

The Joy of Being Occupied with Christ, Part 2

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, January 12, 2014

Once again we have an enormous privilege to look into the word of God and have the Spirit of God speak to our hearts. Will you take your Bibles and turn to John's gospel. This is the second and final of a two part series on The Joy of Being Occupied with Christ and we are learning this from the words of John the Baptist. I'd like to read beginning in verse 22 of John 3, even though we will be looking primarily at verses 31 and 36. So follow along, John 3, beginning in verse 22.

“22 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. 23 John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized - 24 for John had not yet been thrown into prison. 25 Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. 26 And they came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have borne witness, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.’ 27 John answered and said, ‘A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. 28 You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, “I am not the Christ,” but, “I have been sent ahead of Him.” 29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease. 31 He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 What He has seen and heard, of that He bears witness; and no one receives His witness. 33 He who has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is true. 34 For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. 35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. 36 He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Here we have some amazing insights into the last of the Old Testament prophets, a man that was filled with great joy despite many difficulties surrounding him. And the reason he was filled with such joy is because he loved the Lord Jesus Christ and his passion was to point other people to him. He rejoiced greatly because of the bridegroom's voice the text tells us. And, my friends, may I say that there is no greater joy in all the world than knowing Christ intimately, personally, enjoying sweet communion with him and then pointing others to Christ. Frankly, nothing else in life makes any difference; all of the rest is just kind of surviving which we have to do but ultimately this should be our goal. Certainly, this was the reality for John the Baptist; this was the key to life, the secret to his joy. He was, as I say, occupied with Christ.

Now, you will recall that his ministry is overlapping the ministry of Jesus during the transitional phase between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. We see here that his

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/879/The_Joy_of_Being_Occupied_with_Christ_Part_2.html

The Joy of Being Occupied with Christ, Part 2

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, January 12, 2014

disciples were zealous, they were envious of other people that were going to Jesus so they come along and they try to provoke John the Baptist to jealousy. They say to him, "All are coming to him. John, you've got to do something. Jesus is drawing a bigger crowd than you." As you will recall, we studied and learned that John did not succumb to the envy of his followers, he did not lose sight of his calling. He responded in humility; he relaxed within the limits of God's sovereign plan for his life. He said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven."

So he happily acknowledges his unworthiness, his inability to do anything for God apart from divine grace, apart from divine enablement. His life was dedicated to exalting Christ. Because of this, nothing could rob him of that inexpressible joy of experiencing the felt presence and power of Christ in his life. I hope you experience the same thing and for this reason, he would say in verse 30, "He must increase but I must decrease." Friends, you need to remember that: if you want to experience real joy in the Christian life, he must increase but you must decrease.

Now, you will also recall that as John's ministry's popularity began to wane during this time, he remained faithful to his proclamation of the gospel; he was bold in his preaching; he even confronted Herod and his wicked family over their gross immorality and all of their wickedness which landed him in prison and that ultimately led to his beheading. Yet, he endured all of this because he was occupied with Christ. That was his priority, living for Christ, pointing other people to him. So he relaxed within his sovereign care; he lived for the glory of Christ; he had no concern for the praise of men but he was obsessed with the praise of Christ as we all should be.

This leads us to my third and final point in this little series. We see much of his occupation of Christ in his testimony of Christ's supremacy and that's what we will look at today. 3. His testimony of Christ's supremacy in verses 31-36. Before examining this text closely, I found myself overwhelmed as I meditated upon these truths with some fascinating historical context that, I think, will really minister to your soul as it did to me. It's fascinating when you stop and think about it, that the Apostle John recorded this gospel in the latter part of his life, in about 80-90 AD. In fact, this event took place about 50 years prior to him writing about it. You will recall that the Apostle John and James, his older brother, were known as the sons of Zebedee and Jesus gave them the name Sons of Thunder. They were eyewitnesses and participants in Jesus' earthly ministry, an amazing thought.

John saw thousands of miracles, the vast majority of which are not recorded in the word of God. He literally lived with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He was disciplined by him. He witnessed the Lord's transfiguration. He witnessed his death and his burial, his resurrected. John was there at his ascension. And in his gospel, he identified himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved and as the one who reclined on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper. Paul said that he was a "pillar" in the Jerusalem church where his brother James pastured. He ministered with Peter until he went to Ephesus just before the destruction of Jerusalem which he had heard Jesus predict in Matthew 24 a number of years earlier.

