life perspective more **single**. That word, “single”, is an alternate translation for the Greek word *haplotes*.¹¹⁷ “Single” may be understood to be the most literal and fundamental meaning of the word.¹¹⁸ In fact, as we will see, this is how Jesus used the word. There is a “**Singleness of Simplicity**” which I am attempting to share here, as Holy Spirit unveiled it to me.¹¹⁹

Jesus’ Teaching

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” Matthew 6:22 KJV¹²⁰

Solomon had identified the spirit of man as “the lamp of the Lord”.¹²¹ And here, Jesus identifies *the eye* as “the light of the

¹¹⁷ Strong’s # 572

¹¹⁸ *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*: single, simple, sincere. *The Helps Word Studies of The Discovery Bible* explains: “properly, *singleness*, *without folds*, like a piece of cloth *unfolded*”.

¹¹⁹ I must add two things here: 1) I am sharing my personal experience. In no way am I implying that my experience is meant for everyone. But I do believe what I have been instructed in by Holy Spirit God does desire for all who belong to Christ. 2) Also: Living with, observing, and relating to my 76-year-old sister-in-law, who is Intellectually and Developmentally Disabled from birth, has also been a wonderful opportunity for me to learn of the “*Singleness of Simplicity*”. I believe Holy Spirit taught me much through observing and reflecting on how she perceives and interacts with life.

¹²⁰ Also, Luke 11:34

¹²¹ Proverbs 20:27

body”, adding that “ ... if therefore *thine eye* be single¹²², thy whole body shall be full of light”.

But what does Jesus mean by “eye”? He said the eye is a lamp – something that gives light and illumination to that which you are looking at. The Greek word translated “eye” is a word which actually means “vision”¹²³. And the root of that Greek word is a word which means “intentional gaze”, or figuratively, “desire”¹²⁴. I believe that Jesus uses the word “eye” to mean our perspective on life - our life focus.

In the verses *before* Matthew 6:22-23, Jesus is speaking about our hearts being where are treasures are – be they earthly or heavenly. In the verse *after* Matthew 6:22-23, He dealt with the same contrast of choices. Therefore, in the in-between verses, vv. 22-23, He is also speaking on the same subject: earthly or heavenly? Is our perspective on life – our life focus – “good” or “bad”?

¹²² The more popular use of the word “good” instead of “single” in this verse has been chosen to make the contrast with the word “bad” in v. 23. But this is merely a paraphrase. The word “single” is a more literal and accurate translation. The contrast between “good” and “bad” eyes is legitimate; and Jesus presents a “single eye” as being a “good eye” in contrast to a “bad eye”. Cf. Matthew 20:15 for “bad eye”.

¹²³ *ophthalmos*, Strong’s # 3788

¹²⁴ *optanamai*, Strong’s # 370

The key is to see where Jesus intends to take this whole conversation. We need to look at the larger context of His subject matter – namely Matthew 6:19-34, with His “bottom line” being: “Seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” (v.33) **That is to be our perspective on life - the single focus of the “eye” of our being.** Jesus sets up two domains – two kingdoms. And He suggests that *our eye* be **single** – that is, to focus on only one of those domains. There’s heaven and there’s earth. We can focus on one or the other. If we try to focus on both, our *eye* will be double – cross-eyed, blurred.

Certainly, we have to survive here on earth. Jesus assures us our heavenly Father knows that. He then directs us to seek the heavenly kingdom, saying our heavenly Father will provide the earthly needs.

Jesus states clearly and succinctly that our hearts are with our treasures. We can either have earthly treasures or heavenly ones. To think you can have both is to contradict Jesus. You can either serve God or material security¹²⁵ - not both. **Our “eye” – our life focus – must be single.**

¹²⁵ Greek: *mamonas*, Strong’s # 3126. “That which is to be trusted”, *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, W.E. Vine, “Treasure personified”, Genesis.

