

## 103 - We believe because believing is God's gift to us

A few days ago, someone who commented at ScriptureDoc.com asked what other authorities I could steer them to for more of what is often an alarmingly fresh perspective. I had to admit that the publications of the Concordant Publishing Concern were the only ones that were virtually free of religious bias and that they are sticklers about accuracy, which is something I admire and strive for too. I included in my reply to this person a link directly to Concordant.org. I've looked at lots of different sites from folks who purport to examine God's word, issues of faith, and the "Christian walk or life." The common thread I find in them all is a presumption of tradition as truth that we've looked into before. Perhaps as recent as a week or two ago, The Lord showed me quite clearly, that I cannot afford to look to anyone but Him or to anything but His word for what He wants to reveal through this interesting forum, called Light Up The Scriptures, and its extension called ScriptureDoc. He has sown the same about the soon-to-be launched outreach, named BeMadeWhole.tv, which will coincide with the publishing of the newly revised, expanded and re-designed book, **CLEAN HOUSE – 147 Ways To Live Well In The Body God Gave You**. God seems to be requiring a narrowing focus on what He is showing, to the exclusion of almost every other expert or authority in both the field of health and wellness and in the study of His inspired word we call the scriptures. I can't tell you that I know where these two paths lead. I do know they are parallel, and I also know that the direction flies in the face of virtually everything I see in the world. In the end, however, it only matters that whatever we do we do as we obey what we know is from the Father and that it both pleases and glorifies Him. We can't care what it might cost us. In fact, we can't pay any attention to that part at all, other than to know, as Jesus did, it is His will, it accomplishes His purpose, and He is faithful in all things and in all ways He directs. Like Barbara says so often, "Obedience is always the dividing issue."

As I was seeking the Lord about what He would share with us tonight. I was looking through the latest Unsearchable Riches newsletter from the Concordant folks. This newsletter has been in continuous publication, every quarter, for 103 years. The issue I was reading is the first issue of the 103rd volume. This is wild, but tonight is also the 103<sup>rd</sup> "**Light Up the Scriptures**" study.

Here was the statement that stopped me in my tracks:

*"Justification has been gained by means of the faith of Jesus Christ alone, and it is reckoned to us on the basis of our believing, and that alone. Furthermore, it is well for us to appreciate that **even our believing is a gracious gift of God.**"*

Let me read the last nine words again: **even our believing is a gracious gift of God.**

The reference for that astonishing statement was...

### **Philippians 1:29**

29 for to you it is graciously granted, for Christ's sake, not only to be believing on Him, but to be suffering for His sake also

Let's rearrange that a bit: It is graciously granted to you to be believing on Jesus Christ, for His sake. And, oh yeah, it's also graciously granted to you to be suffering for His sake too. You get both, and one naturally and inevitably follows the other.

I don't want to get hung up on the suffering part tonight. I'll simply say that if you're believing, you'll also suffer – suffering is as much a gift as believing and suffering is just as much for His sake – that is, for His good (as in for His good name) – as believing is. In fact, if you're believing and haven't suffered, I would question whether you're truly believing; that's how linked and inescapable the two appear to be in the scripture here.

The Apostle Paul, who wrote this letter to the Philippians, also wrote in 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the same letter:

### **Philippians 3:10**

“to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, conforming to His death,

And Paul continues in **verses 11 and 12**:

11 if somehow I should be attaining to the resurrection that is out from among the dead.

12 Not that I *already* obtained, or am *already* perfected. Yet I am pursuing, if I may be grasping also that for which I was grasped also by Christ Jesus.”

### **Philippians 3:10 again**

“to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, **and** the fellowship of His sufferings, ***conforming to His death***,

The “fellowship of His sufferings” – fellowship is “*communion, joint participation.*” **Listen to this:** “*a gift jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution, as exhibiting an embodiment and proof of fellowship.*”

And this communion with, joint participation with – this contribution – that is OUR embodiment and our PROOF of fellowship conforms us – brings us to the same form, renders us like Him -- to His death.

Also, “sufferings” is externally, misfortunes, calamities, evil, and afflictions. Inwardly it is a state of affliction, or passion (as in the passion of Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane).

So, we see here, to bring everything back to where we began, that “***the gracious gift of our believing***” that Paul wrote about in **Philippians 1** is what leads us to “***the fellowship of His sufferings***” that he described in **Philippians 3**; a condition which includes external affliction like His affliction, and an internal a passion like His passion. I believe that no one listening will have to look far to recognize the passion we experience almost daily as we cry out to God for the realization of our expectation at His coming – the deliverance of our bodies out of death – out of all the cares and troubles of living in this wicked eon -- and into incorruptible, immortal life in the celestials, far beyond the reach of any and all suffering.