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/879/The_Joy_of_Being_Occupied_with_Christ_Part_2.html

The Joy of Being Occupied with Christ, Part 2

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, January 12, 2014

And it was from Ephesus that he wrote this gospel. It was also from this town of Ephesus that the Romans exiled him to Patmos where the Lord Jesus Christ revealed to him the final book of the Bible, the Revelation of Jesus Christ and this was in the last decade of the first century around AD 94-96.

So by the time he wrote this gospel, he was an old man, a very old man, older than most all of his readers. In fact, a little bit after he wrote this gospel, he wrote his epistles, 1, 2, 3 John and he, very often, calls his audience children and you can understand why. Various church fathers that lived at the end of the first century that knew John said that when he lived in Ephesus he carried out an extensive evangelistic and teaching and discipleship campaign. He was dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission even as an old man. We learn from the early church fathers and from history that he gave oversight to many churches around Ephesus. He wanted to see them strengthened doctrinally and he encouraged them, even in the face of mounting persecution. He was an apostle but he was a pastor. He was a shepherd. He was concerned for the people and he would have had, therefore, profound influence on many of the saints that would soon find themselves being tortured and murdered under the vicious reign of Domitian all because of their faith in Christ.

It was also during this time that he conducted an extensive writing ministry: he wrote the gospel of John as an old man and then he writes 1, 2, and 3 John, the epistles, and then a little bit later the book of Revelation. He sends that letter to seven churches that were dear to his heart. One church father, Papias, who had direct contact with him, described him as “a living and abiding voice.” You see, he was the last of the remaining apostles. He was respected by all of the believers. Everyone wanted to spend time with him; wherever he would go he would draw a crowd. People wanted to hear from this dear old apostle who had firsthand experience with the Son of God. Can you imagine that? With the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who occupied his heart and the one with whom he was occupied.

Now by the time that John wrote this gospel between 80-90 AD, Satan and his minions were very, very successful in planting seeds of false doctrine through false teachers. One of Satan’s greatest strategies is to distort and discredit the person in the work of Christ and also to distract people from worshiping him by having them focus on other things. By the way, remember that: distort, discredit and distract. Guard your heart from that because that is the enemy’s strategy.

So, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he drew from his own memory as eyewitness, these events and he composed this gospel, the gospel of John. Really, there is a twofold purpose if you think about it, for writing this: one was evangelism. Remember in John 20:31 he says that “these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing, you may have life in his name.” So, it was for the purpose of evangelism but it was also an apologetic, to convince his readers that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/879/The_Joy_of_Being_Occupied_with_Christ_Part_2.html

The Joy of Being Occupied with Christ, Part 2

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, January 12, 2014

Now, Satan, by this time, was in full gear doing everything that he could possibly do to combat these truths and, of course, it continues to this day. As Paul predicted in Acts 20, false teachers rose up from within the church and they perverted the apostolic teachings. The dominant philosophy that was on the rise in that day was Gnosticism from the Greek word for “knowledge.” It was introduced by Plato and it basically said, in short, that truth is based on secret knowledge or gnosis and it’s available only to the most intellectual, the spiritually elite, the initiated. “We are the only ones that can know truth which, by the way, trumps this stuff about Jesus and the word of God and all of these things the apostles say.” So they claim that the Scriptures were really a product of man, not of God. They advocated a philosophical dualism where matter, they asserted, like the body, is inherently evil. Anything of the spirit was good so, therefore, if you connect the dots here logically, they denied the humanity of Christ in an effort to preserve him from evil and so false teachers pick up on all of this stuff and they weave it into the well accepted fabric of Christian doctrine to confuse people. One such group even denied that Jesus possessed a physical human body. They said that what people saw was only an allusion. They were Docetists from a Greek term that means “appearing.” He just appeared to be what you think he was. Of course, this undermined the nature and purpose of the Incarnation of Christ.

