

'LIFE' WITH CHRIST

Articles of Comfort and Blessings Offered to the Reader

Note: All quotations are taken from the New International Version, if not otherwise mentioned.

Volume Two

Chapter 36

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.
Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
John 8:31-32

HOLDING TO THE TEACHING OF CHRIST is holding to Christ himself, for Christ does not speak from himself, but the Father speaks in him.¹ This is why holding to Christ is holding to God. The words of God give life. They are satisfying food and drink, because they are truth, and truth is central to God. When a man has the truth revealed to him he is no longer a slave to sin, evil or even the appearance of evil, for truth breaks the bonds of a man's nature, mind and will, so he is a new creation of God. Christ takes him as a disciple, which means he is bound to him with the ties that love and follow. He does not will or decide for himself, rather, the will of Christ is the source of his thought and actions. His choice is not based on his own thinking or on what he sees, but the Spirit of Christ in him leads him in the way of life and truth. For him Christ enlightens hidden truths so that he grows in knowledge, light and revelation. Such was the case with Paul the Apostle whose eyes and heart were enlightened by God. He poured his Spirit in him, so that he who had been killing Christians now preached Christ. Moreover, God raised him up to see and hear divine things, things that man is not naturally capable of perceiving. All these things were gifts of God's grace that settled upon this blessed Apostle, despite the fact that Paul the Apostle was not one of the disciples. What the Lord gave him made up for the fact that he did not see or hear the Lord, and he became one of the greatest teachers of the Gospel. He learned all the mysteries of eternal life, and all the hidden mysteries were revealed to him.

So then, the truth is revealed to him who becomes a disciple of Christ, and he knows all that is hidden in the Gospel and all the mysteries of eternal life.

God inspired the disciples and apostles to write what they heard from Christ and his

¹ See John 12:49, 14:10.

commands which they kept, so the words of the Gospel are the words of Christ. At the same time, it contains the divine truth living within the Word and reveals its mysteries to God's chosen ones. This is why all believers are the Lord's disciples, and many of them have distinguished themselves as trumpets of the Gospel heard throughout the world. This does not come about through the skill of preaching and servants of the Word, rather, it is a trumpet of truth heard in the hearts of holy ones. To them the words are uncovered, and the truths of the Christian faith are revealed, to the extent that the earth competes with heaven in the light that radiates from all corners of the world. So Christ said, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age."²

Consider, dear reader, and see just how much the Word of life is heard throughout the world, even as we today are 2000 years past when the Word was written and first read. Is this not incredible! What scientist, what teacher, what wise man, what prophet has caused his words to live 2000 years and increase in their light, brilliance and glory? Is this not in itself a miracle of the Gospel, that it became a living word, equally for children, the elderly, the blind and the deaf? The truth of Christ penetrates hearts before minds. Look with me and see just how many people have been freed from slavery, the dominance of the mighty and the oppression of leaders and guardians, so that the cry for the rights of all men now rises even from the jungles. In the name of human rights leaders of peoples fall, replaced by freedom, and the right of a human to live free is exalted. Is not the source of this the Word of God which builds up the conscience?

July 29, 2005

² Matt 28:20.

Chapter 37
"You are the light of the world."
Matthew 5:14

MESSAGE TO SERVANTS OF THE WORD (1)

AS RECORDED BY THE APOSTLE JOHN, Christ was described by the Spirit as the 'The Word.'¹ He added that he was the true light that was coming into the world.²

Christ truly was a source of light everywhere he went, but the sons of darkness rejected him, raged against him, tried many times to stone him, and yet he would walk away right through the middle of them.³

When Christ ascended and sat at the right hand of his Father, the light of the Word appeared in the mouths of his Apostles and disciples, in a way that, even out of

¹ John 1:1.

² John 1:9.

³ John 8:59, Luke 4:29-30.

stubbornness, cannot be rejected. Yet persecution from the sons of darkness continued to be a source of stumbling for those who served. Nonetheless, what catches our attention is that the Word spread, reached out and grew stronger in every region of the world. The reason is that the Word itself is light. It works powerfully in hearts. It reaches out and has an impact in every environment. So the one appointed by God to be a servant of the Word does not need extra effort or great learning, because the Word comes out of his mouth, and by its own strength it does its work in the hearts of all who hear, for the Word of Christ is always supported by the Holy Spirit. Know, dear reader, servant of the Word of the Lord, the Word itself is a penetrating light in hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. So the servant of the Word is a servant of light, that is, he radiates the light of Christ everywhere he goes.

What is then the Light of the Word?