Look with me at **Romans 8**:

18 For I am reckoning that the sufferings of the current era do not deserve the glory about to be revealed for us.

19 For the premonition of the creation is awaiting the unveiling of the sons of God.

20 For to vanity was the creation subjected, not voluntarily, but because of Him Who subjects it,

So no wonder we have an internal state passion and feel afflicted – we and the rest of creation were subjected to vanity or emptiness; there’s nothing here for us in this world or in this eon; not really, as Paul goes on to say...

in expectation

21 that the creation itself, also, shall be freed from the slavery of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Notice that the creation itself is entirely inclusive – there’s no singling out of anyone for some kind of permanent banishment, torment or destruction. Paul says clearly, “***the creation SHALL be freed***”...that includes everyone who ever lived. The word **SHALL**, as in “***shall be freed***,” is a statement of absolute inevitability. This freeing will not depend on human or celestial action, decision, or will. This freedom “from slavery of corruption” depends upon the sovereign action of God alone; and, even as He was faithful to raise Jesus Christ on the third day, thus also He will be faithful to us.

Paul continues in the **Roman’s 8** passage:

22 For we are aware that the entire creation is groaning and travailing together until now.

23 Yet not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruit of the spirit, we ourselves also, are groaning in ourselves, awaiting the sonship, the deliverance of our body. [there’s the passion we looked at in **Philippians 3**]

24 For to **expectation** were we saved.

The reason for the passion, Paul says in effect, is because we live in a continual state of expectation! We can't get where we're going until God decides to act, and only He knows when that time is! So, until then, we fellowship with Christ's sufferings.

Now, the good news in all this is that the gracious gift of our believing also leads to knowing Him "***in the power of His resurrection.***" Now, granted, we can only know that power in part today, because "***the power of His resurrection***" specifically refers to the change of our mortal bodies at His coming, whether by resurrection out from among the dead or by translation out of the living, into the same form as His immortal body.

We've seen it many times, but let's look at it again:

### **1 Corinthians 15:**

51 Lo! a secret to you am I telling! We all, indeed, shall not be put to repose, yet we all shall be changed,

52 in an instant, in the twinkle of an eye, at the last trump. For He will be trumpeting, and the dead will be roused incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality.

Let's go back to where we began our study:

### **Philippians 1:29**

29 for to you it is graciously granted, for Christ's sake, not only to be believing on Him, but to be suffering for His sake also

We've covered the suffering part so far, but look at the other piece: Paul declared here that our believing – that is, our faith in Jesus Christ and therefore in the word of God itself – is something that God "***graciously granted***" us, and He does so for Christ's sake; that is, for the sake of *His name*. How many times, did God do things for Israel for the sake of *His name*? It's the same idea here. This is entirely God's sovereign favor over and in our lives – we have NOTHING to do with it, except, of course, acceptance of the gift and our willing participation (which again includes the sufferings along with – actually ahead of – the power.

Just a quick aside here: the Concordant Commentary addresses only the part of this verse 29 that deals with the sufferings and never mentions the gift of believing that is ours. Amazing, because this gracious gift of believing is as important I believe, as being chosen in Christ, designated "***beforehand for the place of a son,***" as Paul writes in **Ephesians 1:**

### **Ephesians 1:3-6**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ,

4 according as He chooses us in Him before the disruption of the world, we to be holy and flawless in His sight,  
5 in love designating us beforehand for the place of a son for Him through Christ Jesus; in accord with the delight of His will,  
6 for the laud of the glory of His grace, which graces us in the Beloved

### **Romans 8**

28 Now we are aware that God is working all together for the good of those who are loving God, who are called according to the purpose  
29 that, whom He foreknew, He designates beforehand, also, to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be Firstborn among many brethren.  
30 Now whom He designates beforehand, these He calls also, and whom He calls, these He justifies also; now whom He justifies, these He glorifies also.

All this choosing, designating, calling, conforming, justifying, glorifying...**all of this** is God's gracious gift. It's all His doing and none of our own. This is the amplification of God's approach present in **Ephesians 2:**

### **Ephesians 2:8**

8 For in grace, through faith, are you saved, and this is not out of you; it is God's approach present,  
9 not of works, lest anyone should be boasting.  
10 For His achievement are we, being created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God makes ready beforehand, that we should be walking in them.

Have you noticed that every where we turn in recent weeks, we keep looking at the sovereignty of God? I guess it should come as no surprise that His sovereignty is as omnipresent as He is himself.

Here's what Jesus said that relates back to Philipians 1:

### **John 6:44**

44 No one can come to Me if ever the Father Who sends Me should not be drawing him. And I shall be raising him in the last day.