As a result of this, for example, in 1 John 4, beginning in verse 1, John would later write, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from God because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the spirit of God,” here it is, listen carefully, “every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist of which you have heard it is coming and now it is already in the world.” So, even by the end of the first century, you have a counterfeit Christianity that is widespread. False teachers are everywhere. Heretical movements were endemic by this time.

So in John’s gospel, he presents the truth about Jesus Christ the Son of God and in his epistles he provides tests for genuine saving faith as well as tests to determine genuine Christian ministries, genuine churches. In fact, the 18th century theologian and pastor Jonathan Edwards called them “distinguishing marks,” those that we find in 1 John 4:2 and following. In his excellent new book “Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship,” John MacArthur summarizes these distinguishing marks the Apostle John penned in 1 John 4:2-8. He does so in the form of five questions that we would do well to keep in mind as we look later at what John the Baptist is going to say: Does the work exalt the true Christ?; Does it oppose worldliness; Does it point people to the Scripture?; Does it elevate the truth?; Does it produce love for God and others? Folks, this is what you look for in a church, in a movement, in a pastor, in a teacher.

John would be appalled if he came back to life today to see the trends and, of course, the trend today is to exalt man, not Christ. Instead of opposing worldliness you see churches promoting it. No longer will they confront the culture, they want to conform to the

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/879/The_Joy_of_Being_Occupied_with_Christ_Part_2.html

The Joy of Being Occupied with Christ, Part 2

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, January 12, 2014

culture. In fact, it is the rule not the exemption to see churches orbit around man and his needs, not God and his glory. Man-centered churches. Man-centered movements. Always trying to be edgy and entertaining to appeal to worldly seekers. They show little if any concern for personal holiness. They say little of anything about the person and the work of Jesus Christ. You talk to people in these movements and they really know nothing of theology, they know nothing of our Savior, who he really is. You won't find one out of a thousand churches these days that really point people to the Scriptures, expositing the word of God, declaring its inspiration, its authority, its sufficiency and power.

And what of truth? Well, you kind of make up your own. There is a growing army of religious conmen and charlatans in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement that elevate religious experience over biblical truth and they unwittingly attribute the works of the flesh and of Satan to the Holy Spirit. This is growing like wildfire around the world. The empty platitudes of the flamboyant televangelist and his phony prosperity gospel would have us believe that Jesus suffered and died in order to make us healthy and wealthy. Spiritual swindlers offer temporal blessings rather than eternal life and moral failure among these people is absolutely legendary. Counterfeit Christianity produces a love for self, not for God.

Back to the end of the first century, the aging apostle, the one that Jesus loved, sees all of these things happening in the course of his lifetime and he writes this gospel. You will remember that at the very beginning he says, "In the beginning was the Word." He speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ, a personal God, the one who is the source of revelation, the source of truth and all wisdom. He says that "all things came into being by this divine Word, that the Word became flesh and he dwelt among us." And with undying passion for the truth concerning his beloved Lord and Savior, we see now that the Spirit of God brings to mind this event about John the Baptist that happened some 50 years earlier, an event that would underscore the very theme that he would write about later on in 1 John. As we look at this whole scenario of John the Baptist, we see that the way he responds to his zealous yet envious disciples, exalts the true Christ. It opposes worldliness; it points us to the Scriptures; it elevates the truth; it calls us to love God and others.

We see this, by the way, in a seven fold contrast John the Baptist makes between himself and the Messiah. He says in verse 27 that basically apart from him, I can receive nothing except what he chooses to give me. In verse 35, he says, what I have been given is nothing in comparison to Christ, the one to whom the Father has given all things. In verse 29 he says Christ is the bridegroom, I'm merely the groomsman. Verse 30, Christ must increase, I must decrease. Verse 31, he said that I am of the earth whereas the Lord Jesus comes from heaven; he is above all. Verse 34, he says that the Spirit is restricted in my sinful flesh but Christ has the fullness of the Spirit without measure. Verse 35, I am but a servant but the Savior is the Father's beloved Son. I'm sure when the Apostle John recorded this event that took place with John the Baptist, his heart must have leaped with joy to be able to give yet another testimony of the manifold glories of his beloved Master So, these are the truths that guarded his heart from discouragement, guarded his heart

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/879/The_Joy_of_Being_Occupied_with_Christ_Part_2.html

The Joy of Being Occupied with Christ, Part 2

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, January 12, 2014

from despair and jealousy. He was occupied with Christ, not with himself and, therein, he found his greatest joy come what may.