Of course, that is all very unnatural and very difficult to do, but that *is* what He said to do. There is probably no other biblical passage which is as counter-cultural as this one, and this has caused me to think of other, more practical, reasons why we in western cultures need to **embrace the “singleness” of “seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”**:

Firstly, we live in a culture of *“Productivity”*: Because our current culture tells us we must multi-task¹²⁶ in order to be productive and effective, it may take some “renewing of the mind” to appreciate “singleness” as a Christ-like quality. But Jesus spoke of it as a desired the trait.

Secondly, we live in a culture of *“Distraction”*: Because of wealth, scientism, and technocracy, everyday survival has become relatively easy and convenient; and so, we can afford to be occupied with a plethora of material distractions. and as a result, **we have become essentially oblivious to the state of “death” in the world**. In our everyday perception, the “edge” has been taken off *the fact* that, as a result of spiritual death, creation and

¹²⁶ “Multi-tasking” is a myth. Our brains can do only one thing at a time. What is rather happening is “Task-switching”. And studies show this to be less efficient and less productive. Cf. “Multi-tasking: Switching Costs”, American Psychological Association.
<https://www.apa.org/topics/research/multitasking>

humanity are separated from the Giver of Life – the creation is cursed, humanity is fallen, and to be in the world without God is to be in the world without hope.¹²⁷ Yes, without hope, for the false hopes offered by “deceitful riches”¹²⁸, scientism and technocracy are, in the end, all insufficient.

Thirdly, we live in a culture of “*Dissipation*”: Simply defined, *dissipation is wasting time*. We have a plethora of entertaining activities. We have to make decisions on what we will invest our time in. We need a sense of priority. Jesus said to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness”.

I’ve attempted to communicate how my physical affliction has necessitated a more “single” perspective to my life. So, while this affliction has *disabled* me with regards to many physical activities, it has served to *enable* me to better “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”.

¹²⁷ Ephesians 2:12

¹²⁸ Matthew 13:22; Cf. 6:9; Mark 4:19, 1 Timothy 6:9; Proverbs 23:4

Contentment

“Content is the philosopher’s stone which turns all it touches into gold; happy is he who has found it. Content is more than a kingdom, it is another word for happiness.”¹²⁹

¹¹ “Not that I speak from need, for I have **learned to be content** in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with little, and I also know how-to live-in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

Philippians 4:11-13

Paul the apostle said he “learned¹³⁰ to be content”. (v. 11)

Because of our fallenness, “contentment” is not something innate – it must be learned. It is not “natural”; we need “supernatural input” for us to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds”,¹³¹ being “conformed to the image of His Son”¹³² for the manifestation of this aspect of the divine nature.¹³³

¹²⁹ From Spurgeon’s “*The Treasury of David*”, Psalm 23. Nanci Alcorn explains: “*The philosopher’s stone was an unknown substance, also called “the tincture” or “the powder,” sought by alchemists for its supposed ability to transform base metals into precious ones, especially gold and silver. Alchemists also believed that an elixir of life could be derived from it. The philosopher’s stone was thought to cure illnesses, prolong life, and bring about spiritual revitalization. Obviously, Spurgeon did not believe in the philosopher’s stone, but he referred to it here as a means to clarify his point. To be content in one’s circumstances, while knowing Jesus as your Savior, is “more than a kingdom”! It changes everything into the “silver and gold” of God’s blessing.*”

¹³⁰ Greek: *manthano*, Strong’s # 3129

¹³¹ Romans 12:2

¹³² Romans 8:29

¹³³ 2 Peter 1:4

The Greek word, *autarkes*,¹³⁴ is translated “content”. It literally means “self-sufficient”. But Paul explains that he is “self-sufficient” *through Him who strengthens him*. The strength is infused¹³⁵ into Paul, but the Source is Christ. In another place, Paul said that it was *God’s strength which was made complete in Paul’s weakness*. God’s grace, not Paul’s self, was his “sufficiency”. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) For the Christian, “self-sufficiency” has been replaced with Christ-sufficiency.¹³⁶ Therefore, this “**contentment**” is found in Christ. It is only found in oneself in the sense of “Christ in you”.¹³⁷ But those established in this spiritual reality can say with Paul: “And God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that, always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.” 2 Corinthians 9:8