The light of the Word is ongoing revelation of the divine truth. So the servant of the Word is a source of truth, and the truth is the revelation of all Christ's mysteries. Christ said, 'I am the truth,' which means that someone is needed to provide spiritual clarity to what is done within all matters of this world and to solve all its problems on the basis of Christ's commands and teachings. In this way the servant of the Word is a source of knowledge, truth and light passing from person to person and group to group. This was Christ's final command to his disciples before he ascended, "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Amen.⁴

Here, the reader and the servant should take note that the Word of Christ does not do its work by itself, rather, Christ himself promises he will be with each servant and each word spoken, because the servant of the Word is a companion of Christ. He does not preach or speak by himself, but with each word is power, support, light and truth. So the statement, 'I am with you' causes the servant to be helped by divine and exalted power and kept by the hand of the Lord. He is not burdened with worry along the way nor anxiety about his enemies and those who would trip him up. His night is light so he does not stumble, and no matter how narrow and distressed the way may be the exalted hand supports him from above, and the voice of the Lord strengthens him. The servant sees the support with his own eyes as it comes at the right time. Before he calls Christ hears him. Christ's hand is always extended to help, and we must not forget Christ said, 'I am the way.'⁵

August 5, 2005

⁴ Matt 28:19-20.

⁵ John 14:6.

MESSAGE TO SERVANTS OF THE WORD (2)

A SERVANT OF THE WORD is considered by Christ a branch in the vine, and to the degree he remains in the vine he bears fruit. Christ says, “Remain in me, and I will remain in you.”¹ Remaining in the vine includes the arrival of the vine’s sap to the branches, and remaining in Christ insures the arrival of the spoken word and even insures it will be influential and productive.

What binds the vine with the branches is the living Word. To a servant of the Word the Gospel is his life, which he draws each day from the Gospel. To the degree a servant lives by the Gospel, from it will come words of life which bring life to souls whose purpose in hearing them is to live by them.

The word of life in the Gospel is what is meant by Christ when he said, “I am the living water,” “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”² The word of the Gospel is an impact thrust by the servant into an emaciated man about to die in his sins so that he rises to life and glorifies the living God who saved him from such a death. Driven by the power of the Lord of the Word and the Lord of life, the Gospel raises to life those dead in their sin, through the living Word that comes from the mouth of the servant. In the voice of the servant Christ calls, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink,’ and he will become a spring of living water.

To the thirsty man Christ is a mysterious call to the captives of sin that has sucked their blood and left them hanging between life and death. A servant of the Word is the horn of the Lord calling to those who thirst for righteousness and truth to repent and to become a source of life after having walked the path of hell. The servant who is faithful with sinful souls calls and never stops calling, in the hope that those at the brink of death will hear and their spirits will turn back and rise up like the younger son who came to his father.

The relationship between the branches and the vine is existential in the sense that when there is a vine there are branches. To the heavenly Father the branch is priceless because he is the vine keeper who grows the branches and makes them increase on the vine so that the vine becomes as the vine keeper desires, and he comes at the right time to harvest its fruit.

Servants of the Word also are branches in the vine, and for the Father they bear fruit. They are precious to the vine keeper, meaning they are called by him to enter eternal life. By their fruit they stand before the vine keeper as heirs of the vine, possessors of the kingdom of heaven. So the invitation to eternal life is one of the most important elements of ministry. Though the gate to which they are called is narrow and the path

¹ John 15:4.

² John 7:37-38.

they walk troublesome, the kingdom of heaven presented to them and their disciples is abundant.³ Though they, and we with them, are not of this world,⁴ ‘we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands,’⁵ but built by the heavenly Father and the Son, in which he gives life to his guests, and all of them are ‘members of God’s household.’⁶

In the end, servants of the Word are servants of eternal life.

August 5, 2005

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³ 2 Peter 1:11.

⁴ John 17:16.

⁵ 2 Cor. 5:1.

⁶ Eph. 2:19.

We like to inform our beloved readers that *St Mark Monthly Review* is on vacation during July and August every year.

Father Matta El-Meskeen

The Incarnation Song of the Apostle Paul

Phil 2:11 “And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

“That Jesus Christ is Lord” κῦριοj 'Ihsoāj

This was revealed and proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost by the Holy Spirit: “let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36). The juxtaposition of “Lord and Christ” gives the word ‘Lord’ its divine quality. Consequently, what the Holy Spirit proclaimed has entered into the core of the Christian faith: “because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom 10:9). To confess Jesus is Lord is to confess his divinity, in the sense that [the title] “Lord” in the Old Testament came to replace [the name] “Yahweh”. The church thus confirms that no one can proclaim that Jesus is the Lord except through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit alone reveals it, to pure and faithful hearts. “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3).

Excerpt from *St Mark, Monthly Review*, June 1997.

The Monastery of St Macarius

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