Now, with that as a background, let's look at his testimony. There is really five things that he says that speak about Christ's supremacy. First of all, we see that Christ is the sovereign ruler with a heavenly origin. Notice verse 31, "He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all." He is basically saying, "Look, I am from the earth but Christ has a heavenly origin." In fact, the words "from above" translates a Greek adverb for born again which speaks of our supernatural birth, the heavenly origin of our new birth. As you think about it, all human beings are from the earth, we belong to the earth, right? We are but dust. We are finite. We are limited. But he who comes from heaven, he says, is above all. Indeed, he is the self-existent, uncreated Creator of all things. He is the one who sovereignly reigns over all that he has created. Over and over, John the evangelist in his gospel refers to Christ as the one who descended from heaven, who descended from heaven. What's the point of that? Well, we need to worship him. We need to listen to him. We need to obey him. And now, John the Baptist is saying to his foolish and self-centered envious disciples, "Look guys, nothing else in life really matters but Christ. Don't try to provoke me to jealousy. Don't try to get me to seek the honor of men over the glory of God. Don't tempt me to lose focus of what God has called and gifted me to do as the forerunner of the Messiah. I will relax in the limits of divine sovereignty and rejoice in what he's asked me to do because nothing else really matters in life."

Not only is Christ the sovereign ruler with a heavenly origin, secondly we hear from John that Christ speaks the truth of the Father. Notice verse 32 at the beginning, "What He has seen and heard, of that He bears witness." In other words, he is a vastly superior witness than anything on earth, any earthly messenger. Why? Because he bears witness of what he has seen and what he has heard from the Father. Remember, John the Baptist was the last of the Old Covenant prophets and in the Old Covenant, according to Hebrews 1:1, we read that "God spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets but now," we learn in this transition from the Old to the New Covenant, according to Hebrews 1:2, God "in these last days has spoken to us in," what? "In His Son." Jesus later declared in John 8:26, "He who sent me is true and the things which I heard from him, these I speak to the world." You know, any pastor or teacher that in any way misrepresents or misinterprets or fails to point people to the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ is a fraud. Pure and simple.

If I can digress for a moment and offer something practical. We have, I know, so many listeners around the world in various churches, some of them very frustrated and I want to speak especially to some of the pastors that are a part of this church in various places around the world. My friend, guard yourself from the 1, 2, 3 method of preaching that is so prevalent these days. You know what it's like. One verse, two jokes and three stories that have nothing to do with the intent of the author. Practically, my friend, if you depend upon movie clips and comedy and entertaining stories to capture the attention of the people, you have no confidence in the power and the authority of the word of God. If you depend upon a bizarre hairdo or a Spiderman outfit to gain the people's interest, you have

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/879/The_Joy_of_Being_Occupied_with_Christ_Part_2.html

The Joy of Being Occupied with Christ, Part 2

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, January 12, 2014

no confidence in the power and the authority of the word of God. If you find yourself obsessing over which pair of skinny jeans or which edgy t-shirt you're going to wear to attract the people, you have no confidence in the power and the authority of the word of God. Dear brothers, if you want to arrest the attention of the people that desperately need to hear from God not from you, then may I suggest to you that you come up with a radically new 1, 2, 3 method.

Before I give them to you, may I say, first of all don't spend your week trying to come up with gimmicks that you can find on the internet, instead spend your time in prayer and study in the word of God so that when you stand in this pulpit you can say, "Thus saith the Lord." You say, "How long do I need to study?" Well, you may be a lot smarter than me, but it takes me at least 14 hours to pray and understand the text well enough to be able to present it to the people.

Here's your new 1, 2, 3 method: first of all, start a sermon by reading the word of God with dignity and passion. Let God be the one to arrest the attention of the audience by the power of his word, not your word. He doesn't need Hollywood. He doesn't need your clever personality. He does not need your witty humor. He does not need your cool clothes and appearance.

