

Practical Christian Living

Lesson 6: Why isn't Christ Real to Me?

Key Verse: "He [the Holy Spirit] will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you." John 16:14

When the Lord Jesus was here on earth, He walked and talked with His disciples. How they enjoyed His presence! But one day He told them that He would soon be leaving them.

The disciples were saddened at the thought that the Lord Jesus was going to leave them.

Jesus said, *"Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient (better) for you that I go away..." (John 16:6-7)*

The disciples could not understand how it could possibly be better for them if Jesus went away. But Jesus explained to them that He would come back to them in the person of the Holy Spirit. He said, *"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you."* (John 14:18) He would come, not just to be with them, but to live in them. Jesus said, *"At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."* John 14:20

On the Day of Pentecost, the Lord Jesus came back, in the person of the Holy Spirit, to live in His disciples. They were filled with joy! They went everywhere telling the wonderful news that Jesus Christ was alive and that He was Lord of all.

Best of all, they knew Christ was living in them and they enjoyed His presence. The Holy Spirit made Christ as real to them as He had been when He was with them in His bodily presence.

Christ Dwells in Every Believer

Just as the Lord Jesus lived in the hearts of those first disciples, so He lives in the hearts of His believers today. Christ Himself is in Heaven, but He lives in us by the Holy Spirit.

What does the Holy Spirit do for us? He makes Christ real to us. He causes us to know that Christ is living in us and He enables us to enjoy His presence. He takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us. The Lord Jesus said this about the Holy Spirit: *"He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take from what is Mine and make it known to you."* John 16:14-15

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to make Christ as real to us as He was to His first disciples. Yet Christ is not real to many Christians. They say, *"I believe the Bible, I pray, I go to church; yet Christ is not real to me. Why is this SO?"*

First, we need to point out that there are those who think they are Christians, but they have never been truly born again. Christ is not real to them because they do not belong to Him, and the Holy Spirit does not indwell them. The Bible says, *"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."* (Romans 8:9)

As for those who are truly born again, the reason Christ is not real to them is that they are grieving the Holy Spirit.

We need to grasp the fact that the Holy Spirit is a Person. He thinks, wills, enjoys, loves, desires, and suffers as any other person may. He can be grieved. When we grieve the Holy Spirit, He no longer

manifests Christ to us, and we lose our sense of the Lord's presence. Christ never leaves us, but He does not seem real to us because we have grieved the Holy Spirit.

Many Christians do not know that they are grieving the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we need to understand what grieves Him and how to avoid grieving Him.

What Grieves the Holy Spirit?

There are a number of things that grieve the Holy Spirit. Let us consider some of them.

1 - Unconfessed sin.

God has made provision for us when we sin. The Bible says that if we confess our sins and turn from them, God will forgive us. But, if we do not confess our sins and give them up, these sins come between us and God, and the Holy Spirit is grieved. The Bible says,

"If I regard iniquity (sin) in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66:18

We may have offended someone but we refuse to apologize and make things right with that person. Or someone may have offended us, but we refuse to forgive him. We hold resentment against him. We may be disobeying the Lord in some matter. There may be attitude sins such as pride, selfishness, or a rebellious spirit. Whatever sin it may be, if we hold on to it, we are grieving the Holy Spirit, and we cannot sense and enjoy the Lord's presence.

2 - Being taken up with the cares of this world.

The Holy Spirit wants to take the things of Christ and reveal them to us. We learn about the things of Christ in God's Word. Therefore, we must spend time in prayer and the study of God's Word so that the Holy Spirit can teach us the things of Christ.

It is very easy to become so involved with the problems and cares of this life that we do not take time for the things of God. Jesus said, *"The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." Mark 4:19*

The Holy Spirit is grieved when we allow things to "choke" the Word of God. We can determine the level of our spiritual experience by asking ourselves, *"How much do I love God's Word? How much time do I spend with the Lord each day?"*

3- Worldliness.

Satan uses the world system with all of its glitter and attractiveness to draw Christians away from God.

