

Good for Us

by Chip Brogden

Chip Brogden emphasizes the importance of seeing the Lord and prioritizing His glory over our own needs in the context of true Christian assembly.

Scripture: Matthew 16:18, Matthew 17:5, Luke 9:33, John 6:35, John 9:25

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christ Centered"

Description

Chip Brogden preaches on the importance of the Lord assembling His people into a spiritual temple, emphasizing that our gatherings are the work of the Lord and not something we do on our own. He highlights the need for a personal revelation of Christ, stating that seeing the Lord is essential for true understanding and transformation. Brogden urges believers to seek the Lord Himself rather than focusing on meetings or spiritual experiences, emphasizing that the revelation of Christ is a sovereign act of grace. He warns against building movements or gatherings for personal glory, stressing the importance of listening to and following Jesus above all else.

Transcript

"...Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles..." (Luke 9:33ff).

The Greek word for "church" is "ekklesia", which means "called out ones" and came to mean the assembly (or local expression) of those who had been called out and set apart. This assembling together is not something we do on our own. It is the work of the Lord. We are not the Church because we gather ourselves together into a meeting or a group. Anyone can organize themselves into a meeting for whatever purpose they wish. But we are being assembled by the Lord Himself into a spiritual temple, a House of Living Stones. Jesus is building His Church, and Jesus is assembling His people. Our meetings are external and visible, but this assembly of Living Stones is internal, invisible, spiritual and eternal. I pray that God will deliver us from "meetings" and show us His Son. Then we will see that we have already been assembled together into the Church that He is building upon the revelation of Himself.

We cannot build the Church, for Jesus is building it. Similarly, we cannot assemble ourselves together; the Lord has to do that as well. I am not saying we cannot have a meeting, but I am saying that a meeting is not what makes us the Church. There are many such meetings we can host or attend, but that does not make us the Church. People frequently ask me if I know where they can go to find fellowship. After examining them at length I determine that what they are really looking for is a meeting. Well, meetings are

everywhere. You do not need me for that. I am afraid that I cannot recommend "meetings", I can only recommend brothers and sisters who love the Lord.

Now the Lord wants to assemble us together into a spiritual Temple, but if we look around it is clear that we are divided over several issues. We could go down the list and name them all. We could take time to talk about denominations, organizations, doctrines, beliefs, customs, and the like. We could draw up a list of one hundred or one thousand divisions, but the heart of the matter is this: have we seen the Lord? If we have seen the Lord then we do not need to see anything else: this revelation of Him is sufficient. And, if we have not seen the Lord, it is a waste of time to try and discuss anything else along the lines of doctrine or teaching.

So the question is: have you seen the Lord? I do not mean in a dream or a vision, but I mean have you seen the Lord because the Father has revealed Him in you? It is possible to pray a prayer, but not see the Lord. It is possible to perform good works, but not see the Lord. It is possible (and quite common) to attend church meetings all your life, but not see the Lord. Two men who claimed to know Jesus walked with Him on the road to Emmaus, but they did not know Who He was until their eyes were opened. Many people are in the same situation. We cannot see Him until the eyes of our heart are opened, and when we are thus illuminated from within, we will see Him, we will know Him.

If you have read the Scriptures you know that many who say, "Lord, Lord" and do mighty things in the name of the Lord are, in fact, not known by Him at all, and will have no part in the Kingdom of God. This ought to bring us to our knees. This ought to cause us to search our hearts. Do we really know the Lord? Have we really seen Him? Has God revealed His Son to us?

When we look at the history of God's dealings with man we see a pattern emerging, and this pattern is illustrated for us in the Mountain of Transfiguration, an event recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Here is the pattern. First, the Lord sovereignly reveals His glory to us. Then, we try to grasp the Lord with fleshly hands. Finally, the Lord moves on, and we must either move with Him or stay where we are. Let us look at each point more particularly.

HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM

We are saying that the revelation of Christ is sufficient; that is, if we have seen the Lord Jesus, then nothing else matters, and in time, everything else will take care of itself. But if we do not have the revelation of Christ, if we only have our idea of Who He is, or if our knowledge of Him comes to us from somewhere or someone other than the Father Himself, then it does not matter how much we may read the Bible, attend meetings, or hear people preach. We will be "ever learning, but never coming to the full-knowledge of Truth". This explains how it is possible for someone to perform many works in the Name of Jesus, and yet the Lord Himself says, "I never knew you."

The Lord reveals Himself to us in a variety of ways, and every testimony is different. Peter received the revelation of Christ while fishing. But Thomas received the revelation of Christ only after the Lord appeared to Him and showed him His wounds. Paul received the revelation of Christ on the road to Damascus, as he was on his way to kill Christians. One man says Christ was revealed to him as he stood watching a tree in the dead of winter. Christ was revealed to me as I sat in my backyard, arguing with the Lord over the Bible.

What do these experiences have in common? They are spontaneous unveilings of Jesus Christ. Without warning the Lord simply reveals Himself, and whereas we were blind before, today we see. It is like walking out of one room and into another room, closing the door behind us. We are the man born blind in John 9. It is not that he can improve himself, or gradually come to the place where he can see something. He is BORN blind, and he can see nothing but darkness until the Lord, the Light of the world, makes him see. So many blind people hope to improve their seeing through sermons, meetings, and more teachings. But one moment of seeing is worth ten thousand years of learning. It is better to sit at the feet of an ignorant man who has seen the Lord than it is to be instructed by the most educated Bible teacher who is blind to the things of God.

Frequently when I speak along these lines I am asked, "What do I have to do to get this revelation of Christ?" And the answer is there is nothing TO do, and nothing you CAN do. But we are confident in saying that it is the nature of the Father to reveal Himself. The Father longs to reveal the Son to us. The only condition is that we likewise long to see Him, to know Him, as He is. The revelation of Christ is like a single ray of sunlight, without warning, breaking through the thick clouds of this world and knocking you to the ground - inwardly speaking. It may or it may not be an outward thing, and it may or may not be something dramatic. But when we have seen Him, something "clicks" on the inside. We know we have been changed.

It can be likened to the Mountain of Transfiguration. The Lord Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him high onto the mountain to pray. Presumably they were in the habit of doing this, as the Scriptures record several instances of the Lord at prayer. But on this occasion, His appearance was changed, and His glory was revealed to them. It was a sovereign act, an unveiling. There was no warning, no special preparation. Peter, James and John had nothing to do with it. In fact, they were sleeping when it happened. I hope that will reassure those of us who think there is something we have to do in order to get the revelation of Christ. No, it is all of grace. In fact, until we rest from our works and our words, we are unlikely to see the Lord.

Now we have primarily discussed the revealing of Christ to us personally, but there is also a corporate revelation as well. What we receive of the Lord personally ought to be received on behalf of the Body, and not merely for our own personal benefit. Even so, there is an unveiling of the Lord that occasionally occurs when we are gathered together in the Name of the Lord. After all, He says that "where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there I am in the midst of them." This is the simplest expression of the Church - the called-out assembly. Not two or three thousand, not two or three hundred, not two or three dozen - just two or three, and the Lord is there. We are so concerned for numbers. The real issue is not how many are gathered, but is the Lord with the ones so gathered? I would rather be with two people and have the Lord with us than to be in a crowd of religious people with whom the Lord is not present.

It is in this corporate revelation of Christ that we find a danger, and Peter expresses it nicely when the first words out of his mouth are...

"IT IS GOOD FOR US"

Here is a point that needs to be made. When the Father is pleased to reveal His Son to us, it is for His glory, not ours. So often we seek spiritual things because we desire a name, or power, or glory for ourselves. This is not permitted in the Kingdom where Christ is All in All. What we see of the Lord is for His glory, and not our own.

But just observe how quickly the Self comes into the picture. "Master, it is good for us to be here!" Good for us. Good for us. Good for us. We hear this sentiment all the time. "Isn't it good to be in the house of God today?" "I really enjoyed the message." "I loved the music." "What a lovely service." "I'm so happy I found this little group." Or, "I didn't get anything out of that message." "The music was awful." "They don't have anything for my kids." I, I, I. Me, me, me. Good for us, or not good for us. The music, the preaching, the service, everything is for us, for our needs.

