



A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: JULY 2020 by Lee Shipp

THE FAITH TO PRAISE AND EXPERIENCE GOD

God can be known! We can know Him. Beholding God is not only a privilege for angels, it is the birthright of men. We are made to behold God. We are gifted with capacities of intimacy with God. It is our nature to see God, hear God, touch God, speak with God, and walk with God. These God-given capacities are as much a part of our nature as sleeping, breathing, looking, and walking! God has created us with the capacity to be His friend, with the capacity to share in His joy, with the capacity to commune with Him in His love, with the capacity of understanding His heart and having conversations with Him.

Though the fall of man has devastated the natural instincts, the redemption of Jesus has more than restored them in believers by the glorious gift of the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit's coming into our lives, our capacities of knowing God are off the chart. Therefore, "O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalms 34:8). Restore your sense of smell and you will testify, "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia" (Psalms 45:8). Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice" (John 10:27). If you are not hearing Jesus, are you even one of His sheep? And furthermore beloved, how wonderful is this - we get to see God! "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

God has revealed in the Bible the means by which these senses can be exercised so He can be seen, smelled, heard, and tasted. You see, when man fell and these senses were destroyed by death, we lost the knowledge of approaching God. We lost the ability of intimacy with God and thought that the pursuit of God is like the pursuit of any other relationship. But this is simply not true. There is a means of entering into His presence and the Lord has graciously revealed this entrance throughout His Word.

We have, within our humanity, sensory organs by which we can know God as truly as we know material things. In our physical man, we are gifted with senses by which we can experience and participate in the physical world in which we live. We have the senses of smell, touch, taste, sight, and sound. Likewise, in our spiritual man, we are gifted with senses by which we can experience and participate in the spiritual world in which we live.

Our spiritual man is gifted with the organs to sense and know the world of God. Through the redemption of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, these senses are now restored in those who are born again. Jesus confirmed this to Nicodemus when He said, "... except a man be born again, he cannot SEE the kingdom of God." Jesus used the word "see" and His intention was to assure Nicodemus that if he is not born again, he will never see: to know, behold, look upon, or understand, the kingdom of God.

Beloved, if you are going to know God in intimacy, then you are going to have to learn to live by a new set of senses that only exist in your spiritual man. If you are going to listen to a symphony, you do not use your eyes to listen, you use your ears. And if you want to watch a sunset you do not use your ears, you use your eyes. Likewise, you are gifted with spiritual sensory organs by which to know God. Faith is a spiritual sensory organ by which you can know God. Hebrews 11 confirms that by faith you know things. By faith you know the worlds were made by the Word of God.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Additionally, just consider how precious the gift of the Holy Spirit is and the

untold capacities He restores, thus allowing us to know the world of God. Paul very clearly confirms that this knowledge of God is within the new man of the believer. As a matter of fact, Paul prayed for believers to have this experience of God's love. The fact that Paul prayed this for believers is a startling revelation that intimacy and the experience of God's love does not automatically occur just because one is born again. It is evident that a believer must learn to exercise his spiritual man.

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 is the prayer I am referring to. In this passage Paul prays,

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit IN THE INNER MAN: that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

It is here, in this inner man, where a believer receives life and ability from the Spirit of God. It is here, in the inner man, where communion and intimacy with God are manifestly experienced.

Consider Paul's word to the Corinthians. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2 that there are things God wants to reveal to us that the eye has not seen, the ear has not heard, and man's heart has not even perceived. But these things that the eye cannot see, and the ear cannot hear, and the heart cannot know are revealed right now to the believer by the Holy Spirit. Paul makes it very clear that the Holy Spirit is not revealing this to the believer's natural man, but to his spiritual man.

"IF YOU ARE GOING TO KNOW GOD IN INTIMACY, THEN YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO LEARN TO LIVE BY A NEW SET OF SENSES."

We have received the Spirit of God so we can know the things of God. And Paul very clearly states that the natural man, your physical man, cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God because they will appear foolish; neither can you know these things of God by your natural man because they are spiritual discerned. In other words, if you are going to know the things of God, then you are going to have to exercise the organs of your New Man. This New Man became alive in you when you were born again.