An Outcome of Singleness

For most of us, most of the time, “**Contentment**” is assessed by certain things being “*contents*” in our life, and by *a particular amount* of those things being present in our life. For example, most of us won’t feel “**content**” unless we have “money in the bank”. And then that “**contentment**” will still be contingent upon *a*

¹³⁴ Strong’s # 842

¹³⁵ *Vincent Word Studies*

¹³⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:4-5; Philippians 3:3

¹³⁷ Colossians 1:27

particular amount of “money in the bank”. Or conversely, we may believe that we will have “**contentment**” in our life when certain “**contents**” have been lessened or totally removed from our life. I think both border on unreality. The reality seems to be that “**contentment**” must be found *regardless* of certain “**contents**” being present or absent in our life.

We tend to think: “I’ll be **content** with such and such”

But Paul said he learned to be **content** *with* such and such *and without* such and such. We compile a personalized list of things which we think will bring us to **contentment**. It’s interesting how that list changes during different seasons of life. That should be an indicator to us that our “lists” are not the stuff of **contentment**.

For those born of God, we should ask ourselves: “*What is the **one thing** I have even when I don’t have anything on my ‘list’? And when I do have everything on my ‘list’, is that **one thing** still there, although it is somewhat crowded out or buried in my heart?*” Of course, that “one thing” I am referring to is God – our relationship with Him.

“**One thing** I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.”

Psalm 27:4

“‘Martha, Martha’, the Lord replied, ‘you are worried and upset about many things. But only **one thing** is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, and it will not be taken away from her.’”
Luke 10:41-42

Jesus said you can’t serve that “one thing” *and* your “list”. Only one can be your “treasure”. And where your “treasure” is, your heart is; and where your heart resides in **contentment**. So, **contentment is having a single life focus of seeking God – His kingdom and righteousness.**

An Outcome of Meekness

While discipline, organization, and planning have become even more necessary because of my disabilities, I have also found that it is just not possible to have many things in my life the way I would like them to be. And with my “Type A” personality, this is at least one reason for existing discontentment in myself and in my life. There are certain of things which are “legitimate” causes of concern. And some are lesser, and essentially unimportant things in everyday life. There are things of which I have no control over and cannot possibly change. And there are also things which Holy Spirit is clearly asking me to cease trying to control and change that I might learn how to love more fully.

4"Love is patient, love is kind, it is not jealous; love does not brag, it is not arrogant. 5It does not act disgracefully, it does not seek its own benefit; it is not provoked, does not keep an account of a wrong suffered, 6it does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7it keeps every confidence, it believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." ___1 Corinthians 13:4-7

"Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8

Personally, I have found that **a key to contentment is meekness** - which is accepting anything God allows in our life, recognizing it as an opportunity to be conformed to the image of Christ, and surrendering to and co-operating with the work of Holy Spirit to that end in the given circumstance or situation. And, just as an outcome of faith is rest,¹³⁸ **an outcome of meekness is contentment.**

"Godliness is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment." 1 Timothy 6:6

¹³⁸ Hebrews 4:1-11

Postscript

⁷“But we have this treasure in earthen containers, so that the extraordinary greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; ⁸we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying around in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹For we who live are constantly being handed over to death because of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our mortal flesh. ¹²So death works in us, but life in you. ¹³But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written: “I believed; therefore, I spoke,” we also believe; therefore, we also speak,¹⁴ knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and will present us with you. ¹⁵For all things are for your sakes, so that grace, having spread to more and more people, will cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. ¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer person is decaying, yet our inner person is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, ¹⁸while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

Bill & Frances Furioso
~ At Christ's Table ~



Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, discipled many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

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