Someone has given this **definition of worldliness**: *Anything that keeps me from enjoying God's love and wanting to do God's will.*

Each day the Holy Spirit longs to open God's Word to us, to reveal to us the riches of Christ, and to show us all that we have in Him. But many of God's children do not take time for Him. Instead they spend hours and hours each week watching television, reading worldly literature, going to wrong places, and doing wrong things. They love the things of the world and devote their time to them. They constantly associate with people who do not know God or care about Him, or with Christians who are disobedient and have no desire to grow spiritually. It is no wonder that God is not real to them. The Bible says, *"Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." James 4:4*

To enjoy the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in our heart, we must stop doing those things that grieve the Holy Spirit. And we must start doing those things that please Him. The Bible says, *"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."* Ephesians 4:30

Getting Right with God

God is holy and He cannot have fellowship with us when we have unconfessed sin in our life. Sin separates us from God. The Bible says, *"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."* Isaiah 59:1-2

We receive **eternal** forgiveness when we are saved. When Jesus died on the cross, He bore all our sins—past, present and future. By His death on the cross, He paid for every sin we could possibly commit during our whole lifetime. When we are born again, we become God's child forever.

But once we come into God's family, there is the matter of our fellowship with our heavenly Father. Sin breaks our fellowship with Him. If a child of God should sin and continue in that sin without confessing it to God, he still remains God's child, but his sins have broken his fellowship with the Father. He needs forgiveness to restore fellowship. We must deal with those sins which have come between us and our Father.

We cannot deal with our sins collectively by praying, *"Lord, please forgive me of all my sins."* Our sins were committed one by one, and we must deal with them one by one.

Right now, get a sheet of paper. (A piece of notebook paper will be fine.) Start listing every sin in your life that you can think of, numbering them as you write them down. Be honest with God. The Bible says, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."* 1 John 1:8, 10

Do not take this lightly. You are doing business with God. Think over your life carefully and write down **every** sin you can think of. Be honest with yourself. No one need see this list but you and God. You may need to work on this list over a period of time.

When you have written down all the sins you can think of, ask God to show you the sins in your life that you have not thought of. This is what the psalmist was doing when he prayed, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."* Psalm 139:23-24

If you are sincere in this prayer, God will show you additional sins in your life. Add these to your list of sins. Give God time to go over your life and bring sins to your mind

After you have spent time on this first list, start a second list. On this list, write down the things you are doing that do not bring joy to God's heart. There may be a number of things in your life that you do not regard as sins; yet you know that they are not pleasing to God. As God's children, we have a responsibility to bring joy to His heart.

What to do about your Sins

When you have spent time on the list of your sins and the list of the things that do not bring joy to God, you are ready to ask God to forgive you of all these sins. The Bible says, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* 1 John 1:9

The only way to get right with God is to come to Him and humbly confess our sins. What does it mean "to confess our sins"? The word "confess" means to "say the same thing." To confess our sins to God means that we are saying the same thing about them that God says about them. If we lied, we need to say that we lied. If we stole, we need to say that we stole. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from sins that we confess as sins, but it does not cleanse us from sins for which we make excuses.

What does it mean when it says that God is "**faithful**" to forgive our sins? It means that He keeps His Word. God has said that He will forgive us, and He always keeps His word.

What does it mean when it says that God is "**just**" in forgiving us our sins? It means that He is righteous in forgiving us because Christ has paid the penalty of our sins. God sees those sins as being placed on Christ on the cross. Because Christ died for our sins, God can righteously forgive us.

Now that we understand this, we are ready to confess our sins to God, one by one. Take the first sin on your list and say, "*Father, I have sinned against You by (name the sin). Right now I am confessing this sin to You and asking You to forgive me. I thank You that Jesus Christ shed His precious blood for this sin.*"

It may help you to think of placing that sin on Christ on the cross. That sin has now been transferred from you to Christ. It has been paid for by His death, and it is no longer on you.

If that sin was against God only, you can scratch it off your list. But, if it involves another person, you cannot scratch it off until you have asked that person to forgive you. (We will have more about this in the next lesson.)

Do the same thing with each sin on your list. Go down the entire list, one by one, confessing each sin to God and asking His forgiveness. Then go to the list of things that are not pleasing to God. One by one, confess these to God. When you have completed this, ask, "*Lord, is there anything else in my life that needs to be confessed and forsaken?*"

We want our hearts cleansed from all sin and all defilement of sin. Therefore, it is good to ask the Lord to cleanse us with the precious blood of Christ from anything that would hinder our fellowship with Him.