Secondly, exposit that word with accuracy and with authority and with clarity. Unpack it according to the author's intent. Carefully convey the God intended meaning of the text knowing full well that it will radically differ with many of the ignorant, self-serving, heretical opinions of some people in your audience. Do you know what's going to happen? They're either going to get mad and leave or they're going to get saved and stay. Now, the question is: do you want a crowd or do you want a church?

Finally, apply the meaning of the text and you can do this throughout the sermon but somewhere, apply the meaning of the text to the contemporary issues of life because it is the word of God that saves. It is the word of God that sanctifies. Oh, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Oh, the power of divine truth that comes from the Incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, even those who sought to kill him acknowledged, in John 7:46, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." And you think people want to hear you? Are you kidding?

Pastors and teachers, we would see Jesus, not you. We would hear Jesus, not you. We would know Jesus, not you. We must decrease, he must increase. That's the point. So, may I encourage you to preach the word of God. May I remind you that it is Scripture, not you, that is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. It is the word of God, not you, that is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. It is the word of God that is able to judge the thoughts and the intentions of the heart. It is the word of God that lays men bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. From the moment you stand behind this sacred desk until you sit down, may we all, as men of God, speak the oracles of God. Let it be the authority and

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/879/The_Joy_of_Being_Occupied_with_Christ_Part_2.html

The Joy of Being Occupied with Christ, Part 2

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, January 12, 2014

the power of the word of God that arrests the attention of the people, not the gimmicks of man.

“Oh but, Pastor, if we do this, the people are going to be bored.” Well, of course they will be, a lot of them, because they’re spiritually dead. The next time you’re at a funeral home, go up to the corpse and try to start up a conversation and watch what happens. They’re just not going to hear it. But, my friends, hear this: to the elect, the word of God is the power of God unto salvation. Others will be in your congregation immature, they will be worldly like those in 1 Corinthians 3 that Paul described and they can’t handle solid food, deeper things of doctrine. They can only handle milk and so, pass out some milk along with the meat. But whatever you do, don’t starve the mature. Just like with a little child that can only have milk, we sit them at the table, they watch us eating meat and little by little they start wanting a taste of this and then they want a little bit more and a little bit more and before you know it, they don’t want the milk anymore, they want the good stuff. That’s what we have to do. Remember that God uses our message as well as our lives to influence others with the gospel which includes preaching the whole counsel of God from Genesis to Revelation and everything in between. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:17, “For we are not like so many,” meaning like the majority, “peddlers of God’s word but as men of sincerity as commissioned by God in the sight of God we speak in Christ.”

Now, of course, most people are going to reject the message and through the use of hyperbole, that’s exactly what John the Baptist acknowledged. He says, “And no one receives his testimony.” By the way, the term “received,” lambano in the original language, it is used here in an active way that means “to seize” or “to grasp; to take hold of something; to take it captive.” John says in John 1:12, “But as many as received him to them he gave the right to become the children of God.” And Jesus would later say in John 5:43, “I have come in my Father’s name and you do not receive me.” You see, many people are not going to receive the truth of the gospel, the truth of the word of God. So, therefore, many of them will call themselves Christians but not be Christians and that is why it is so foolish to tabulate the success of a ministry based upon numerical statistics. Most are mere thrill seekers or country club keepers. Only true believers will receive the testimony of Christ, a testimony that the world hates. So he says, “And no one receives his testimony.”

If I can go a little bit deeper doctrinally here, this mirrors the Apostle John’s earlier statement in the prologue. You remember in verse 11 of chapter 1, he speaks of the divine Logos that “came unto his own,” referring to the people of Israel. And those who were his own “did not receive him.” This speaks of the special covenanted rights of the Davidic kingdom that belonged to Israel and if Gentiles received any of those blessings, it was only through humble faith and the acknowledgement that what they received had fallen from the table of divine blessing appointed by God for his covenant people Israel. And you would think that after all of the years of suffering and pain as a nation, by the time Jesus came they had waited 400 years for God to reveal himself once again, and you would expect that now with Jesus and all of his miracles, they would be flocking to him. But no, they rejected their King resulting in the postponement of the kingdom and sadly,

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/879/The_Joy_of_Being_Occupied_with_Christ_Part_2.html

The Joy of Being Occupied with Christ, Part 2

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, January 12, 2014

to this day, Israel remains God's beloved enemy. Victims of, according to Romans 11:25, "a partial hardening that has happened." But he goes on to say, "until," there is hope here, "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in and thus all Israel will be saved." Indeed, Christ speaks the truth of the Father but the world rejects it, both Jew and Gentile, because they are spiritually dead, they are at enmity with God. They are blinded by Satan. "The natural man does not accept the things of God for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised," 1 Corinthians 2:14. Not so for the man of God that doesn't even know that the Father is drawing him yet but the Father is drawing him to himself on the basis of grace.