Though one is born again, the exercising of this New Man is not automatic. This man has to receive life and power in the Holy Spirit and learn to function as any baby must learn to open their natural eyes to see and train their ears to hear. Paul said to the believers in Corinth, who are born again but still limited to functioning in their natural man and have not yet discovered how to become spiritual, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1).

Seeing then that we have in our "Inner Man" sensory organs by which we can know God, why do we know so little of that habitual conscious communion with God that the scriptures offer? Knowing we can know God as truly as we know material things through our physical senses, why is God's world so foreign to us? The reason is our habitual unbelief!

We know these capacities of knowing God are there, for the Bible makes it clear, but we do not exercise our faith to enter into these realities. People don't shout and dance before God in church. People don't lift up loud praise to God in church. People don't form a choir of praise before God and declare His worth and glory in church. And yet, these same people expect God to come down and meet with them on their terms!

What's more, Christians are battered with defeat, depression, boredom, poverty and such like. Why? Because they cannot see, and the Lord is standing right in front of them. His hand is opened with everything that will satisfy them, but they have no knowledge of this because they have not exercised their "Inner Man" to experience these blessings.

They are carnal and cannot comprehend the spiritual world of abundance and fulness that is all about them. They cannot hear the joyful shouts of the Father as He says to them, "All of my promises are in Jesus, Yea and Amen" (1 Corinthians 1:20).

By faith we know ... and when faith is defective then numbness toward spiritual things is common. In other words, the worship is carnal, the praise is dead and fake, and the prayers are weak. Again, Paul gives evidence of this despair in Romans 1. What is the reason for depression, despair, and negative thoughts? *"Because that, when they knew God (they are believers), they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened"* (Romans 1:21). They had the faith to know God, but they did not have the faith to praise Him, they didn't have the faith to thank Him, and they didn't have the faith to glorify Him.

FAITH RECKONS ON THE REALITY OF GOD

A spiritual kingdom lies all about us, enclosing us, embracing us, within our reach, waiting for us to recognize it. God Himself is here awaiting our response to His presence. This eternal world will come alive to us the moment we begin to RECKON upon its REALITY. A. W. Tozer said, *"[T]he worshipping heart does not create its object – it finds Him!"* This does not mean we visualize or imagine Him. Imagination is not faith! Faith creates nothing. Faith simply reckons upon that which is already there!

God and the spiritual world are real – faith knows this and reckons upon that reality. Every man must choose his world. If you choose to follow Christ, then by faith deliberately choose the Kingdom of God. Awaken yourself to that world; arise from the dead and Christ will give you light. *"Be filled with the Spirit by speaking to yourself in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your heart and giving thanks unto the Lord"* (Ephesians 5). Do it, don't just amen it! Do the Word! Approach God the way He has prescribed, and you will find His world come alive to you!

Do not push the Kingdom of God into the future. Quit listening to the faith destroying reasonings that you will see when you get to heaven. The Holy Spirit has come so you can see now what your eyes cannot see (1 Corinthians 2:10). Do you not have the faith to believe this? That is why the people are not praising, it is because they do not believe!

Meditate on what the Holy Spirit will do to the believers when He comes to them. According to John's gospel, chapters 14 through 16, the Holy Spirit will come to you and abide with you. His presence inside of you (in your Inner Man) will produce comfort in you. The intent of His indwelling is intimacy; you should experience and know Him as your greatest companion. He will dwell in you. Living inside of you He will manifest Jesus to you (meaning inside of your Inner Man). His presence will cause both the Father and the Son to actually abide inside of you. This is truly fantastic, but how many believers simply do not exercise their faith to know this reality. He will be your teacher. He will bring all things to your remembrance of all Jesus said. He will testify and manifest Jesus to you. What He hears He will speak. Have you ever heard Him speak to you inside your Inner Man? He will show you things to come. Have you ever seen these things? He will show you the things belonging to Jesus. Have you seen them? Jesus said, *"A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father"* (John 16:16). Well beloved, do you see Jesus? Do you believe you can or do you believe this is just rhetoric? Oh, that we would all have the faith to believe these truly amazing promises of God. I can assure you they are true for today!

GOD IS THE PURSUER

What does the gift of the Holy Spirit mean to us? It means that God is the pursuer of this relationship with you. God has restored you. God has given you the capacities of knowing Him and enjoying Him. He wants to ravish your life! The impulse to pursue God originates with God, but the outworking of that impulse is your following hard after Him.

