

FOLLOWING ON TO KNOW...

HIS COMPASSION FOR THE LOST

Witnessing

Phil. 3:8 - "I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly...

For my determined purpose is that I may know Him... ~~that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him,~~ perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly.

TO KNOW CHRIST, WHAT A WONDEROUS GIFT OF GOD!

Multitudes enjoyed the priceless privilege of knowing Christ as He walked the dusty roads of Palestine and lingered on the shores of the beautiful ~~shosea~~ sea of Galilee.

The sick, the lame, the halt, the blind were blessed to know Him, to feel His touch and receive His healing power; the leper was cleansed at His word.

Mary Magdalene was one among many of the ~~sink~~ stain souls who knew the joy and peace of His forgiveness; Mary, Martha and Lazarus shared the precious treasure of knowing Him in intimate friendship.

Twelve favored ones walked with Him daily, listening to His words of wisdom, knowing Him as their Master. The inner circle of disciples, Peter, James and John, seemed to know Him in even a closer relationship.

Paul, though not a contemporary of Christ, met him "as one born out of ~~due~~ season" on the road to Damascus. The blinding light, the voice of Jesus, the vision of the crucified Christ was so indelibly stamped upon his heart, mind and character, that Saul of Tarsus was radically changed into Paul, the Apostle *the persecutor of Christians*

Once he had been committed to the task of stamping out Christianity--but when he met Christ that day, he became consumed with a passion to know Christ in His fulness and to make Him known to others.

God spoke to Ananias in a vision and sent him to pray for Paul that he might receive his sight, saying "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

Many years later, Paul wrote the Christians at Corinth listing some of his sufferings for the sake of Christ. Yet, after recounting his afflictions, he summed them up by saying, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Perhaps this is the secret of power in Paul's ministry. Perhaps this is the secret of his keen insight into the mind and character of God. Paul magnified the ministry of suffering in a Christian's life. He gloried in persecutions that came his way deeming it a privilege to be counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ.

If we like Paul pray to know Christ in the fellowship of His suffering, we are asking for a difficult role. We are asking for loneliness, opposition, reproach and physical suffering. We are asking to be rejected of men, to be misunderstood. We are asking for burdens to bear for others.

Although we shrink and cringe in fear before suffering, it is good for us. Suffering is a burning flame in the heart, a cleansing, refining action, consuming the dross and leaving the individual *weaker, re* stronger, ~~yet~~ more dependent on God.

Gone is self-assurance; in its place is assurance of strength through God. A new, wonderful relationship is born--a revelation of a new way of life, a life that is in God's hands, owned by God, kept by God, and directed by God for His glory and in His will.

Such a relationship transcends all human understanding. It's as though the Glory of God is shed in a shining ray to envelop the individual. It's as though a ladder is let down from heaven with angels ascending and descending bringing new revelation and insight into the character of God.

3/ Approval of others becomes incidental. Only one thing becomes important--to know and to move in the perfect will of God.

To know God in this relationship spotlights foolish self-pride and shows a person how helpless he is without God. It's like the lifting of a fog which clouds the vision, showing man's true relationship to his Maker. It clears away false ideas and gives true perspective.

Why should we shrink from suffering when it works such wonders in our lives. When we embrace sorrow, suffering, persecution, or tribulation as coming from God, as He works in and through us, then indeed can suffering have its perfect work in us and through the resurrecting power make us into chosen vessels to bear the Name of Christ.

And that is why we are saved--to make known Christ to a lost world.

We are living in a day of Careless Christians, at ease in Zion. The church has grown lazy, cold, increased in goods, and self sufficient.

Great satisfaction is achieved in carrying out the ~~physical~~ physical and social aspects of the church program while men everywhere are dying without Christ. The church has lost the urgency of the Commission. Many have lost their compassion for the lost that once added meaning to Christian service.

We need to ask Christ to renew our vision of Him and His kingdom..."For where there is no vision, the people perish.

We are not always aware of our lack of vision, nor are we always conscious that our vision has been dulled.

For nineteen years, I was very nearsighted and didn't know it. I thought everyone saw things as I did. It's true that distant objects appeared blurred; I couldn't recognize people across the street but I honestly believed I had good vision.

Then one day while working for the Navy Department I laughingly picked up a pair of horn-rimmed glasses belonging to my boss. I nearly fell over in *bifocals* astonishment. Everything was so clear and bright.

I looked down the length of the long office and could recognize every person. Their features looked so sharp and clear. Everyone was beautiful!

I looked out of the window at the distant skyline of the city of Atlanta. I had never seen it before. The clock on the building across the street came into focus. I didn't even know it was there.