Now, not only is Christ the sovereign ruler with a heavenly origin who speaks truths of the Father but thirdly, we see John saying that not everyone rejects his truthful testimony. Not everyone is going to reject it. Notice verse 33, "He who has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is true." Set his seal was something that they would have understood in those days. They would press usually a signet ring or another hand stamp on melted wax and thereby certify their approval of something and so, the point here is some believed the preaching of the word of God. They believed the testimony of Christ. They received Christ. And by their acceptance, they validate or therefore set their seal on the truthfulness of God's revelation. That's the point. Everything Jesus said, everything in Scripture, is perfectly true. This is an infallible record, therefore, we should listen to him.

In fact, as you think about it, while Jesus was on earth his humiliation was voluntary. You will remember that on a mountain with Peter, James and John, he allowed the effulgence of his glory to emanate from within his earthly tabernacle. The word of God says that "his face shone like the sun." They were terribly frightened and then in Matthew 17:5, we read of how the Father's voice comes booming down from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him." That's what we need to do. The question is: do you listen to him? Or do you allow other voices to speak into your life? Voices perhaps that have not received the transforming truth of God? Isn't it wonderful to see a person receive the witness, the testimony of Christ and set their seal upon that truth by living a life that is just radically changed by the power of the Spirit? That is such an exciting thing and, of course, that's what it looks like when this happens, a life that is lived for Christ, a life that puts him on display, a person filled with joy because they are occupied with Christ.

Notice how else John the Baptist gives testimony of Christ's supremacy in verse 34, he says, "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure." This is an intriguing statement. First of all, again, keep the flow here: he's saying not only is Christ the sovereign ruler with a heavenly origin who speaks truth from the Father that some but not all reject but fourthly, Christ was empowered with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Now, let's think about what this means. This re-emphasizes the unmitigated power available to the Incarnate Christ but there is something more. It emphasizes his unity with the Father and with the Spirit, a theme that John presents throughout his gospel. My friends, bear in mind that salvation is not merely a work of the

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/879/The_Joy_of_Being_Occupied_with_Christ_Part_2.html

The Joy of Being Occupied with Christ, Part 2

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, January 12, 2014

Father, it is not merely a work of the Spirit or of Christ but of all three. Therefore, an accurate confession pertaining to Jesus Christ is that he is the Incarnation of the fullness of God. In fact, John tells us that he is the one who existed in the bosom of the Father in verse 18 of chapter 1. Paul said in Colossians 2:9, “In him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.”

Now, this statement in verse 34 would have had perhaps a lot more relevance in that day in terms of the cultural context than it does today. Let me tell you why: the rabbis believed that the Spirit empowered the prophets in varying ways and in varying degrees. Some would have more, some would have less and for varying amounts of time. This rules out what John is saying about Jesus because he makes it clear, he says, “For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.” It’s also interesting that Luke tells us that John the Baptist “was filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb,” Luke 1:15. And I believe that Scripture teaches that every believer is given the Spirit without measure. In fact, Romans 8:9 says, “If anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.” We do not receive part of the Spirit and then have to do something else later on to get the rest of him.

While we all receive the full measure of the Spirit, because of our sinful flesh his full expression is restricted. In fact, sometimes we grieve the Spirit. Sometimes we even quench the Spirit. Now, prior to Pentecost, the Holy Spirit would only fill certain individuals temporarily to give them the ability to accomplish certain tasks. He did not permanently indwell them, Old Testament saints, as he does us, New Testament saints. However, even though our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, the remnants of our unredeemed humanness prevents the full expression of the Spirit within our lives. This included John the Baptist and he knew this but not so the Lord Jesus Christ. He was given the Spirit without measure.