Every sin that you have confessed to God is now forgiven. When we confess our sins, "*He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

God not only forgives us, but He also forgets these sins. He says, "*Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*" Hebrews 10:17

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill your Heart

If you are a child of God, the Holy Spirit is in your heart. He has been there since the moment you were born again. But if you have had sin in your life, then He has been unable to fill your life. Instead He has been grieved. If you want Him to fill your life, pray to Him and tell Him: "*Blessed Holy Spirit, I have grieved You so long...I have confessed my sins, and now I ask You to come out of that dark corner of my heart and fill my life. Make Christ real to me. I do want Him to be Lord of my life.*"

True Repentance means a Change in your Life

When God's children have been grieving the Holy Spirit, God calls on them to repent. God says, "*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent.*" Revelation 3:19

To repent of your sins means that you are sorry enough for them that you want to stop doing them.

David said, *"I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies."* (Psalm 119:59) David realized that his ways were wrong and that he was hurting God's heart. He turned from his wrong ways to God's ways. That was true repentance.

Many times we pray and tell God that we are sorry for our sins and that we truly want to please Him, but the question is: *Do we really mean what we say?* God is not impressed with pious words and lovely prayers. He looks to see if there is a change in our actions. The Bible says, *"Talk no more so very proudly; let no arrogance come from your mouth. For the LORD is the God of knowledge; and by His actions are weighed."* 1 Samuel 2:3

If you have truly repented and you truly want Christ to be real in your life, here are some things you will do:

1 - You will put God first in your life.

It is one thing to say that you are putting God first in your life; it is another thing to live it out. But God will not accept any place other than first place. He purchased us with His own blood and we belong to Him. If God is truly first in our life, we will not let business, pleasure, work, or anything else be our main interest. If we put God first, He will take care of our needs. Jesus said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things will be added to you."* Matthew 6:33

2 - You will love the Lord.

Trying to serve the Lord without loving Him is like being married to someone you don't love. The heart of the relationship is missing.

The Lord Jesus loves us with all His heart, and He wants us to love Him with all our heart. Jesus said that the first and great commandment is this: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."* Matthew 22:37

3 - You will turn from worldliness.

The Lord Jesus loved you enough to die for you, and He hates anything that would steal your heart from Him. A great man of God, Wilbur Chapman, said,

"Anything that dims my vision of Christ, or cramps my prayer life, or makes Christian work difficult, is wrong FOR ME, and I must, as a Christian turn from it."

4 - You will spend time with God.

It is a foolish Christian who is so busy that he doesn't have time to spend with God. He is like a man on a long trip in an automobile who says he is in such a hurry that he doesn't have time to stop for fuel.

Whatever cares and responsibilities we may have, we cannot let them crowd God out of our life. We must spend time with God in prayer and the study of His Word each day. We cannot overemphasize the importance of this. The Bible says of the Lord Jesus, *"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place, and there He prayed."* Mark 1:35

If the Son of God Himself found it necessary to spend time with His heavenly Father, how much more should we! Robert Murray McCheyne said, *"I feel it is far better to begin with God—to see His face first, to get my soul near Him before it is near another. I ought to spend the best hours in communion with God. This is my best and noblest employment."*

If we love the Lord, obey His commandments, and spend time with Him, He will be real to us. The Lord Jesus said, *"He who has My commandments, and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and MANIFEST MYSELF TO HIM."* John 14:21

Discovered Gem: The Holy Spirit makes Christ real to me. I am responsible to see that I do not grieve Him.

Questions

1. What does the Holy Spirit do for us?
2. Is the Holy Spirit a Person?
3. Does He think?
4. Does He love?
5. Does He suffer?
6. Can He be grieved?
7. These are things that grieve the Holy Spirit: unconfessed sin, being taken up with the cares of this world, and worldliness.
8. Can we deal with our sins by praying, *"Lord, please forgive me of all my sins?"*
9. The only way to get right with God is
10. What things have you learned in this lesson that will help you most in your Christian life?