Immediately I wanted glasses of my own and didn't rest until I possessed a pair. They opened up a new world to me. The stars were no more just bright blobs against the midnight blackness of the sky.

Each little star was a pin-point of brilliance. Every leaf on the tree stood out to itself when visioned through my new glasses. I saw the beauty of the birds and flowers with new appreciation. The sun no longer blinded me. The whole world was new.

Every few years, I find that my vision has faded and things begin to blur. It is necessary for me to go through a test and pay the price before my vision is clear again.

Perhaps you have never had good spiritual vision. Or perhaps your vision has faded. It may cost something to get that vision. It may involve suffering or sorrow. We know it will involve new dedication and commitment. But whatever the price, it is worth it, for the most important thing in life is to have a vision of Christ--no matter what the cost.

Strangely enough, along with a vision of Christ comes a vision of Christ's compassion for a ~~lost~~ and dying world.

And it is a lost world. In this enlightened age of our time, in an era when illiteracy is at an all time low, over one billion, four hundred million souls exist without knowledge of Christ or salvation

During the last generation, seven hundred and fifty million souls died without Christ. These figure could not be a reality if every person who professes an experience with Christ were filled with compassion for the lost.

With world population growing at the rate of 62½ million a year, more than 185,000 must be won to Christ every day, 7708 an hour, 128 every minute just to keep pace with the increase in population.

We sit Sunday after Sunday, ^{listening to} ~~enjoying the~~ messages from our pulpits, enjoying the blessings of the Holy Spirit without realizing the many ^{hungry hearts} who are longing for such a message.

If our own people of the P.H. Church were fully committed to the cause of Christ, we would multiply with rapidity in the homeland, and our missionaries would pour into all parts of the world to carry the glorious gospel to those who have never heard.

There would be no shortage of workers...for every member would be a worker. There would be no shortage of funds...for every member would be a tither and generous contributor.

If each of you were fully committed to this cause, many of you would not be sitting here in your pew, calmly enjoying this service. You would not feel you had done your duty ~~on~~ the Sabbath Day because you attended church and paid your tithes.

No, some of you would be preaching the Gospel; others would be carrying the Word to the remote corner of the world; and the rest of you would feel a compelling urgency to witness in some manner to everyone with whom you come in contact.

Don't ever underestimate the power of witnessing. In an address to a youth convention, I heard Mr. Elver Smith, Director of Navigators, an evangelical youth organization, make a statement that startled me.

He said: "If Billy Graham preached to 125,000 Chinese every day, it would take 120 years to reach all the Chinese people of the present population with

the Gospel, not taking into account the population increase.

"However, if you, as an individual, win one person to the Lord every six months, take six months to instruct him in the Word of God and train him to be a soul winner, and he in turn wins and trains one person every six months, we can win the whole world for Christ in just sixteen years."

The secret--every person involved in telling the story. Every Christian a living witness for Christ.

The different areas of service incorporated into the ministries of the Woman/s Auxiliary provide natural channels through which we as women of the church can witness for Christ, through word and deed.

But, I wonder, are our motives always pure? Are we serving only for recognition or personal satisfaction, or are we motivated by our love for Christ and our compassion for the lost?

There's a world of difference in the two. Only when we have the right motive will our service be truly effective in winning the lost.

What is COMPASSION? Webster defines compassion as sympathetic consciousness of ^{another's} other's distress together with a desire to alleviate it.

In Matthew 9:36, it is said of Jesus: "When He saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion."

He looked and saw. He was conscious of the spiritual and physical needs of the people, and He moved to meet those needs. It was compassion for a lost human race that took Him to the Cross. It was compassion that caused Him to give His life a ransom for us.

We need to look and see--see the neglected children see the delinquents, see the retarded, see the drop-outs from human society, see the forgotten old people see the shut-ins, see the needy, see the bereaved, see the lonely, see the blind, see the disadvantaged and displaced persons, see the new neighbor, see everyone with whom we come in contact with eyes of

of our compassionate Christ. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you will know what to do, what word to speak, what action to take in meeting their need.

No matter what may be required of us, we must follow on to know Christ in His fulness...then our compassion can reach out to needy mankind to point them to Christ.

God grant that each of us will be willing to make the depth of dedication that this will be a reality in our lives.

A number of years ago, Bob Pierce, founder of World Vision made a statement that could be the prayer of our hearts today "Lord, let my heart be broken by the things that break the great heart of God."

This ^{attitude} and this alone will give us the vision and compassion we need to fulfill God's will the Great Commission to bring light & life to the lost.