This is why we continually stress that the reason we do not attend or sponsor meetings with any regularity is simply because the Lord's Need is often not met in these meetings. Self permeates so much of what we do (or do not do), even in spiritual matters where Self is supposed to be denied. Peter is a man full of himself. So his reaction to the glory of the Lord is, "It is good for us! Let us build for You..." This is how many works, denominations and ministries are begun. The Lord sovereignly reveals something of His glory to a handful of people, and they begin to build something - a church, a movement, a denomination - in order to contain that glory. Or, the Lord visits His people in a particular meeting or setting. It is good for us: so we decide to meet again the next week in hopes that we can experience more of the same. And so on. We believe if only we can find the right combination of music, or teaching, or worship, or people, then it will be "good for us" every time we meet. Soon, however, the Life is gone and the glory is departed, but the meetings continue!

"I will build My Church," Jesus says. That is Life. "Let us build for You," Peter says. That is Death. To see if a thing is living or dead we need only trace its source. Not only is "let us build" wrong, but "let us build FOR YOU" is equally wrong. Each is motivated by the same thing: "It is good for us."

What Peter did not realize, and what we, too, fail to perceive, is that the glory is in Christ, and not in a method, a meeting, or a movement: and it is for Him, and not for us. How quickly "It is good for us..." turns into "Let us build for You..." How subtle our flesh is! How often in the name of "fellowship" have we have built something "for" the Lord Jesus that really serves our own agenda?

"LISTEN TO HIM"

Scripture records that Peter did not know what he was saying, even while he was offering to build something for Jesus. Jesus gave him no reply. Instead, a cloud enveloped them, and a voice spoke: "This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him!"

The Father is continually pointing us to the Son as All in All. He is working all things together towards the fulfillment of His Purpose, which is for Christ to have the preeminence in all things. So it is at this point that the Lord Jesus begins to descend into the valley, and the disciples must decide if they will stay on the mountain or follow Him down. The mountain is full of light, power, and glory. But the valley is full of darkness and demons. "It is good for US to be HERE, Lord! Let us build something for You!"

How many tabernacles on the mountaintop have been made in the Name of Jesus - when Jesus has long ago descended into the valley? How many people and places claim the presence and glory of God, when the glory has long ago departed? I can think of several instances in which the Lord genuinely moved in a group, church, or meeting long ago, and now that group, church, or meeting has built an entire movement around the experience. What began in the Spirit is now perpetuated by the flesh, and "it is good for us". It is a shame that some people cannot realize that there is no presence, or glory, or power, or anything apart from the Lord Jesus. We can claim to have the presence, the glory, and the power, but if we do not have the Lord Himself, then these things are only spiritual counterfeits.

Jesus multiplied the loaves and the fish, and the crowd thought, "It is good for us to be here!" But Jesus left during the night and crossed the lake. The people woke up the next morning to find Him gone, and crossed the lake in a desperate attempt to locate Him. But when they found Jesus, He said, in essence, "You are only following Me because I filled your stomachs with food." It is important to make this distinction, because I am afraid that if something is deemed "good for us" then we will begin to follow IT and miss the Lord. John records this episode in order to signify that the real miracle is not that the Lord gave them bread to eat, but that the Lord gives Himself to us as Living Bread. Which would you rather have, a full stomach, or eternal life? The presence of God, or God Himself? The glory of God, or God Himself? Do we want salvation, or a Savior? Do we want a healing, or a Great Physician? Do we want what the Lord can give us, or Who the Lord is?

Christians seek many spiritual things: anointing, power, gifts, blessing, fruit, wisdom, prosperity. I pray the Lord will make us thoroughly and completely dissatisfied with THINGS, even the things He gives us, and make us hungry and thirsty for Himself. May we judge things not by whether they are "good for us", but whether they are good for the Lord, whether His Will is done in them, whether His Need is met by them, whether His Purpose is fulfilled in them, whether His Son is seen through them. He is the Only One, the Beloved Son of God. May the Lord be transfigured before us! Amen.

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