David's life was a torrent of spiritual desire. He was in hot pursuit of the heart of God. But this did not originate with David. David himself said it started with God, *"When thou said, seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek"* (Psalms 27:8).

God asked you also to seek His face. Are you like David? Has this pursuit of God become the passion of your heart? Paul confessed the mainspring of his life was the burning desire to know Christ. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people.

God waits to be wanted! God has told us what attracts Him to us. Do we have the faith to do these simple things that we may be attractive to God? Such as this simple invitation to be attractive to God. God is hungry for worship, so do we worship God? Jesus said the Father is looking for those who are worshipping Him. How foolish are those who have been created for the most sublime enjoyments and yet forgo them through a lack of faith to worship God?

ARE YOU FOOLISH?

Psalms 53 reveals the foolishness of man. The foolish man is the one who knows there is a God, but within his heart, he says there is no God. The fool does not say this with his mouth, but with his heart. He knows there is a God, but his heart says God is not there. The heart is the seat of intimacy and desire. In a man's intellect he knows God exists, but the fool will not allow that reality to enter into his heart. This reality motivates him to passionately pursue God. The fool lives daily as though God does not exist; there is very little time spent seeking after God, walking in His Word, or enjoying intimacy with the Father.

The fool does not seek the One he knows is there. God looks down from heaven to see if there is anyone who understands. Who understands what? Does anyone understand that God is worth seeking? Does anyone realize that God is there to ravish your life? Does anyone understand that everything a man could desire is in God? Does anyone understand and therefore pursue this gracious Father? God's sad conclusion is that we are all fools; no one was found seeking Him! We are all fools, we are all filthy, no one among us is good, no one understands – no one is seeking God. But thank God He is redemptive and chose to seek us! He is the seeking God.

It is God's grace that stirs a heart to seek after Him. The woman at the well was seeking for God. That is why Jesus went through Samaria. That is why Jesus sent His disciples into the nearby town, so that she would not be afraid to come to the well due to the fact of it being surrounded by a group of men. And when she came, the cry of her heart poured out to Jesus, *"Where is God that I may worship Him?"* And there was God, right in front of her, and she knew it! Oh, the glorious love and fellowship she had that day with God. Jesus ravished her heart. Here, an immoral woman, five times divorced and now living with a man, is enjoying joyful, loving intimacy with God Himself!

How did this happen? It was simple. Jesus asked something from her, and she asked something from Him. Jesus began the pursuit, *"Give me water."* She is profoundly surprised that He is talking with her. He explains who He is – this is God initiating the relationship, just like He does with you every day. Jesus said that if she knew who He was she would ask Him for water, and she would never thirst again. She is compelled with desire, *"Give me this water!"* And now the relationship and the reward and the intimacy with God begins and shall never end. He will give and she will get, and she will give, and God will get! Oh, beautiful exchange, beautiful worship. This is not some dead church service – this is the fountain head of living joy.

What was the water Jesus wanted from her? It was not H₂O! The Lord says that if He were hungry or thirsty, He would not tell us for He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. If not actual water, then what did Jesus want from her? He wanted her praise, her worship! He wanted the fruit of her lips and the cry of her heart. God says of worshippers, *"One look from you ravishes my heart. Your love for me is precious and is better than wine. Your lips and the words of your love for me are sweeter than the honeycomb and better than milk"* (Song of Solomon 4:9-13). Your praise of God is what attracts Him to you. Like the woman at the well, our desire to praise Him ravishes His heart. Why do so many Christians find this so hard to do? The Lord eats up the words that come from our mouth. We should feed Him every day.

The tongue is the place of the fruit, the heart is the source of that fruit. If our hearts do not mean our praise, then the fruit is spoiled. When we take time to speak words of love and praise to Jesus, He comes to us and manifests His love to us. The more He hears my voice the more I enter into His rest!

I know how wonderful it is to have Him speak a word of love to my heart, and He finds it equally delightful to have me speak words of love to Him. The fruit of my lips is the fruit God feeds on. God's response to my praise will revolutionize my life. So no longer will I live as the fool; God has won my heart and He shall have my worship and my praise.

Lee Shipp
Saturday, June 27, 2020