Finally, think about it, the Apostle John, John the evangelist is writing this gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit to remember accurately and record precisely what John the Baptist had said some 50 years earlier reveals to us a fifth a final testimony of Christ’s supremacy in verse 35. He says, “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.” My friends, this is the climax of the whole passage, summarizing the glorious essence of all that has been said before. And I would put it this way, 5. that Christ is the Son of God who has been granted all authority from the Father. You see, John the Baptist knows his ministry as the Messianic forerunner is gradually fading away and even the aging apostle who recorded this inspired text knew that his opportunity to serve Christ was fading away. So both John the Baptist and John the apostle knew this. By the way, the same can be said of all of us depending upon our age and our health. We only have so long to serve Christ. You need to make the best of it, make the most of it. Again, that’s all that’s really important in life.

So I find this to be a fitting conclusion to John the Baptist’s testimony of Christ, that he would say, “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.” In context of what’s going on, he’s basically saying, “Look disciples, those of you that are trying to

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/879/The_Joy_of_Being_Occupied_with_Christ_Part_2.html

The Joy of Being Occupied with Christ, Part 2

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, January 12, 2014

get me to be jealous because everybody is going to Jesus and not me, all of you people that may reject even my message, you may reject me, you may laugh at me but this is the truth and here I will take my stand with full assurance.” Then he says this, verse 36, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life.” By the way, I love that statement. It is a present possession, a present possession. You have eternal life. It is not a potential blessing as long as you keep yourself saved. That is a heresy. But then he says this, “but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Notice, too, that he does not separate belief from obedience. Do you see that? You’ll never see that in the New Testament. Indeed, those who truly believe will obey because it is obedience that validates genuine saving faith. Obedience doesn’t earn salvation, it proves it and that’s what we see here. So you may say to me, “Pastor, oh yes, I’m a Christian. I believe in Christ.” Great. Praise God. Show me your obedience. That’s what will validate whether or not what you say is true or not. Remember, Jesus said, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?”

So, my friend, if you do not believe in Christ which encompasses the full spectrum of truth pertaining to the gospel, according to this passage, you are currently living in a state of divine condemnation. Do you realize that? Let me say that again: if you do not know and love Jesus Christ proven by your obedience, your passion in serving and obeying him, then according to the word of God you are currently, right now, living in a state of divine condemnation and unless you repent and unless you place your faith and receive Jesus Christ, you will one day hear him say, “Depart from me you worker of iniquity. I never knew you.” How unspeakably solemn.

In closing, I would simply ask you this: to which group do you belong? Those who believe, validated by a life of obedience to the Master or those who do not believe though you may say you do yet your disobedient life testifies against you. Dear sinner, if that is you, place your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ today before it is too late. Dear Christian, as I conclude this morning, I want you to ask yourself a question and it’s simply this: does my life give testimony to the supremacy of Christ? Does my life give testimony to the supremacy of Christ? By the way, according to what we’ve learned, if the answer is yes, then you will be filled with joy, you will have a passion to know him, to commune with him, you will be pointing people to him and you will constantly be decreasing in your life so he will increase. Is that true of you? Make a list. Answer it yes or no, maybe here’s where not at all. Then jettison those things that weaken your testimony and add those things that will strengthen it. Then, like John the Baptist, you will experience the amazing joy of being occupied with Christ. What a promise we have because of Christ.

Let’s pray together.

Father, thank you for these truths. May they bear much fruit in our lives to the praise of your glory. Again, for those that know nothing of your saving grace, O God, as always, we pray that you will do your convicting work, Spirit of God convict them of sin, righteousness and judgment that they might repent and believe. We ask this, Lord,

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/879/The_Joy_of_Being_Occupied_with_Christ_Part_2.html

The Joy of Being Occupied with Christ, Part 2

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, January 12, 2014

because some of these people that do not know you are our children. Lord, some of them are part of our family in other ways. Many of them are our friends, our associates. Lord, tragically I'm sure on the basis of your word that there are those even within this church that would never miss a service but they really do not know you. So, Lord, we depend upon you and cry out to you to do your amazing work of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and it's in his name that we pray. Amen.

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/879/The_Joy_of_Being_Occupied_with_Christ_Part_2.html