Over and over, Jesus said, "**Who has ears to hear, let him hear.**"

It seems to me that anyone who has ears to hear has been given those ears by the Father, and therefore He has given the capacity to hear and heed, literally to be drawn to Jesus Christ. This is the sovereign work of the Father, once more we find ourselves in the midst of **Ephesians 3:**

### **Ephesians 3:**

11 in accord with the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord;

12 in Whom we have boldness and access with confidence, **through His faith.** Look at those last 3 words – “**through His faith.**” I know we’ve read this many times before, but in the context of what we see here tonight, that we are believing in Jesus Christ and the word of God right now, precisely and solely because the Father himself gave us this gift, and here in Ephesians 3, Paul declared that it’s all “**in accord with the purpose of the eons, which He [the Father] makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord;**

The Apostle goes on to declare in verse 12 that “**we have boldness and access with confidence, through His faith.**”

Oh, Father, how grateful we are today for the faith – the believing – that you have given us, together with your designation beforehand, Your calling, Your justification, Your conforming to the image of Your Son, the boldness and access with confidence through HIS FAITH. Father, we declare today that all we are, all we know, all we see, all we will yet become is Your gracious gift and Your sovereign work alone. That we come to you now, speaking these words, worshiping You, we pray, in spirit and in truth is by your sovereign enabling of us to be believing for Christ’s sake – for the sake of His name, and yours.

God just gets bigger and greater, more loveable the more we look into His word, doesn’t He?!

Paul said, “**faith is out of tidings, yet the tidings through a declaration of Christ.**” (Romans 10:17). Couple that with what Jesus said “Who has ears to hear, let Him hear.” Put it in the context of Philippians 1:

#### **Philippians 1:29**

29 for to you it is graciously granted, for Christ's sake, not only to be believing on Him, but to be suffering for His sake also

Somehow, the gift of believing eclipses the suffering, as Paul said, in Romans 8: “**the sufferings of the current era do not deserve the glory about to be revealed for us.**” We won’t escape sufferings – they’re a part of know Him, as Paul said; they’re a part of conforming to the image of Christ; they’re a part of being designated for the place of a son or daughter. The awesome, jaw-dropping truth I see tonight, and pray you absorb it with me, is that God is doing it all – not us. Not in any way are we or have we been involved in any part of hearing or believing, let alone the designating, calling, justifying or conforming. The only part we have is to join Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3, and His declaration that follows in **Ephesians 4:**

### **Ephesians 3:**

13 Wherefore I am requesting you not to be despondent at those of my afflictions for your sake which are your glory.

14 On this behalf am I bowing my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
15 after Whom every kindred in the heavens and on earth is being named,

16 that He may be giving you, in accord with the riches of His glory, to be made staunch with power, through His spirit, in the man within,

17 Christ to dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, having been rooted and grounded in love,

18 should be strong to grasp, together with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height --

19 to know the love of Christ as well which transcends knowledge -- that you may be completed for the entire complement of God.

20 Now to Him Who is able to do superexcessively above all that we are requesting or apprehending, according to the power that is operating in us,

21 to Him be glory in the ecclesia and in Christ Jesus for all the generations of the eon of the eons! Amen!

### **Chapter 4**

1 I am entreating you, then, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,

2 with all humility and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit with the tie of peace:

4 one body and one spirit, according as you were called also with one expectation of your calling;

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 one God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in all.

7 Now to each one of us was given grace in accord with the measure of the gratuity of Christ.

Doesn't this just get bigger and bigger to you too?!

God, I pray we take every jot and tittle of your word into the fabric of our characters, so that when You look at us, You see Your own reflection. Father, all we can do is run into Your arms like 3 year olds into the big, welcoming arms of their Abba, Papa, Who has prepared such a place, such an inheritance, such un fathomable love and glory that we can scarcely breathe in the realization of it, let alone its fulfillment. And yet we know, Lord, that we will not only breathe but we will exult in the event yet to come in the Day of the Lord. So, Father, we join as one voice and one body – Christ's body – His complement – the complement of the one completing the All in All – and say YES and

AMEN. Even so, Come. Lord Jesus come. We wait for you. We wait and watch...patiently, but in a state of expectancy and passion, for You have shown us a taste – a down payment – of Your glory with which You will clothe us in that day. We are Yours, Holy Father; we are Your offspring, divine sons and daughters, coming after Your begotten Son, Yeshua, HaMashiach, firstborn among many brethren and sisteren.

Our Father, Who art in the heavens, hallowed be Thy name!

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done, as in heaven, on earth also,

Give us our daily dole of bread.

And pardon us our sins, for we ourselves also are pardoning everyone who is owing us.

And mayest Thou not bring us into trial, but rescue us from the wicked one.

**(Luke 11:2-4)**

**Amen and Amen**